

A ROADMAP: DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS THAT WILL SET THE FUTURE OF TEACHER PREP AND NEW TEACHER SUPPORT POLICY IN ILLINOIS

Ensuring every Illinois student is taught by a well-prepared, well-supported teacher requires rigorous, evidence-based preparation and sustained support once new teachers enter the classroom. Inspired by the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan (ICLP) and Illinois Comprehensive Numeracy Plan (ICNP), the recommendations below offer concrete actions for state leaders, EPPs, districts, and philanthropy to strengthen teacher training and new-teacher support across three areas: strengthening instruction and preparation, elevating clinical practice and mentorship, and expanding access to high-quality pathways.

INSTRUCTION: STRENGTHEN EVIDENCE-BASED TEACHER PREPARATION

- 1. Support EPP implementation of the ICLP and ICNP.** Strong preparation requires that EPPs, not just districts, are equipped to deliver evidence-based literacy and numeracy instruction. Illinois should:
 - Sustain funding for ISBE's Community of Practice (CoP) for EPPs, and consider partnering with a technical assistance organization or lead EPP to build shared training materials.
 - Gather planning and implementation data from EPPs to identify which programs need support, and direct existing or new funding accordingly.
 - Publish EPP implementation status for prospective candidates and others via the [Illinois Educator Preparation Profile \(IEPP\)](#).
 - Appoint a literacy expert and a math expert to the State Educator Preparation and Licensure Board (SEPLB).
- 2. Align EPP standards, assessments, and licensure exams with current research.** Illinois should:
 - Direct ISBE's Advisory Group to review licensure standards against current research on literacy and numeracy instruction.
 - Fund an external, independent review of the new elementary reading test (launched July 2026) and the elementary math test.
- 3. Require training in High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) and learning science for pre- and in-service teachers.** Illinois should:
 - Require EPP coursework and lesson-planning assignments tied to evidence-based literacy and numeracy instruction (EBLMI) in reading and math, modeled on EPPs' partner districts' use.
 - Require ISBE to release guidance on EBLMI and information describing how EPPs teach and practice EBLMI. Share this with EPPs and prospective candidates via the IEPP.
 - Leverage the [Continuing Professional Development Unit \(CPDU\) renewal requirement](#) to align in-service training with ISBE's literacy and numeracy priorities.
 - Ensure every Regional Office of Education (ROE) can deliver standard, high-quality literacy and math training; expand ISBE's Districts Literacy Implementation Plan Grant to fund more ROEs and the ICNP rollout.
 - Help ISBE vet third-party professional development providers for ROEs and districts using existing [rubrics](#) and provider directories.
- 4. Promote statewide alignment and transparency around curricula.** Illinois should:
 - Require districts to publicly report the P-12 reading and math curricula they use, with ISBE publishing a statewide report (see Massachusetts' curriculum dashboard).
 - Establish a state-recommended HQIM list for reading and math.
 - Pilot state- or philanthropically-funded EPP–PK12 district partnerships where both collaborate on training, student teaching, HQIM, and other shared instructional priorities, with fidelity monitoring.
 - Subsidize EPP access to the most-used local reading and math curricula and screeners, and require districts to share HQIM with EPPs that place candidates in their schools.
- 5. Strengthen the data systems and entry requirements underlying preparation.** Illinois should:
 - Improve teacher-educator and researcher access to workforce data systems (e.g., the Illinois Longitudinal Data System) to better align supply, demand, and student-teacher placement.

- Prioritize research and development on learning science, instructional practice, and clinical experience in Illinois schools.
- Require alternatively licensed teachers to complete foundational pedagogical coursework before serving as teacher of record, as New York does (200 hours, including 40 hours of fieldwork).

PRACTICE: ELEVATE MENTORSHIP AND CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

6. Elevate the role of high-quality mentor and cooperating teachers and increase the amount of candidate practice time with them. Supervised practice with a strong cooperating teacher builds skills and confidence. Illinois should:

- Require training for cooperating and mentor teachers and compensate them for their time.
- Give principals a confidential list of their most effective teachers and encourage them to select cooperating teachers from it, as Tennessee has done with strong results.
- Expand successful residency programs using state and philanthropic dollars, building on Teacher Vacancy Grant momentum, and requiring a sustainability plan post-grant.
- Define allowable hours and activities for early field experiences, including small-group instruction and high-impact tutoring.
- Align EPP and district calendars so candidates are on-site from the start of the school year (Week 0) through the full term.
- Establish minimum standards for the length and setting of culminating clinical experiences across all programs.

7. Guarantee formal induction and mentoring for every novice teacher. Illinois should:

- Shift state-funded mentoring from opt-in to opt-out for novice teachers until all funded slots are filled, since funding has gone underused.
- Require completion of mentoring to progress through stepped licensure system.
- Ensure all mentors are high-quality, trained, and use evidence-based practices.
- Require joint professional development for cooperating/mentor teachers and clinical supervisors on adult mentoring, and HQIM in literacy and math.

ACCESS: MAKE HIGH-QUALITY TRAINING ACCESSIBLE STATEWIDE

8. Expand direct financial support for candidates, especially in high-need areas. Illinois should:

- Directly compensate all student teachers for their clinical experience.
- Fund EPPs that address subject-area shortages and show strong completion rates, including dual-credit/CTE pathways and Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Programs (RTAPs).
- Strategically place student teachers in high-need regions, and make bilingual and Special Education endorsements easier to complete within typical program timelines and costs.
- Subsidize or cover testing and background-check fees for all candidates, or at minimum those with financial need.

9. Streamline and unify financial-aid available for pathways into teaching. Illinois should:

- Combine applications for scholarships, loan forgiveness, and other aid into a single, unified application and portal.
- Revise eligibility and outreach for the Special Education Teacher Tuition Waiver (SETTW) so its applicant pool better reflects Illinois' demographics. Conduct targeted outreach re. all financial aid available to Seal of Biliteracy holders.
- Enhance ISBE's public-facing recruitment website (see Teach North Carolina) and add "Navigator" support for prospective candidates, as in the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity.
- Designate teaching and educator preparation a workforce development priority to unlock [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#) and [Perkins V](#) funding.

10. Create new credentials that give aspiring teachers access to employment benefits. Illinois should:

- Establish workforce licenses that give teacher and School Support Personnel (SSP) residents/apprentices access to health insurance, pension, and/or salary during preparation.

- Allow residency or apprenticeship years to count toward the Teachers' Retirement System, requiring statutory or ISBE rule changes and district/union negotiation of collective bargaining agreements.

11. Improve transparency and accountability for pathway programs. Illinois should:

- Publish standardized outcomes for state-funded pathway programs, including hiring, placement in shortage subjects/districts, and retention.
- Track outcomes of out-of-state licensure programs through the IEPP and the Educator Supply and Demand Report, as Maryland is developing.
- Collect and annually report outcome data comparing outcomes for fully licensed, emergency-certified, and short-term-approval teachers.
- Collect data comparing in-person, online, and hybrid preparation and in-state versus out-of-state training, like [KY](#).
- Aggregate Alternative Pathway outcomes at the EPP level on the IEPP, and define consistent categories for pathway types beyond “traditional” versus “alternative.”

Select sources and detailed rationale for these recommendations are drawn from cited state examples (Tennessee, New York, Texas, Massachusetts, Kentucky, Michigan, Maryland, North Carolina, California).