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TECHNICAL REPORT

Reforming Teacher Education

A First Year Progress Report on Teachers for a New Era

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Summary

In a bold attempt to reform the way teachers are prepared in the United States, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, with the Annenberg Foundation and the Ford Foundation, launched Teachers for a New Era (TNE) in the summer of 2001. The goal of this initiative is to fundamentally reform teacher education in a selected number of teacher preparation programs by providing these sites with funding (\$5 million over a period of five years) and technical assistance through the Academy for Educational Development (AED). Four institutions were selected for the TNE grant in FY2002: Bank Street College of Education; California State University, Northridge (CSUN); Michigan State University (MSU); and the University of Virginia (UVa).²

Bank Street College of Education is an independent institution devoted entirely to improving the education of children and their teachers. The college comprises three divisions: Children's Programs, which runs the School for Children; the Division of Continuing Education; and the Graduate School of Education devoted entirely to teacher education. The Graduate School offers master's degrees in education through a number of different programs that can be completed in as little as 12–15 months, although two years to completion is most typical. Generally, Bank Street graduates about 250 teachers per year from programs leading to initial certification.

CSUN offers multiple pathways for obtaining elementary and secondary teaching credentials, including undergraduate programs offered jointly by the College of Education and arts and sciences colleges. In addition, it offers several versions of the postbaccalaureate program (fifth-year program). In 2000–01, CSUN issued a total of 1,554 initial credentials. Overall, a little less than half of the graduates were minorities.

MSU's teacher education program is a five-year route to a bachelor's degree and a Michigan teaching certificate. The Department of Teacher Education also offers an 18-month certification program for postbaccalaureate applicants. MSU prepares approximately 550–600 teachers a year.

At UVa, the Curry School of Education and the College of Arts and Sciences offer a five-year integrated Teacher Education Program, the culmination of which leads to both the baccalaureate and the Master of Teaching degrees. In addition, the Curry School of Education offers a two-year postbaccalaureate program in which students with a completed BA degree in a noneducational field earn a Master of Teaching degree. There were 124 students

² In summer 2003, Carnegie selected seven additional sites for TNE funding: Boston College; Florida A&M University; Stanford University; the University of Connecticut; the University of Texas, El Paso; the University of Washington; and the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

in the graduating class of 2002. Enrollment in the Curry School teacher education programs has been growing in recent years.

TNE Design Principles

The TNE prospectus outlined several design principles that Carnegie believes characterize excellent teacher education programs. The three major principles are:

- **A teacher education program should be guided by a respect for evidence.** A culture of research, inquiry, and data analysis should permeate the program. Attention needs to be paid to pupil learning gains accomplished under the tutelage of teachers who are graduates of the program.
- **Faculty in the disciplines of the arts and sciences must be fully engaged in the education of prospective teachers,** especially in the areas of subject-matter understanding and general and liberal education.
- **Education should be understood as an academically taught clinical practice profession.** This requires: close cooperation between colleges of education and actual practicing schools; appointment of master teachers as clinical faculty in the college of education; and a two-year residency induction period for graduates of a teacher education program, during which graduates will be followed and provided mentoring and support. (http://www.carnegie.org/sub/program/teachers_prospectus.html)

Each institution was required to develop a design proposal that detailed how it proposed to reform its teacher education program to align with these design principles and also addressed a number of other issues detailed in the TNE prospectus (such as recruiting from underrepresented groups in teaching; providing pathways for late deciders; and ensuring that teachers had a deep understanding of subject matter as well as pedagogical content knowledge that would allow them to teach imaginatively and productively, etc.). These design proposals were then translated into work plans with specific activities, milestones, and time lines. The sites received their first-year funding in November 2002–January 2003 and were required to report progress in the first year in October 2003.

The First Phase of the National Evaluation and Purpose of Report

RAND and MDRC are jointly conducting a national evaluation for the Rockefeller Foundation of the TNE initiative as it is implemented by these first four grantees. The first phase of this evaluation began in December 2002. The objectives of this first phase were to lay the foundation for the larger, longer-term evaluation, collect baseline data to describe where the institutions were at the start of the initiative, analyze the design proposals to understand how the institutions proposed to align their programs with the TNE design principles, collect early implementation data on the programs and the institutions, and analyze the environments in which these four institutions are operating with respect to state and district policies. This report uses data collected during extensive site visits at the beginning and end of the first year.

This report describes the results of the first phase of the study. Because the sites had only been implementing TNE for about nine months at the time of our site visit, the report is largely descriptive.

Cross-Site Observations Regarding Implementation in Year 1

The sites have made progress over the past year in implementing their work plans, especially given that their “year” really consisted of between eight and ten months. Several cross-site themes emerged in the first year.

Recognition by Top-Level University Administrators and Strong Project Leadership Enhanced the Credibility of TNE. The insistence of the funders that the leadership for TNE should rest in the provost or president’s office helped the projects gain visibility and prestige. The open and vocal support of university leaders attracted arts and sciences faculty into the TNE fold. Appointing senior and well-respected faculty from both arts and sciences and education to head the projects helped facilitate dialogue across the campus departments and fostered implementation.

The Sites Structured and Supported Their Teams in Very Different Ways. Some sites provided release time and overt recognition for their leadership teams; others did not. Some provided release time or stipends for all faculty working on TNE; others did not. Often the release time or the stipend was reportedly insufficient to cover the time required by the TNE work. In recognition of the heavy demands on faculty of teaching, research, and service duties, the sites had or were attempting to hire new faculty or staff to help with the TNE work. The sites were hiring many of these new faculty under criteria that seemed somewhat different from those used for the typical academic hire. For example, the advertised positions at CSUN stressed direct experience in K–12 schools and/or demonstrated interest in pedagogy along with the more usual academic credentials and research.

Junior Faculty and Those Close to Promotion Points Were Concerned About the Effect of TNE on Their Advancement. Some junior faculty—while excited about the work—worried about refusing to participate, given the high visibility of the project, and felt they paid a heavy price for taking on this work. Some arts and sciences deans openly spoke of their concern about the publications records of junior faculty engaged in TNE, while some faculty members who were close to tenure points expressed fears about whether they had done sufficient work on their tenure review packages. Despite these issues, most faculty were excited about their TNE work.

Sites Adopted Different Strategies Tailored to Their Institutional Culture but Recognized That Changing Culture Is Challenging. The sites displayed perspicacity in choosing their overall approaches. Because CSUN and MSU already had a fair degree of overt and explicit collaboration between arts and sciences and education faculty, they chose to establish teams to work on the design principles with leaders from both colleges. UVa, playing to the research interests of its faculty, offered funding to arts and sciences and education faculty to conduct research focused on assessment issues and the opportunity to teach new, integrated courses. UVa also attempted to reach out to local school districts and to be sensitive to “turf” issues. Bank Street, realizing that it had the farthest to go in terms of educating its faculty regarding assessment and collaboration with arts and sciences, chose to

establish small teams with some limited arts and sciences involvement that focused on developing a research base to help inform program improvement.

Overall, across the sites, most faculty reported that these collaborations were a rewarding experience, in that they learned to see through different lenses. But all the sites understand that changing institutional culture and making the project a cross-university endeavor is uphill work and will require time and patience.

Involving K–12 Faculty in Meaningful Ways Proved Harder Than Expected. Although increasing the involvement of K–12 faculty in the teacher education program is one of the central principles of TNE, this has proven to be harder for some sites than expected. Some of this difficulty is due to scheduling problems (for example, the different teaching times for university and K–12 faculty); some of the difficulty, however, is due to the sites having not yet determined how best to involve teachers.

Site Communication Both Within and Outside TNE Needs Improvement. TNE is large and complex, involving large numbers of participants. Communication is an issue both within TNE and between TNE and other non-TNE faculty, and the sites frequently mentioned the importance of clear and frequent communication of the vision, the process, and progress to get buy-in from both internal and external audiences.

There Was Some Redundancy in the Work Being Done by the Sites. Assessment is front and center in the TNE prospectus, but the work requires sophisticated technical expertise and access to high-quality data, both of which may be harder to come by in some institutions and some states than others. All the sites seemed to be going over the same ground—learning about value-added modeling and examining different ways of measuring the learning of both their teacher candidates and the pupils taught by their graduates. Induction is another area where current efforts have been marked by a great deal of redundancy with nearly all the sites conducting literature reviews of induction programs in an attempt to identify best practices. The sites expressed a desire for greater collaboration, believing that this would be particularly beneficial in such a challenging area as assessment.

Technical Assistance Played an Important Role in Facilitating Implementation. The role of the technical assistance provider is to manage the project, act as a spokesperson for the funders, arrange workshops on relevant topics, facilitate cross-site communication, and provide tools and techniques to help the sites manage the project. For example, the TNE grant required each site to produce a work plan detailing specific activities, milestones, and time lines. While this was somewhat alien to the academic culture, the sites ended up appreciating the discipline imposed by the work plans and saw them as a roadmap and an important referent. The workshops were seen as generally useful in helping the sites to think through different issues.

State Policy Environments Have Important Implications for TNE Implementation. State policies, in terms of teacher licensure and induction requirements, are already affecting all four institutions. In particular, all four sites are attempting to align the design of their TNE induction programs with those administered by districts and/or mandated by states. The TNE work would also be facilitated by access to longitudinal data that would allow the sites to track their teacher graduates over time and student-level test score data linked to teachers. Such data collection would be most efficiently done at the state level.

Despite reductions in state funding, the three public institutions have tried to protect their teacher education program from budget cuts. However, in some cases, faculty have been stretched thin because of universitywide cost-cutting measures (for example, a hiring

freeze at UVa at the time TNE was launched). If there are further cuts, it is uncertain whether the institutions can continue to shield their teacher education programs. Reductions in faculty and/or support are likely to affect TNE implementation.

Recommendations

These observations translate into recommendations that might help improve implementation in future years. We should make clear that the sites are aware of many of these issues and are working on them in the second year.

- Providing tangible support and clear recognition of TNE leaders and participants would alleviate some of the time burdens and send a clear signal regarding the importance of the TNE work.
- Explicitly recognizing TNE work in promotion and tenure decisions, and wide dissemination of these changes, would encourage the participation and ongoing involvement of junior faculty in the work.
- Ensuring that new TNE faculty receive contracts that detail explicitly the criteria on which they will be judged for promotion and tenure is important.
- Paying greater attention to ways in which K–12 faculty can be integrated into the TNE work and/or providing substantive roles for teachers-in-residence would be helpful in achieving greater buy-in from these faculty.
- Working collaboratively on such issues as assessment and induction would be helpful. The technical provider could play an increased role in facilitating such collaboration.

This first year was a learning year for the sites. This report documents their successes and their challenges in the first year of the reform and sets the stage for the future. The lessons derived from the first year of implementation should prove useful to the four sites studied here, new TNE sites just beginning their first year of implementation, and the funders as they move ahead with the reform initiative.