

# Build deeper relationships with Educator Preparation Programs

While lower-income schools tend to employ more first-year teachers, school and district leaders across the state are working to ensure that these new teachers are prepared to teach diverse students. This work can begin long before a novice teacher's first day of school, with teacher candidates at all stages of Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs), and can be made more effective by a district building deeper relationships with a small group of EPPs.

As one of the key strategies of the Equity Plan, nine districts in a [Professional Learning Network](#) created strategies to address inequities in students' access to excellent educators. Lawrence Public Schools (LPS) focused on developing partnerships with EPPs, and thus on hiring teachers who were better prepared to teach in Lawrence's schools. The following are key advice and experiences from LPS's work.

The [2015 MA Equity Plan](#) identifies gaps in the rates at which low-income students and students of color are taught by **effective, in-field**, and **experienced** educators. In MA, **nearly twice as many** novice teachers teach in schools with large percentages of students from poverty and/or students of color.

## Why should my district consider developing/strengthening EPP partnerships?

In addition to ensuring that prospective hires have direct experience in your schools, and increasing the appeal of working in your district, you can design partnerships to meet specific local needs.

For more information about the benefits of deeper EPP partnerships, and **successful practices of districts** nationwide, see [Ensuring High-Quality Teacher Talent](#).

Lawrence wanted a **larger pool of certified Special Education (SPED) and English as a Second Language (ESL) applicants**, and designed a pipeline that would "get more people excited about the prospect of working in LPS earlier in their job-hunting timeline."

When considering your district's pipeline needs, note that statewide projections predict a deficit of SPED and ESL applicants in the coming years, and also a greater demand for teachers of color.<sup>1</sup>

Although teacher candidates only spend a fraction of their time on in-school placements, districts play a major role in creating the conditions for successful teacher preparation placement. The components of preparation that are the **highest-value predictors of teacher effectiveness** are:

- ★ Characteristics of the student teaching placement site
- ★ Characteristics of the supervising practitioner

## Where do we find EPP partners?

Most EPP completers in Massachusetts end up teaching within 15 miles of their EPP. This would suggest that school districts should look to their neighboring EPPs for student teachers and new hires, and that's what many districts do. **However**, the location of a student teaching practicum is also predictive of where a new teacher will work – it can be even more predictive than the location of the teacher's EPP or hometown.<sup>2</sup> **New teachers are more likely to work in the school where they completed their practicum, or in a similar school.**<sup>3</sup> Thus, it can be worthwhile to seek partnerships with EPPs locally *and* throughout the state.

Lawrence started by looking at nearby EPPs and considering:

- The number of current Lawrence teachers who attended that program
- The number of graduates from the program
- The licensure areas the program offers

After developing a relationship with an EPP, districts can formalize their partnership with an

<sup>1</sup> Levin, J.D., et al. (2015). "Massachusetts Study of Teacher Supply and Demand: Trends and Projections." *American Institutes for Research*. [http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Massachusetts-Study-of-Teacher-Supply-and-Demand-December-2015\\_rev.pdf](http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Massachusetts-Study-of-Teacher-Supply-and-Demand-December-2015_rev.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Krieg, J.M., Theobald, R. and Goldhaber, D. (2016). "A Foot in the Door: Exploring the Role of Student Teaching Assignments in Teachers' Initial Job Placements." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 38(2).

<sup>3</sup> Goldhaber, D., Krieg, J. & Theobald, R. (2013). "Knocking on the door to the teaching professional: Modeling the entry of prospective teachers into the workforce." *Economics of Education Review*, 43, 106-124.

After selecting and emailing target programs, face-to-face meetings allowed EPPs to share their past experiences working with LPS, and their interest in developing stronger student-teaching partnerships. Such conversations can reveal the positive and negative experiences that EPPs have previously had with placing teachers or student teachers in your district, and allow your district to **clearly outline your intentions and needs** for the partnership, which can inform how you design future collaborations.

## ***We host student teachers and hold job fairs. What else could we do?***

**While teacher candidates are taking courses (not yet in their final year), you can offer:**

- Pre-practicum placements in your schools
- One-time class visits
- Talks to education classes about working in your district
- Consultation with EPPs to inform coursework requirements so that candidates are ready to work in your schools

**When teacher candidates are ready for their student teaching practicum, you can:**

- Look for EPPs that offer longer practicum placements (i.e. the whole school year)
- LPS recommends that districts tell EPPs and teacher candidates about specific, successful schools and classrooms looking to place student teachers
- Interview potential student teachers to identify those that are a good fit for your schools and that you are most likely to eventually hire
- Require a demo lesson from potential student teachers
- Inform EPPs' assignments for students doing practicums
- Offer incentives for candidates to student teach in your district
  - Ex: extra training, guaranteed interviews, early notice of job openings

**When hiring EPP graduates, you can:**

- Early on, consult with principals and/or supervising practitioners to identify potential hires from the pool of current student teachers
- Allow early hiring and/or guaranteed first-round interviews for highly effective student teachers

As you develop engagement activities for teacher candidates, be prepared for potential logistical obstacles. If your district is not home to EPPs, and/or does not have much public transportation, it may be difficult for teacher candidates to attend classes *and* complete practicums in your schools. Some EPPs provide shared transportation from campus to schools.

For more on how districts and EPPs can work together to enhance the quality of new teachers, see the [webinar](#) on leveraging partnerships with EPPs.

## ***Who in the district should be working on this?***

A takeaway from Lawrence's work was to assess the capacity of participants from the district, determine who can be involved, and be realistic about the time commitment of individuals. Some district personnel may serve as consultants, but not work consistently on the partnership strategy.

Getting **principals on board first** was key in Lawrence; they were "able to connect a few principals directly, and then also impress upon the principals the importance of doing this centrally so that we could have a pipeline of teaching talent."

Lawrence shared a [sample email](#) informing principals about student teaching placements, as well as an [overview of student teaching](#) for principals unfamiliar with the process.

### **Educator Preparation Partnerships and Equity**

- High-poverty, high-minority, and Level 4 and 5 schools employ first-year teachers at a higher rate. Even in higher-performing schools in MA, novice teachers are more likely to be assigned to students who are academically behind.
- Our **moral imperative** is that all students have equitable access to great educators.
- Districts can work toward this moral imperative by working together with EPPs to develop **well-prepared teachers** who are **effective on day one in the classroom**.