

Final Teacher Preparation Evaluation Regulations of the Higher Education Act: Implications for Washington

Summary

New federal regulations require Washington to change teacher preparation program evaluation practices and collect new data elements (including student growth and teacher performance information) before April 2018.

Overview of the Law

On October 12, 2016, the Department of Education released a Notice of Final Rulemaking (NFR) for the Teacher Preparation Regulations of the Higher Education Act (HEA). Draft regulations were reviewed and public comments were accepted twice between 2014 and 2016.

Key Points:

- The new regulations mandate a focused and consistent set of outcomes-based performance indicators to be used by all states to evaluate teacher preparation programs:
 - Placement and retention rates of new teachers, including placement and retention in high-needs schools
 - Surveys of program graduates and employers about teacher preparedness
 - Student learning outcomes measured by student growth, teacher evaluation results, and/or other state-determined measure that is relevant to students' outcomes, including academic performance, and meaningfully differentiates amongst teachers
 - Compliance-oriented indicators, including assurances of program accreditation or state approval (which must include measures of clinical preparation, rigorous exit requirements, and content and pedagogical knowledge).
- States must use the indicators to assign one of three ratings: effective, at-risk, or low-performing. (States may add other indicators to the evaluation, if desired.) Students attending programs receiving a rating of low-performing for at least two of the last three consecutive years will be ineligible to receive federal Title IV funds.
- States are allowed to weight indicators to determine performance. States must use the indicators to “meaningfully differentiate” among programs to determine a rating.
- All states and programs are required to publish information about indicator performance. States are also required to assess data quality.
- Traditional and alternative routes are defined and evaluated separately under the law.
- States must provide technical assistance to low-performing programs.

Immediate Action Needed before April 2017

Washington is well-situated to accommodate many parts of this federal policy. Two years ago, PESB elected to move to an indicator-based system of program review. Additionally, PESB has maintained data collections and data governance policies for more than five years.

Some essential changes will need to be made in order to bring Washington into full compliance with federal law. The federal government recommends the current academic year (2016-2017) to set up a pilot; to execute such a pilot, changes must be implemented by April 2017. With or without a pilot, if Washington does not address the following issues, the state will be out of compliance in April 2018. Subsequently, all teacher candidates in Washington will be ineligible for Title IV funding, including TEACH grants (representing more than \$1.5 million and more than 450 Washington teacher candidates each year).

Indicator Data

Washington is currently unable to provide data on the following federal criteria:

- Student growth: OSPI must develop strategies for packaging student growth information in accurate, secure, and ethical ways. OSPI must provide program-level aggregate data to the Federal government and PESB.
- Teacher evaluation measure: Legislators need to consider new laws regarding collection of and access to teacher performance (TPEP) scores that allow for links to programs. Legislators need to consider requiring the centralized collection of TPEP data.
- Survey outcomes (completer and employer): Surveys need to be developed and systematically administered.

Without access to these data elements, WA will be out of compliance with federal law. In this scenario, programs cannot be evaluated by the state and are therefore at risk of losing federal funding. Teacher candidates would also lose Title IV funds.

Electronic Certification System (E-Cert)

Implementation of this law will require several key changes to the electronic certification system:

- E-Cert must allow for disaggregation of data for alternative route and traditional programs.
- E-Cert must include a mechanism for distribution of a completer and employer survey and/or provide up-to-date contact information for completers.
- E-Cert must collect data on *all* individuals who complete programs.

Data Collection Processes

- PESB must revise data collection procedures and data element definitions.
- PESB and OSPI must develop a strategy to ensure data collection quality.

Program Review Process

- PESB must reconfigure plans for indicator-based program review to accommodate and weight federal indicators. PESB must consider the effect of HEA policies on other regulated educator roles.