



## The NH IHE Network Position Statement on Key Issues in 2018

April 26, 2018

Dear Commissioner Edelblut,

Consistent with the New Hampshire IHE Network's primary aim of working collegially across institutions of higher education and with the NH State Department of Education to promote innovative programs and policies, we offer the following position statements and proposals for your consideration. We believe the following statements and action steps reflect our ongoing commitment and ability as a consortium to:

- strengthen and sustain the relationship between educator preparation, educator evaluation, P-12 student learning, and state-level policy development;
- assess the effectiveness of our programs and contribute to supporting the effectiveness of the teachers with whom we work;
- accurately convey what we do for stakeholders in the public, legislative, and statewide educational arenas.

### **Issue #1: Under-resourced Program approval processes for educator preparation**

**Context:** We are all invested in high-quality educator preparation and the practice of program approval, including the practice of standards-based peer-review through the CTE. Yet, program approval in our state is limited and complicated by a severe lack of resources which can yield unsustainable and inconsistent processes. Since educator preparation programs may not function without approval, support for program approval is an urgent matter. Providing the time and resources required and systemizing the structures that exist (rules, processes, shared resources) are especially important as program approval is a high-stakes endeavor for institutions.

**Suggested Actions:** Resource and supports systems include but are not limited to the following:

- Regular and comprehensive program review training to include all stakeholders;
- A comprehensive program review manual to include shared definitions, rubrics for evaluation, an institutional self-study template, a template for the NH DOE CTE program approval report, and examples of a range of multiple types of acceptable evidence;
- A mechanism for technical support from the NH DOE and/ or CTE for continuous program improvement, especially for program reviews which yield recommendations that require responsive action;

- Time for IHEs to share assessment strategies and practices, and
- An exploration of options available for funding program review process.

### **Issue #2 State required background check process**

**Context:** When candidates are asked to complete additional fingerprinting for each school visited, it is time-consuming, costly and prevents candidates from accessing the required field experiences. To protect the safety of P-12 students, it is necessary for candidates to complete fingerprinting and a criminal background check in accordance with RSA 189.13. We suggest that candidates complete fingerprinting and a criminal background check upon entering a teacher preparation program and as long as they pass and are continuously enrolled in the program, they be allowed to visit multiple schools to complete all pre-student teaching field experience requirements.

**Suggested Action:** Establish and support of a consistently implemented and timely process for candidates to provide evidence of a single background check allowing them to engage in early clinical practice at multiple P-12 schools prior to student teaching. This includes establishing a statewide shared understanding of protocol with school administrators, school boards, and IHEs.

### **Issue #3: Testing requirements**

**Context:** We recognize the need for candidates to demonstrate knowledge of content and skills, however we have some concerns regarding the selection and accessibility of standardized tests currently required for New Hampshire certification. Questions have also been raised about redundancy across tests and their place within the broader approaches to assessment in our state (e.g. competency-based education).

**Suggested Action:** We suggest convening an advisory review committee comprised of multiple stakeholders from NH, including but not limited to P-12 educators, administrators, IHE representatives, teacher candidates, and the NH DOE representatives to review and make recommendations for assessment requirements for teacher candidates. This committee may consider how other states assess candidates, the cost of the exams, the appropriateness of cut-off scores, the validity of various assessments, adding alternative assessments in place of standardized tests, and ways to provide accessible testing centers.

### **Issue #4: Need for increased, consistent, and systematic support and mentoring for new teachers**

**Context:** Beginning teachers need support as they continue to learn and grow during their first years of teaching. Research indicates that teachers need at least 3 years of practice to become fully effective, and teachers who receive targeted and thoughtful support are more likely to remain in our schools. While some school districts in New Hampshire use state funding and resources to develop mentoring and induction programs that align with the contextual needs of each district, systems of support are not available in all schools to all new teachers. Lack of support can make it hard for schools to retain teachers, which can make it hard for schools to build capacity and meet the needs of all learners. *Induction with mentoring* has been shown to support stronger comfortability with curriculum and assessment, confidence and competence

with instruction and pedagogical methods, and a sense of collaboration and belonging within the school culture.

**Suggested Action:** The IHE Network is committed to supporting our new teachers. Following the research, national discourse, and trends, we suggest at least 1 but preferably two years of *induction with mentoring*. Research has demonstrated that new teachers value mentoring as well as having a network of professional development and connection. Some ideas to do so include but are not limited to:

- The development of online mentoring and induction resources (e.g. interactive learning modules) that districts can use to enhance their individual needs;
- The development of online professional networks (e.g. chat rooms, discussion boards) for teachers across the state to connect, share ideas, and support one another as they transition into teaching responsibilities;
- The development of a network of support for mentors (e.g. materials, learning modules, discussion boards, workshops).

#### **Issue #5: Need for an in-state RFP process for educational research**

**Context:** In a conversation between Commissioner Edelblut and the NH IHE Network on October 26, 2017, it became clear that there was the need for a mechanism to address research needs identified by the State Department of Education, LEAs and other educational entities. Stakeholders at the meeting expressed the desire to draw upon in state resources to respond to requests for data and research around identified needs.

**Suggested Action:** Establish a statewide network of NH IHEs with research faculty, along with appropriate professional associations and other organizations (1) to respond to state level requests for data and research around identified needs, (2) to spur further research, and (3) to share existing research. This research will be shared with relevant stake holders including but not limited to IHEs, the NH DOE, those LEAs that have expressed a pressing need for information, technical assistance and/or professional development concerning evidence-based practices keyed to student learning concerns. In this way NHDOE would model a nationally unique “demand-driven infrastructure” to support educators in their sustained efforts to improving key aspects of their students’ well-being and success.

The IHE Network is a ready partner, willing to collaborate with the Department of Education, the legislature, and the professional educational organizations throughout our state. This collaboration will be essential, especially given the realities of shared financial and other constraints facing our state. We are committed to our common goal of developing a strong cadre of future educators who meet the highest standards of our schools and communities.

The undersigned Professional Educator Preparation Programs have thoughtfully considered this position statement and endorse its intent:

Antioch University New England  
Franklin Pierce University

Granite State College  
Keene State College  
New England College  
New Hampshire Institute of Art  
New Hampshire Technical Institute  
Plymouth State University  
Rivier University  
Saint Anselm College  
Southern New Hampshire University  
University of New Hampshire  
Upper Valley Educators Institute

To continue our collegial conversations and strategize ways to move forward on these issues, we invite you to contact Megan Birch (PSU), and Suzanne Canali (NHIA), newly installed President and Vice-President, respectively, of the IHE Network.

Megan Birch: [mlbirch@plymouth.edu](mailto:mlbirch@plymouth.edu)  
Suzanne Canali: [scanali@nhia.edu](mailto:scanali@nhia.edu)