



Reforming Teacher Education

Spotlight on Michigan State University

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In summer 2001, the Carnegie Corporation of New York launched an ambitious initiative, Teachers for a New Era (TNE), to fundamentally reform teacher preparation in the United States. The foundation was persuaded to do so by a growing body of evidence showing that teachers have discernible, differential effects on student achievement and that those effects appear to persist across years. The aim of this initiative is to stimulate development of excellent teacher education programs that are guided by a respect for evidence, are based on close collaboration between education and arts and sciences faculty, and provide strong clinical training and support. These principles have been espoused by other reform efforts, but TNE differs from those past efforts in two important ways: (1) It explicitly requires that teacher education programs base continuous improvement efforts on evidence of the “value added” that their teaching graduates bring to the classroom in terms of gains in student achievement, and (2) it requires that both teacher education and arts and sciences faculty members provide support to their new education graduates during a two-year “induction period.”¹

Four institutions—Bank Street College of Education in New York City; California State University, Northridge; Michigan State University (MSU); and the University of Virginia—were selected in summer 2002 as the first TNE sites. Those schools are each receiving \$5 million over a period of five years and technical assistance to reform their teacher education programs to align with TNE principles.

¹ *Induction* is professional support provided to new teachers, typically in the first two years of teaching. TNE requires that colleges and universities provide such support on an ongoing basis to their education students after graduation. Many states and districts also have teacher-induction programs to support the new teachers in their regions.

Abstract

At the request of the Rockefeller Foundation, RAND and MRDC are jointly conducting a national evaluation of Teachers for a New Era, an ambitious attempt to reform teacher education. A new report examines first-year implementation of the initiative in the initial four program sites, one of which is Michigan State University. This research brief focuses on first-year implementation and underscores the role of a supportive state policy environment in advancing the goals of this reform.

The Rockefeller Foundation retained the RAND Corporation and Manpower Research Demonstration Corporation (MRDC) to jointly conduct a national evaluation of the TNE initiative as it is being implemented by the first four grantees. A new RAND report, *Reforming Teacher Education: A First Year Progress Report on Teachers for a New Era*, offers a look at first-year implementation of the initiative. This research brief focuses on first-year implementation of TNE at MSU and discusses the implications of the state policy environment for TNE. (Information on obtaining other RAND publications on this initiative appears at the bottom of page two.)

Michigan State University and TNE

The State of Michigan employs almost 100,000 public school teachers and issues more than 8,500 initial teaching certificates each year, 90 percent of which are granted to new teachers trained in state. The teacher education program at Michigan State University is a five-year route to a bachelor’s degree and a Michigan teaching certificate. In addition, MSU offers an 18-month certification program for post-baccalaureate applicants. MSU prepares 550

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to 600 teachers a year, making MSU the fourth-largest producer of teachers in the state.

More than 80 education, arts and sciences, and kindergarten through grade 12 (K–12) faculty participated in the first-year implementation of TNE. MSU created a set of teacher-knowledge standards to guide its TNE work. The standards map what teachers should know and be able to do across a seven-year teaching career divided into three stages: emergent (four years of undergraduate work), novice (one year of internship), and target (two years of induction).

MSU will gather several types of evidence to inform continuous program evaluation and redesign, and will develop assessments to measure its teacher education candidates' progress in meeting the teacher-knowledge standards across the three teaching career stages. MSU is also undertaking a study to identify characteristics of future teachers that can help predict their success in the classroom. It also is examining ways of linking pupils' learning gains with teacher characteristics and training, including using data from the Michigan Educational Assessment Program.

In addition, MSU has begun to develop a two-year induction program for MSU graduates that will not only provide professional support but may also lead to an additional degree or certificate.

Preparing teachers for urban contexts is a key part of MSU's vision. MSU is working to integrate knowledge about urban contexts throughout its teacher education program and, ultimately, develop a special concentration for candidates who want to teach in urban settings.

State Policy Environments Have Important Implications for TNE Implementation

The TNE initiative is meant to spur innovative, out-of-the-box thinking from the selected educational institutions. However, these institutions must comply with state policies and regulations, which could either support or inhibit their ability to substantially reform

their teacher education programs.

States can help to support the reform effort. For example, to produce evidence on the effectiveness of their graduates in improving student learning, the TNE sites must be able to track their teacher graduates and to link student test score data with teacher data. Graduates teach in a variety of districts and states. As a result, obtaining these data is likely to be time consuming and expensive. The State of Michigan is planning to develop a centralized teacher data system; access to these data would be of great help to MSU in its TNE work.

Under TNE, the sites are developing innovative ideas on how best to educate future teachers about content and teaching practices. However, this effort must be done within the context of state standards for teacher education, which may include specific course requirements and caps on the number of allowable credits for teacher education. TNE sites may need some flexibility to experiment with and test novel approaches to teacher education, which could benefit teacher education more broadly.

Induction is an area in which the sites must coordinate their TNE programs with state-mandated or district-run programs. For example, in Michigan, schools and districts develop their own induction programs, and MSU is keenly aware that it needs to work with the schools and districts to develop shared objectives and to position its TNE induction activities within existing frameworks.

Like many states, Michigan is facing lagging revenues and has reduced its funding to institutions of higher education. Support for the state's public universities and community colleges was trimmed by 10 percent from fiscal year 2003 to fiscal year 2004, and an additional \$73.2 million was cut by a December 2003 Executive Order. While MSU has largely shielded its teacher education programs from funding cuts, it is uncertain whether it can continue to do so if there are further reductions in state funding. The funding situation will have implications for MSU's ability to undertake the work required for TNE and teacher education more broadly. ■

This research brief describes work done for RAND Education documented in *Reforming Teacher Education: A First Year Progress Report on Teachers for a New Era* by Sheila Nataraj Kirby, Jennifer Sloan McCombs, Scott Naftel, Heather Barney, Hilary Darilek, Frederick Doolittle, and Joseph Cordes, TR-149-EDU, 2004, 172 pages, \$30, available online at <http://www.rand.org/publications/TR/TR149/>. A research brief on the overall report is available online at <http://www.rand.org/publications/RB/RB9063/>. Research briefs on the other three sites featured in the report are available at <http://www.rand.org/publications/RB/RB9059/>, <http://www.rand.org/publications/RB/RB9060/>, and <http://www.rand.org/publications/RB/RB9062/>. These documents are also available from RAND Distribution Services (phone: 310-451-7002; toll free: 877-584-8642; or email: order@rand.org). The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. RAND® is a registered trademark.

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