What's Happening

Approaches to evaluating teacher preparation programs in seven states

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Key findings

- All seven Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Central states (Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming) have evaluation procedures for approving and reauthorizing teacher preparation programs. These procedures focus on program design and implementation.
- Six of these states were implementing or planning changes to their evaluation of teacher preparation programs to shift the focus to the performance of program graduates.
- Other changes in focus and process across REL Central states include developing statewide data collection tools, investing in data systems, and exploring new approaches for reporting evaluation findings.

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Summary

Policymakers, researchers, educators, and others have expressed concerns about the quality of teacher preparation, spurring efforts to reform how states evaluate teacher preparation programs. As a result, many states are rethinking their evaluation criteria and methods to better understand how program graduates are performing, with the goal of improving curricula, recruitment, and clinical experiences (Noell & Kowalski, 2010). This report describes how the seven Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Central states (Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming) evaluate their teacher preparation programs and the changes they are making to improve their approaches to evaluation.

Like many states across the country, all seven REL Central states focus their evaluations of teacher preparation programs on program design and implementation. Evaluation teams, typically comprising state education agency staff and practicing and retired educators, review documents (on program curricula, field experiences, and candidate performance, for example) submitted by each teacher preparation program. The teams conduct onsite visits to supplement and validate the documentation and then make a determination about the quality of the program.

Six of the seven REL Central states are implementing or planning changes to how they evaluate teacher preparation programs. Most changes involve paying more attention to the performance of program graduates, developing common data collection tools and data systems, and developing new ways to report evaluation data. Specifically, states are:

- *Increasing their focus on the performance of graduates* to better assess the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs and guide improvement efforts (all but Wyoming).
- *Identifying or developing data collection tools* for statewide use to facilitate program evaluation (Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska). These tools include assessments of content knowledge, work habits, and performance of preservice teacher candidates, as well as surveys of recent program graduates.
- *Investing in data systems* that can support answers to evaluation questions. Colorado is assessing the capacity of its data systems to link outcomes for K–12 students of recent graduates of teacher preparation programs to the programs they attended.
- *Exploring new approaches for reporting evaluation findings.* Colorado and Missouri are developing annual reports of teacher preparation programs that focus on outcome measures for teacher candidates and program graduates. Nebraska is exploring new ways to report evaluation findings, such as a public "report card" with evaluation findings.

This report provides information about how states evaluate teacher preparation programs for state and district education leaders and policymakers, teacher preparation program administrators and faculty, and others with an interest in the effectiveness of teacher preparation evaluation, especially in the seven REL Central states. It is based on a review of publicly available documents and interviews with state education agency staff with primary responsibility for oversight of teacher preparation programs.

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Why this study?

Teacher preparation is increasingly the focus of discussions among national and state policymakers and practitioners.[1] Concerns about the quality of teacher preparation programs (see box 1 for definitions of key terms) have been raised by researchers, policymakers, analysts, teacher accreditation organizations, and teachers themselves, partly because of a new emphasis on teacher effectiveness and accountability (Alderman, Carey, Dillon, Miller, & Silva, 2011; Chesley & Jordan, 2012; Crowe, 2010; Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2012; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010).

Several national efforts promote reforming how teacher preparation programs are evaluated. For example, in 2011, the U.S. Department of Education released the *Plan for teacher education reform and improvement* (U.S. Department of Education, 2011), which emphasizes better reporting of program outcomes for accountability purposes. Specifically, it recommends that assessments include information on student achievement growth, teacher job placement and retention rates, and surveys of program graduates and their principals. These national efforts have led many states to rethink the way they evaluate teacher preparation programs in order to better understand how graduates of different programs perform as teachers and to capture information to improve program curricula, teacher recruitment efforts, and clinical experiences (Noell & Kowalski, 2010).

Many states are rethinking the way they evaluate teacher preparation programs in order to better understand how graduates of different programs perform as teachers and to improve program curricula, teacher recruitment efforts, and clinical experiences

Box 1. Key terms

Alternative teacher preparation program. A program that "primarily serve[s] candidates who have subject matter knowledge and who are the teachers of record in a classroom while participating in their teacher preparation program" and "may be based in an institution of higher education (IHE) or outside an IHE" (U.S. Department of Education, 2013, p. x). Alternative programs serve individuals who have subject matter expertise but lack formal education coursework or training. For Title II reporting (see below), each state determines which teacher preparation programs are alternative programs. (See also *traditional teacher preparation program*.)

Educator preparation program. A program or state-approved course of study that leads to an initial credential to serve as a school administrator, librarian, or counselor.

Professional education unit. An entity with administrative oversight of one or more educator preparation programs. Most professional education units are schools, colleges, or departments of education.

Teaching certification or licensure. The state-issued documentation required for an individual to teach in a public school. Both terms are used in REL Central states. Three states (Missouri, Nebraska, and South Dakota) use the term "certification," and four states (Colorado, Kansas, North Dakota, and Wyoming) use the term "licensure."

Teaching endorsement. A descriptor that appears on a certification or licensure document to identify the areas in which an individual is qualified to teach.

Teacher preparation program. Definitions vary. The U.S. Department of Education (2013, p. xiii) defines it as "a state-approved course of study, the completion of which signifies that an enrollee has met all of the state's educational, or training requirements, or both, for an initial credential to teach in the state's elementary, middle, or secondary schools." A teacher

(continued)

Box 1. Key terms *(continued)*

preparation program may be either a traditional program or an alternative route to certification or licensure. The term "teacher preparation program" is used variously to refer to the institution that provides teacher preparation (for example, Missouri State University or the University of Nebraska); the program type offered within an institution (whether alternative, traditional, undergraduate, or graduate); or the particular certification or licensure track offered (such as secondary school math education). In this report, unless otherwise noted, "teacher preparation program" refers to each subject- or grade-level-specific area in which a professional education unit offers preparation for teacher certification, licensure, or endorsement.

Teacher preparation program approval and reauthorization. The process by which states formally approve teacher preparation programs, enabling them to operate in the state. These processes vary by state and tend to focus on program adherence to standards. New programs must receive initial approval before operation, and existing programs must successfully complete a reauthorization process every five to seven years.

Teacher preparation program evaluation. Any activity designed to elicit information and make judgments about the quality or impact of a teacher preparation program.

Title II of the Higher Education Act. Legislation that provides grants to state education agencies to support the recruitment and preparation of highly qualified teachers and principals and to support accountability for preparation programs. States are required to submit an annual report to the U.S. Department of Education that provides information about teacher preparation programs and their performance.

Traditional teacher preparation program. A program based at an institution of higher education, defined in Title II reporting as one that "generally serve[s] undergraduate students who have no prior teaching or work experience, and lead[s] to at least a bachelor's degree" (U.S. Department of Education, 2013, p. x).

Evaluation standards have tended to emphasize the quality of program processes, and few states have engaged in evaluation that focused on both program quality and outcomes; however, some states are changing their evaluations to focus on program outcomes

Nationwide, evaluation of teacher preparation programs involves primarily state program approval processes, which vary substantially. There is no systematically collected information about these processes (Feuer, Floden, Chudowsky, & Ahn, 2013). Participants in REL Central's Educator Effectiveness Research Alliance have expressed the need for better information about how to evaluate these programs. Alliance participants include state education agency administrators, teacher preparation program administrators and faculty, and researchers. To begin to fill this information gap and respond to alliance member needs, this study examines REL Central state efforts to evaluate teacher preparation programs.

State teacher preparation program evaluations are shifting their focus to program quality and outcomes

All states have standards for approving and reauthorizing teacher preparation programs, and many also encourage or require these programs to seek accreditation from an external agency (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). Evaluation standards have tended to emphasize the quality of program processes, and few states have engaged in evaluation that focused on both program quality and outcomes (Crowe, 2011). However, some states are changing their evaluations to focus on program outcomes.

Based on the most recent data available, as of early 2012, at least 13 states (none served by REL Central) and the District of Columbia reported (or were planning to report)

information about K–12 student achievement (using value-added statistical models, also known as student growth models) in their teacher preparation program evaluations. Several jurisdictions also plan to use additional measures, such as indicators of program graduate "persistence" (the length of time a graduate remains in teaching), graduate placement in high-needs fields, certification or licensure exam scores, advancement to higher certification or licensure, beginning teaching performance, and graduate surveys (Sawchuk, 2012). Louisiana and Tennessee are recognized as leaders in evaluating teacher preparation programs because they have implemented systems that use value-added student achievement measures to evaluate effectiveness (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Reviews of research and evaluation related to teacher preparation have identified several quality and outcome measures used to evaluate teacher preparation programs (table 1). Measures of program quality focus on program design and implementation, including selection processes, program resources, program curricula, and clinical experiences. Measures of program outcomes include teacher knowledge and skills, teacher perceptions, teacher placement and persistence, employer perceptions, teacher evaluation results, and student achievement outcomes. Despite an increasing focus on both process and outcome measures, there is little consensus about the relative merits of using particular measures, data sources, or methods for evaluation (Floden, 2012; Noell, Brownell, Buzick, & Jones, 2014).

Recent national initiatives are motivating states to focus on evaluating teacher preparation programs

A focus on evaluating teacher preparation programs is reflected in several recent federal policy efforts. As part of proposed changes to the Title II teacher quality and accountability provisions of the Higher Education Act, the U.S. Department of Education (2011) promoted increased reporting of program outcomes, including student learning, satisfaction, and employment outcomes. In April 2014 President Barack Obama directed the department to

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Table 1. Measures used in evaluation of teacher preparation programs, with examples

Measures of program quality	Measures of program outcomes[a]
• Selection processes (admission requirements, candidate achievement test scores) • Program resources (faculty qualifications) • Program curriculum (emphasis on content, general arts and sciences, education foundations, education methods courses) • Clinical experiences (nature and extent of field and student teaching experiences)	• Teacher knowledge and skills (scores on certification or licensure tests or performance assessments) • Teacher perceptions (ratings of satisfaction with their preparation program and preparedness to teach) • Teacher placement (number of graduates hired as full-time teachers) • Teacher persistence (length of time graduates remain in a school, district, or K–12 teaching) • Employer perceptions (principals' ratings of teacher knowledge and skills) • State and district teacher evaluation results (evaluation ratings based on teaching practice and outcomes) • Student achievement (value-added estimates based on state achievement tests)

a. Teacher and student data are aggregated to the program level and used to compare outcomes among programs and with benchmarked standards.

Note: This table summarizes a range of quality and outcome measures that have been used to evaluate teacher preparation programs. Categories of measures and examples were identified by the authors.

Source: Adapted from Coggshall, Bivona, & Reschly (2012); Feuer et al. (2013); and Zeichner & Conklin (2005).

develop a plan to encourage states to develop meaningful systems for identifying high- and low-performing teacher preparation programs, move from input-focused measures to meaningful outcome measures, improve the availability of information about programs, and use state ratings to guide allocation of Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education grant funds, which subsidize training for teachers who commit to serve in high-need fields (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2014).

Improved accountability for teacher preparation programs is also promoted by the U.S. Department of Education through its Race to the Top initiative. Grantee states are required to link data on student achievement and student achievement growth to teachers, tie this information to the in-state programs that prepare teachers, report data on program effectiveness publicly for each preparation program in the state, and expand teacher education programs and program components that produce graduates who are effective teachers (Crowe, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Other recent national initiatives include the efforts of the Teacher Performance Assessment Consortium, a 25-state initiative of some 200 teacher preparation programs, to develop a teacher performance assessment that predicts effective teaching and student learning and informs teacher development (http://edtpa.aacte.org/); studies of teacher preparation programs by the National Council for Teacher Quality to distinguish more and less effective programs based on adherence to standards as reflected in program documentation (for example, Greenberg, McKee, & Walsh, 2013); and the revised Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (2013) standards, which promote the use of evidence for teacher preparation program accountability. A 2012 report by the Task Force on Educator Preparation and Entry into the Profession called for transformation in educator preparation (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012); the task force included members of the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Association of State Boards of Education, and the National Governors Association. The report encourages states to hold preparation programs accountable by establishing a performance-rating system to guide program improvement and state approval of teacher preparation programs. A review of accountability systems of state teacher preparation programs by the Center for American Progress concluded that they are of limited utility for identifying low-performing programs and recommended that states adopt common indicators of program and graduate performance as a basis for teacher preparation program evaluation (Crowe, 2010).

Recent national initiatives on teacher preparation programs include the efforts of the Teacher Performance Assessment Consortium, the National Council for Teacher Quality, and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation

What the study examined

The study team reviewed existing documents and conducted interviews with state education staff with responsibility for oversight of teacher preparation programs in each REL Central state[2] to examine the following research questions about the evaluation of teacher preparation programs:

- How are states evaluating teacher preparation programs in REL Central states?
- What changes are planned or under way for state evaluation of teacher preparation programs in REL Central states?

The methodology used in this descriptive study is described briefly in box 2 and in more detail in appendix A.

Box 2. Data and methods

Study design. This descriptive study is based on a review of publicly available documents with information about current and planned approaches for evaluating teacher preparation programs in REL Central states, as well as interviews with state education agency representatives with primary responsibility for oversight and approval of teacher preparation programs.

Data collection. Document reviews and staff interviews took place between May and October 2013. Publicly available documents produced in 2007 or later were accessed from websites, including those associated with state education agencies, departments of higher education, journals, conferences, colleges and universities, and research organizations (appendix B lists the documents reviewed). Interviews were conducted by telephone with one or two state education agency staff members in six of the seven REL Central states (a respondent from Wyoming could not be reached to participate in an interview). The structured interview protocol contained questions about current and planned approaches for evaluating teacher training programs (see appendix C).

Data analysis. Analysis of the information collected through the document reviews and interviews focused on six content domains that reflect key elements of state teacher preparation program evaluation activities: questions or objectives being served by program evaluation, program standards, measures, reporting conventions, state education agency use of program evaluation findings, and confidentiality provisions. Two study team members, working closely with the principal investigator, reviewed and coded the documents. The study team generated reports of coded text from documents and interviews for each content domain. These reports were used to create written summaries of the findings. To ensure accuracy, relevant draft report sections of the summaries were sent to each state for review.

The three most populous REL Central states— Colorado, Kansas, and Missouri— accounted for about three-fourths of the 172 programs in the region

Teacher preparation in REL Central states

This section provides background information about teacher preparation in REL Central states and state oversight of teacher preparation programs.

REL Central states serve more than 44,000 teacher candidates through more than 170 teacher preparation programs

State Title II reports, which present descriptive information about state teacher preparation programs to the U.S. Department of Education, show that 172 programs offered teacher preparation during the 2010/11 academic year in REL Central states (figure 1).[3] The region's three most populous states (Colorado, Kansas, and Missouri) accounted for about three-fourths of the programs. More than two-thirds of the programs were identified as traditional, meaning that they typically serve undergraduate students with no teaching experience and lead to a bachelor's degree.

Across the region about 44,000 teacher candidates were enrolled in programs and nearly 14,000 completed them during the 2010/11 academic year (figures 2 and 3).[4] Because most programs take more than a year to complete, the number of program completers in a given year is much smaller than the number enrolled in that year. While alternative programs accounted for nearly a third of teacher preparation programs during the 2010/11 academic year, 10 percent of program completers attended an alternative program.

Figure 1. Most REL Central state teacher preparation programs were traditional in 2010/11
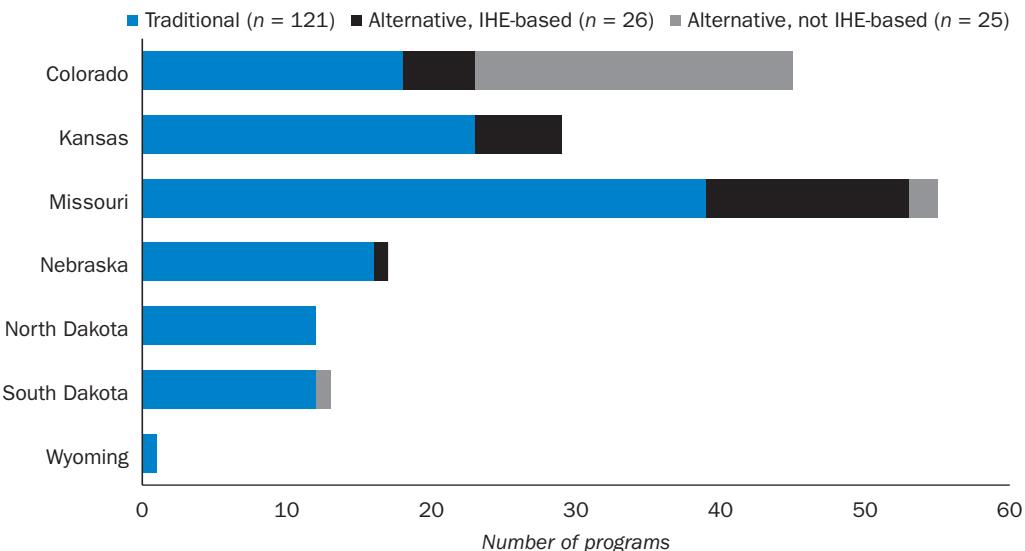
■ Traditional (*n* = 121) ■ Alternative, IHE-based (*n* = 26) ■ Alternative, not IHE-based (*n* = 25)

Number of programs

IHE is institution of higher education.

Note: For Title II reporting, states count multiple certification or licensure tracks at a single institution of higher education as a single program. Traditional programs typically serve undergraduate students with no teaching experience and lead to a bachelor's degree. Alternative programs, which can be based inside or outside an institution of higher learning, serve candidates who have subject matter knowledge but lack formal teacher training and who teach in a classroom while participating in the program.

Source: Authors' summary of data reported in U.S. Department of Education (2013).

Figure 2. REL Central state teacher preparation programs enrolled 44,000 candidates in 2010/11

■ Traditional (*n* = 40,395) ■ Alternative, IHE-based (*n* = 1,699) ■ Alternative, not IHE-based (*n* = 1,894)

Number of enrollees

IHE is institution of higher education.

Note: For Title II reporting, states count multiple certification or licensure tracks at a single institution of higher education as a single program. Traditional programs typically serve undergraduate students with no teaching experience and lead to a bachelor's degree. Alternative programs, which can be based inside or outside an institution of higher learning, serve candidates who have subject matter knowledge but lack formal teacher training and who teach in a classroom while participating in the program.

Source: Authors' summary of data reported in U.S. Department of Education (2013).

Figure 3. Nearly 14,000 candidates completed teacher preparation programs in REL Central states in 2010/11

■ Traditional (*n* = 12,157) ■ Alternative, IHE-based (*n* = 639) ■ Alternative, not IHE-based (*n* = 910)

Number of completers

IHE is institution of higher education.
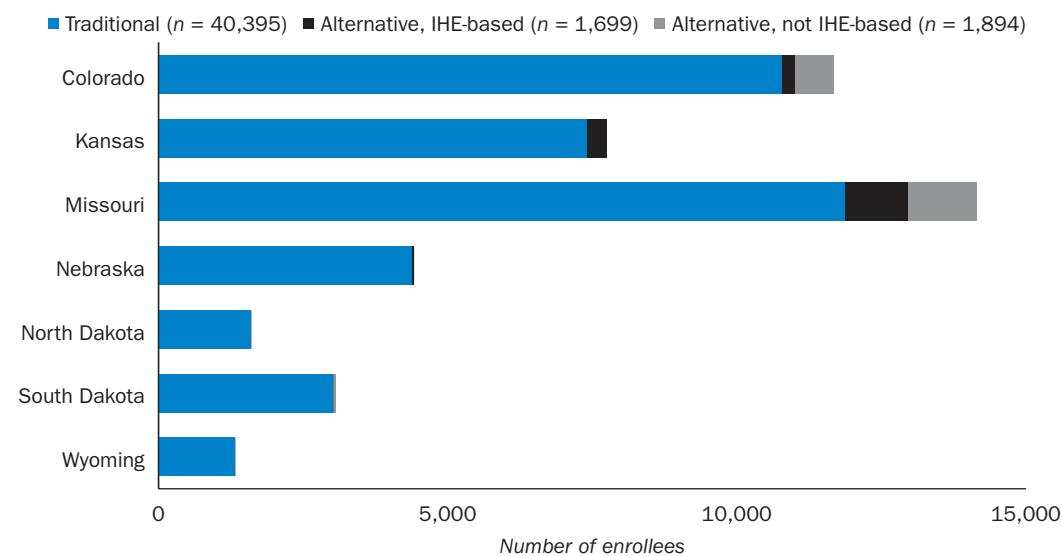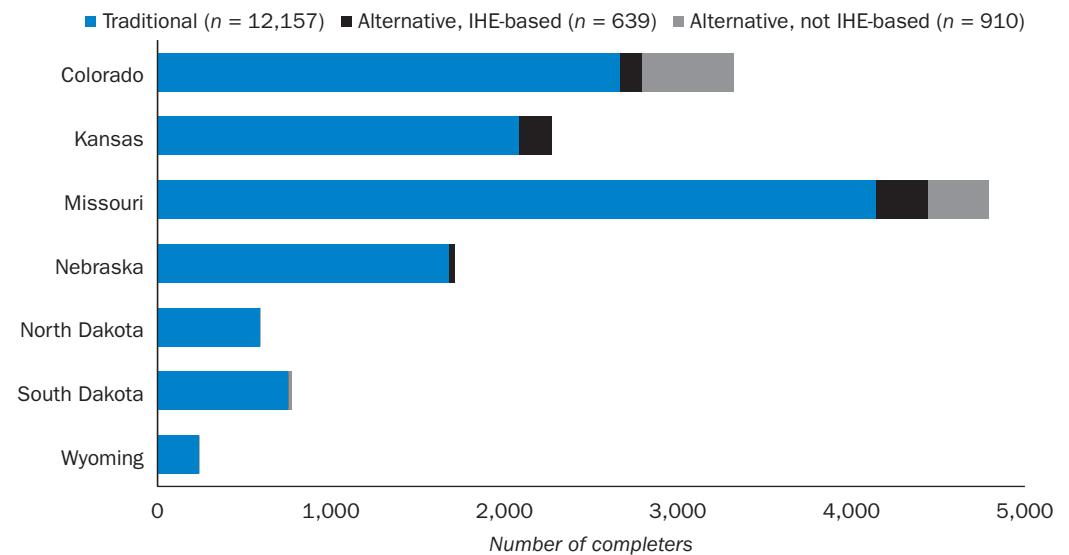
Note: For Title II reporting purposes states count multiple traditional programs at a single institution of higher education as a single program. Traditional programs typically serve undergraduate students with no teaching experience and lead to a bachelor's degree. Alternative programs, which can be based inside or outside an institution of higher learning, serve candidates who have subject matter knowledge but lack formal teacher training and who teach in a classroom while participating in the program.

Source: Authors' summary of data reported in U.S. Department of Education (2013).

As of October 2013, all seven REL Central states had procedures in place for approving and reauthorizing all teacher preparation programs in the state

In REL Central states alternative programs are concentrated in Colorado, Kansas, and Missouri. Programs in these states tend to serve individuals who have subject matter expertise but lack formal education coursework or training. Candidates in these programs often receive short-term licenses that allow them to teach under supervision while completing courses to meet state certification or licensure requirements. In Colorado, which has the highest proportion of alternative program completers among REL Central states, alternative preparation is provided by "designated agencies," which, in addition to institutions of higher education, include school districts, charter or private schools, regional boards of cooperative educational services, and nonprofit organizations. Alternative programs in Colorado also tend to serve candidates in rural settings, where there are often no qualified applicants for open teaching positions.

State oversight of teacher preparation programs varies across REL Central states

As of October 2013, all seven states had procedures in place for approving and reauthorizing all teacher preparation programs in the state.[5] In four states (Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Wyoming) the same entity that approves and reauthorizes teacher training programs conducts the evaluations (table 2); in the remaining states (Colorado, Kansas, and South Dakota) the functions are conducted by separate entities. In five states (Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and South Dakota) the department of education is charged with evaluating and authorizing teacher training programs; in North Dakota and Wyoming external boards are responsible for evaluating and for approving and reauthorizing of teacher preparation programs. In North Dakota, for example, the Education

Table 2. REL Central state entities that oversee and evaluate teacher preparation programs, by state, as of October 2013

State	Entities that approve and reauthorize programs	Entities that evaluate programs
Colorado	Colorado State Board of Education Colorado Commission on Higher Education	Colorado Department of Higher Education Colorado Department of Education (Office of Professional Services and Educator Licensure)
Kansas	Kansas State Board of Education	Kansas State Department of Education (Office of Teacher Licensure and Accreditation)
Missouri	Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Office of Educator Quality)	
Nebraska	Nebraska Department of Education	
North Dakota	North Dakota Education Standards and Practices Board	
South Dakota	South Dakota State Board of Education	South Dakota Department of Education (Office of Accreditation and Teacher Quality)
Wyoming	Wyoming Professional Teaching Standards Board	

Source: Authors' analysis of publicly available documents and interviews with state education agency staff, as described in appendix A.

Standards and Practices Board, funded by educator licensure fees, is responsible for teacher licensure and professional development in addition to program evaluation and approval. Its 10 members, appointed by the governor, include teachers, administrators, school board members, and teacher educators.

Evaluation of teacher preparation programs in REL Central states

State approval and reauthorization processes are the primary means through which teacher preparation programs are evaluated in REL Central states as of October 2013. These processes are used primarily to ensure that programs meet legislative requirements and standards established by each state. States can deny approval or reauthorization to programs that fail to meet standards. Programs are evaluated for initial approval and then for reauthorization every five to seven years.

Reviews of programs are conducted within professional education units, such as schools, colleges, or departments of education. Each state has its own standards for program approval and reauthorization, and three states (North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming) explicitly require programs to meet national standards in addition to state standards, such as those developed by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education/Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (NCATE/CAEP),[6] the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium. The state entities that review teacher preparation programs analyze program documentation (such as descriptions of program curricula, field experiences, and candidate performance) submitted by each professional education unit and conduct on-site visits to supplement and validate the information submitted.

At the time of this study, all seven REL Central states focused their evaluations of teacher preparation programs on the program's design and the implementation of that design (table 3), though most state education agency officials described plans for more frequent, outcomes-based, or program-improvement-oriented evaluation approaches (see section below on planned changes).

All seven REL Central states focused their evaluations of teacher preparation programs on the program's design and the implementation of that design, though most state education agency officials described plans for more frequent, outcomes-based, or program-improvement-oriented evaluation approaches

Table 3. Summary of state teacher preparation program evaluation in REL Central states, as of October 2013

State	Frequency (after initial approval)	Data sources	Other features
Colorado	Not more than once every five years	Program documents, site visits	Feedback provided to guide improvement; programs encouraged to collect and report teacher and student outcome data
Kansas	Every seven years	Program documents, site visits	Improvement process for programs with identified areas for improvement
Missouri	Annually beginning in 2013/14 (formerly, every seven years)	Candidate grade point average, candidate content knowledge scores, teacher and school leader ratings of satisfaction with program quality (additional data sources to be included in future years)	
Nebraska	Annually (limited) and every seven years (comprehensive)	Program documents, site visits	
North Dakota	Every seven years	Program documents, site visits	
South Dakota	Every seven years	Program documents, site visits	
Wyoming	Every seven years	Program documents	

Source: Authors' analysis of publicly available documents and interviews with state education agency staff, as described in appendix A.

Several state officials reported that state agencies routinely collect information from programs about participant enrollment and completion rates. These data can be used to monitor the preparation of teachers who can meet needs in hard-to-staff schools, subjects, and grade levels. Officials in Colorado and Kansas indicated that evaluations are used to encourage program improvement. In Colorado, program evaluation data are used to guide state support for program improvement. In Kansas, programs identified as needing improvement must submit annual progress reports to demonstrate improvement efforts.

Colorado and North Dakota state education agency officials indicated that some districts and programs have been leaders in evaluation efforts focused on outcomes. A Colorado state agency staff member said that districts have led program evaluation efforts and that some districts and programs have indicated an interest in sharing data to facilitate program evaluation. A North Dakota state agency staff member mentioned that many programs collect their own data on candidate outcomes and that several programs are exploring greater use of tools to measure the performance of teacher candidates.

Colorado

Institutions offering teacher preparation programs are required to seek initial program approval from the state and reauthorization once every five years. State evaluation has focused on program approval and reauthorization, to assess whether programs meet state standards in statutes, state board of education rules, and state department of education policy and guidance.[7]

The evaluation process includes a review of written proposals and submitted documents (such as course syllabi) to assess the program's adherence to standards and rules. Site visits

are conducted for programs seeking reauthorization, and feedback is provided to guide program improvement. A state agency staff member described close collaboration with program staff to drive improvement: "[We try to work] together and not have the state 'do unto.'" Agencies that offer alternative programs are held to the same standards as traditional, university-based programs, and state statutes include criteria to ensure that they specify goals, such as focusing on serving hard-to-staff and high-need areas.

Some school districts and agencies that offer alternative programs have examined program outcomes. For example, one large urban school district examined the effectiveness of its teachers prepared in different programs through student achievement outcomes. "This district is actually using its own evaluation framework as the lead framework to compare all the graduates of those preparation programs in terms of the students in their classrooms' achievement," according to a state agency staff member. The staff member also described interest among district and teacher preparation program administrators in greater collaboration and data sharing for examining program outcomes and supporting program improvement. The state has also used the program reauthorization process to build capacity for documenting program outcomes over time: "We created a pilot where designated agencies give each other a lot more critical feedback around how [to] actually document successes and challenges. I think if we can do more of that work, we can increase the quality across the board, and we can also increase what [program outcome] measures we want to collect." Although evidence of outcomes for teachers and their students is not required for reauthorization, the Colorado Department of Education asks programs whether they collect outcome data and how they use it to assess programs.

Colorado requires institutions offering teacher preparation programs to seek reauthorization once every five years, while Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota require reauthorization every seven years

Kansas

All institutions in Kansas that offer teacher preparation programs leading to licensure are required to seek initial program approval and to seek reauthorization every seven years. The process involves site visits and examination of documents submitted by the programs to determine whether they meet state standards. Course syllabi are reviewed during the approval process for new programs. Documents submitted for reauthorization by programs must include assessments of progress toward meeting state licensure standards, including use of the Praxis Series tests for content knowledge assessment; of ability to plan instruction; of clinical experience; of teachers' effect on student learning; and of content knowledge through comprehensive exam scores, portfolio reviews, case studies, and course grades. A template, similar to that used for recognition of specialized professional association programs, is used to solicit information about program context (such as admission criteria, course requirements, and student enrollment); assessments used by the program to determine whether candidates meet standards, and the standards each assessment addresses; evidence for meeting standards; and a description of how assessment results are used to improve candidate and program performance.

A program review team examines documentation submitted by programs and reports findings to the Kansas State Department of Education Evaluation Review Committee. The committee makes a recommendation for program approval or disapproval to the state board of education, which makes the final decision. Programs may be approved with areas identified for improvement, in which case the institution is required to submit to the state an annual report documenting its improvement efforts. A program with critical deficiencies is designated as "approved with stipulation" and has two years to address them.

Missouri

Evaluations of teacher preparation programs are conducted by the Office of Educator Quality, which recently developed new standards and is revising its processes to increase the frequency of program evaluation and the focus on program outcomes. Before these revisions all institutions offering teacher preparation programs were required to seek initial approval and then to seek reauthorization every seven years. Information was collected through document reviews and site visits and included information about admissions criteria, faculty and resources, field and clinical experiences, and teacher candidate performance. An annual evaluation process began at the end of the 2013/14 academic year, based on three measures: candidate grade point average, content knowledge (Praxis Series test) scores, and ratings from beginning teacher and school leader surveys that measure satisfaction with the quality of teacher preparation.

In 2014 evaluation in Missouri began to occur annually and to be based on candidate grade point average, candidate content knowledge, and beginning teacher and school leader ratings of satisfaction with the quality of teacher preparation

Nebraska

All institutions offering teacher preparation programs are required to receive initial program approval, an annual review, and a comprehensive seven-year review. Programs must meet requirements outlined in the Nebraska Administrative Code, known as Rule 20.[8] For the seven-year review, institutions are required to prepare documentation for each certification area, including syllabi and other program documents. They are also required to prepare documentation of candidate performance in six to eight assessment areas, including grade point average, employer follow-ups, work samples, and other data used to measure candidate performance. Institutions may also provide information about program improvement, as needed. The seven-year review includes an on-site visit by a review team that conducts interviews to substantiate information in the materials submitted by the programs. The Nebraska Department of Education decides program approvals and reauthorizations based on a review of the documents and information collected during the on-site visit.

North Dakota

All programs that lead to licensure, endorsements, or education degrees are required to submit reports to the Educational Standards and Practices Board and host an on-site visit to seek initial approval and then reauthorization at least once every seven years. The professional education unit within each institution is expected to meet NCATE/CAEP standards as well as North Dakota Program Approval Standards for individual programs. North Dakota has also adopted Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium standards for teacher preparation programs and Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards for leader preparation programs. Program approval standards and procedures are reviewed every five years, at a minimum, with input from representatives of teacher preparation programs and K–12 educators.

Programs are required to submit documentation, such as program and course catalogs, policy documents, and descriptions of curricula. Programs must demonstrate that 80 percent of their graduates achieve passing scores on the Praxis Series tests, which are administered as part of the licensure process. Course syllabi and student work are reviewed during on-site visits. Professional education units also have the option of pursuing NCATE/CAEP accreditation; half of the state's programs are accredited.

Many programs collect their own data on teacher outcomes. A state agency staff member said: "North Dakota is a very local control state. Much [program evaluation] is done at the institutional level. We don't require or collect it at the state level." The staff member also indicated that some programs are considering adopting measures for candidates that examine classroom teaching performance, and the state expects to consider establishing a common statewide measure.

South Dakota

All institutions offering teacher preparation programs are required to seek initial program approval through the state board of education and then reauthorization every seven years. In addition to state board of education approval, professional education units offering teacher preparation programs must also be accredited by NCATE/CAEP or by a regional accrediting agency. State program reviews evaluate adherence to state administrative rules, which require that professional education units use data to evaluate the efficacy of their program components, including field and clinical experiences. Programs are also expected to share evaluation data with teacher candidates and faculty to help them reflect on and improve their performance.

Teacher preparation programs in South Dakota are expected to share evaluation data with teacher candidates and faculty to help them reflect on and improve their performance

Programs submit documents to the state as part of an institutional self-study report, including information about program conceptual frameworks, program assessments, admission criteria, course requirements, and field experiences. The state program review also includes examination of data from at least six assessments related to teacher candidate performance. Programs must use Praxis Series tests to assess teacher candidates' content knowledge, but they have discretion regarding other assessments. Site visits by a review team verify the information submitted. Following the review, the South Dakota Department of Education makes a program approval recommendation to the state board of education. Programs that do not receive approval are placed on probation and required to address identified deficiencies.

Wyoming

To be approved by Wyoming's Professional Teaching Standards Board, teacher preparation programs must be accredited by NCATE/CAEP or successfully pass the board's review process, which is aligned with NCATE/CAEP's. All teachers prepared in Wyoming complete programs at the University of Wyoming. Programs are reviewed for reauthorization by the board every seven years. In addition to meeting NCATE/CAEP standards, programs must also meet specialized professional association standards, such as those established by the Council for Exceptional Children, the National Council for Teachers of English, and the National Council for Teachers of Math. Programs in disciplines without an associated specialized professional association must adhere to the state's standards, as outlined in Wyoming Rules and Regulations Governing Licensing for School Personnel. NCATE's state evaluation protocol indicates that professional education units must provide data for each of their programs from assessments administered at the time of candidate admission, state licensure tests, field or internship assessments, and candidate follow-up assessments.

Planned changes in evaluating teacher preparation programs in REL Central states

As of October 2013, six of the seven REL Central states are implementing or planning changes to how they evaluate teacher preparation programs. States are moving from a focus on program approval and reauthorization processes designed to ensure compliance with standards to more frequent evaluations that emphasize program outcomes for teacher candidates, practicing teachers, and their students. To enable this switch in focus, states are developing and implementing new data collection tools and enhancing their data systems. States are also exploring ways to report evaluation results that support public accountability for outcomes and program improvement.

Plans for changes to program evaluations in REL Central states are consistent with the growing federal emphasis on outcome-focused evaluation. Through proposed changes to Title II regulations included in the Higher Education Act and the Race to the Top initiative, the U.S. Department of Education has encouraged states to focus on student learning outcomes, teacher employment outcomes, and teacher and school leader satisfaction with program quality. State plans for program evaluations address these outcome areas and include others such as assessments of teachers' classroom practice, knowledge, and skills.

States are exploring ways to report evaluation results that support public accountability for outcomes and program improvement

State efforts vary, but most include increased attention to the performance of program graduates, development of common data collection tools and data systems, and development of new approaches for reporting evaluation data (table 4).

Focus on the performance of program graduates

At least six REL Central states are implementing or planning changes to state evaluation of teacher preparation programs to focus on the performance of program graduates. That focus is intended to provide additional information to judge program effectiveness. In at least two states, graduate outcome data are intended to guide program improvement efforts.

Colorado. State policy changes have required modifying Colorado's objectives for program evaluation—from ensuring compliance with state standards to measuring the effectiveness of programs as evidenced by the performance of program graduates. State laws passed in 2010 and 2011 increased the requirements for program evaluation and reporting, with an emphasis on assessing the performance of program graduates.[9]

As of late 2013, state law requires annual reports to the General Assembly that include information about the performance of the state's educator preparation programs in terms of student academic growth, educator placement, and educator mobility and retention. The Colorado Department of Education intends to use data about the performance of graduates and their students to identify which educator preparation programs produce the most effective graduates (in particular subject areas, with particular types of students, and in particular academic settings) and to better understand what makes programs effective. Colorado has developed a new system to evaluate educators, which began implementation during the 2013/14 academic year. Because the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards used to evaluate teachers differ from standards in state statutes for evaluating educator preparation programs, the Colorado Department of Education has been working with leaders of teacher training programs to align the two sets of standards so that teachers can be prepared to meet the expectations of future evaluations.

Table 4. Changes planned for state teacher preparation program evaluation in REL Central states

State	Focus on performance of program graduates	Identification and development of common data collection tools	Enhancements to state data systems	New approaches for reporting evaluation findings
Colorado	Revising evaluations to focus on student academic growth, educator placement, and educator mobility and retention	Developing a graduate survey	Investing in state agency data systems to support new approaches to evaluation	Developing annual program performance reports that will be publicly available
Kansas	Planning to evaluate programs on K–12 student performance and exploring ways to incorporate additional teacher performance data	Examining ways to compare ratings from multiple teacher performance measures		
Missouri	Developing an annual system for evaluating programs that initially focuses on candidate grade point average and knowledge test scores	Requiring new assessments for candidates, focusing on knowledge, performance, and work habits		Developing annual program performance reports that will be publicly available
Nebraska	Planning to incorporate program outcome data in its evaluation efforts, including measures aligned with revised teacher performance standards	Developing a graduate follow-up survey and tools to assess candidate knowledge and performance		Considering program evaluation reports that will be publicly available
North Dakota	Considering the use of K–12 student achievement and teacher evaluation data for program evaluation			
South Dakota	Considering the use of teacher performance data for program evaluation			
Wyoming	A respondent from Wyoming could not be reached to participate in an interview, and a review of state documents identified no planned changes for teacher preparation program evaluation			

Source: Authors' analysis of publicly available documents and interviews with state education agency staff, as described in appendix A.

Kansas. Although the evaluation of teacher preparation programs does not currently consider teacher performance, Kansas is developing a system in which K–12 student performance will become part of a state evaluation system. The Kansas State Department of Education collects work sample data from teacher candidates. About half the state's preparation programs use the Kansas Performance Teaching Portfolio to demonstrate candidates' ability to design and implement a unit of study. The remaining programs use similar tools. The state is exploring ways to ensure that teacher candidate performance data are comparable across teacher preparation programs.

Missouri. Missouri is using new state standards for educator preparation to develop a system to annually evaluate and report on the performance of teacher preparation programs. According to a state agency staff member, the state is moving away from a document-based review every seven years to an indicator-based system that tracks annual performance: "[We have] continued to look at those same data points except [we now] capture them annually and eliminate all the other text that went with it." The Missouri Standards for the Preparation of Educators are based on six program areas: academics, design and assessment, field and clinical experiences, candidates, faculty, and operations and resources.

Initial implementation of the new annual evaluation system focuses on three measures: candidate grade point average, candidate knowledge (Praxis Series test scores), and results from beginning teacher and school leader surveys. According to state agency staff, the state intends to develop annual indicators that align with the new standards, and programs will be expected to meet annual benchmarks. If a program fails to meet benchmarks for two years and shows no improvement over that two-year period, Missouri's Office of Educator Quality will work with the program to develop an improvement plan to be approved by the state board. If the program fails to demonstrate improvement for an additional two years, it will be subject to discontinuation. Depending on the circumstances and program structure, a professional education unit or programs in certain certification areas could lose authorization.

Nebraska. The state is changing its process for evaluating teacher preparation programs from an annual evaluation focused on monitoring and compliance to one focused on program outcomes and continuous improvement. According to a state agency staff member, the state plans to incorporate revised Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium standards, developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (2012), into state regulations for teacher preparation programs. These standards focus on K–12 learner development and differences, learning environments, content knowledge, application of content, assessment, planning for instruction, instructional strategies, professional learning and ethical practice, and leadership and collaboration. A state agency staff member reported that incorporating these standards into state regulations will likely lead to expanded state requirements for program evaluation, including demands for additional data: "We have, in my opinion, a fairly input-driven approval process, [and] we are trying to move that into a more outcome and data-driven process."

North Dakota. Teacher preparation programs in North Dakota are participating in a multistate initiative to compare student achievement outcomes for graduates. The state hopes to use the results of these comparisons in revising its evaluation methods. The initiative is led by the Bush Foundation in partnership with North Dakota State University and Valley City State University. A state agency staff member indicated that North Dakota is revising how teachers and principals are evaluated (for example, it is considering collecting data on teacher classroom practices), which may in turn affect how teacher preparation programs are evaluated. For example, the state is considering asking schools to generate school composite scores based on aggregated data from evaluations of teachers and principals. Concerns about misuse of those data (for example, for ranking schools) are a central part of that conversation.

South Dakota. State agency staff mentioned that, as the statewide longitudinal data system is developed, South Dakota will begin to track performance outcomes for teacher candidates and licensed teachers and that these data will be linked to teacher preparation programs to evaluate program effectiveness.

Identification and development of common data collection tools

Four REL Central states (Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska) are identifying or developing common data collection tools to facilitate evaluation of teacher preparation programs. These tools include assessments of content knowledge, work habits, and performance for teacher candidates, as well as surveys of recent program graduates.

Four REL Central states are identifying or developing common data collection tools to facilitate evaluation of teacher preparation programs

Colorado. A state agency staff member reported that the deans of teacher preparation programs have been developing a common survey to be administered to graduates of all institutions offering teacher preparation programs to assess perceptions of program quality.

Kansas. The state is updating the Kansas Performance Teaching Portfolio to reflect the updated Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium standards. Ratings collected through the portfolio will be compared with ratings from similar tools used by programs to assess the utility of these tools for program evaluation.

Missouri. To better reflect the state's new standards for teacher preparation, Missouri is requiring several new assessments for candidates pursuing certification as a teacher, counselor, librarian, principal, or superintendent. These assessments are designed to provide additional data for evaluating preparation programs and include the Missouri Standards-Based Performance Assessments, which measure candidate performance in content, coursework, and clinical experiences; the Missouri Educator Profile, designed to identify and develop work habits associated with effective educators; the Content Specialty and Pedagogy Assessments, which are exit exams aligned with Missouri and national standards that will replace the Praxis Series tests; and the Missouri General Education Assessment, an admission test for undergraduate teacher preparation programs, which measures knowledge in English/language arts, writing, math, science, and social sciences and will replace the College Basic Academic Subjects Examination currently in use.

Nebraska. The state is developing a graduate follow-up survey and plans to develop common tools to assess the content knowledge and performance of teacher candidates.

Enhancements to state data systems

Colorado has made substantial investments to ensure that state education agency data systems are adequate to answer the types of evaluation questions the agency seeks to ask. In response to legislative changes related to evaluation, state agency staff recently worked with a consortium of researchers from Colorado universities to assess the feasibility of using student outcome data to evaluate teacher preparation programs by examining the state's ability to link teachers to the programs that prepared them. This study focused on traditional programs, looking closely at the processes used to identify candidates who had completed their initial licensure and those who completed additional endorsements in high-need areas (Alzen et al., 2012a, 2012b). To ensure that teachers' initial licensure and endorsements were attributed to the correct programs in the correct year and to confirm that teachers had completed the program, teacher rosters were sent for verification to teacher preparation programs. Data from this verification process were then used to assess the validity of a process for creating links between teachers and programs in cases where a program is unable to retroactively identify program graduates. The process used existing data and identified a substantial number of "false positives" (teachers who were incorrectly attributed to a preparation program), raising concern about its use.

As a result of these findings, the Colorado Department of Higher Education now requires teacher preparation programs to identify graduates of initial licensure programs as part of their reporting to the state. The study also provided recommendations to better link teachers to their preparation programs, such as by increasing use of campus student information systems to track candidate data, using a common definition of graduates across programs,

Colorado has made substantial investments to ensure that state education agency data systems are adequate to answer the types of evaluation questions the agency seeks to ask

including licensure exam scores in campus data systems, and developing internal processes to verify the accuracy of data before submission to the state. A state agency staff member reported that the state has invested substantial resources to ensure that data on teacher preparation programs are accurate.

New approaches for reporting evaluation findings

Results from program approval and reauthorization reviews are typically shared only with the professional education unit. Although results are sometimes available to the public on request, state agency staff indicated that the results are rarely requested. Colorado and Missouri are exploring approaches for more frequent and more public reporting. Nebraska is in the early stages of considering new approaches for public reporting of evaluation findings.

Colorado. For roughly a decade Colorado state law has required an annual report to the state General Assembly that describes the state's approved teacher preparation programs. Recent legislation requires annual reports on the effectiveness of educator preparation programs, using data collected during an educator's first three years of employment and that include information about student academic growth, educator placement, and educator mobility and retention to assess how programs perform. According to the law, the Colorado Department of Education is expected to collaborate with teacher preparation programs and the Colorado Department of Higher Education to share reports of annual evaluations in order to improve curricula and programs. The reports are expected to be made available to the public on its website.

Colorado and Missouri are exploring approaches for more frequent and more public reporting, and Nebraska is in the early stages of considering new approaches for public reporting of evaluation findings

Colorado state education agency staff reported that the state has yet to determine how results from future program evaluations will be made public and that they want to ensure that the reporting process encourages positive use of the results: "We have a commitment to make sure that the data are used in a positive way and not in a harmful way . . . [Programs] are very concerned. They lived through a previous time when there was this ranking of [teacher preparation programs] and we don't want to use the information prematurely to bash a preparation program, especially when it's not appropriate . . . When we get to the public reporting of summarizing the information, we want to make sure that the method in which we present the information is done carefully."

Missouri. State agency staff reported that a new format is being developed for annual performance reports that focuses on teacher candidate outcome measures. A pilot of the revised report format is expected to be implemented in 2014. Programs will have the opportunity to review findings and appeal any findings of concern before they are made public. A state agency staff member mentioned that the state also intends to develop a system that teacher preparation programs can use to generate reports based on data the state collects.

Nebraska. A state agency staff member indicated that public reporting of the evaluation findings for teacher preparation programs is under consideration and that the state is concerned about ensuring the validity of what is reported: "In terms of the Nebraska state report card, I say it might be a couple of years . . . it's a concern about what do you report on a report card that fairly, reliably, and validly indicates the quality of an educator program."

Implications of study findings

States are moving from program approval and reauthorization processes designed to ensure compliance with standards to more frequent evaluation activities that focus more closely on program outcomes for teacher candidates, practicing teachers, and their students. States are developing and implementing new data collection tools and making enhancements to data systems that will permit this focus on candidate, teacher, and student outcomes. States are also exploring ways to report evaluation results to support public accountability for outcomes and program improvement. These more frequent and more outcome-focused approaches to evaluation have the potential to motivate a change from the current focus on program accountability to meaningful and ongoing identification of program strengths and weaknesses that can be used to improve programs.

Common purposes for evaluating teacher preparation programs include holding programs accountable, providing consumer information to prospective teacher preparation program students and their potential employers, and supporting program improvement (Feuer et al., 2013). As states develop new evaluation systems, it will be important to keep these purposes at the center of discussions about evaluation system design and the best use of evaluation findings.

More frequent and more outcome-focused approaches to evaluation have the potential to motivate a change from the current focus on program accountability to meaningful and ongoing identification of program strengths and weaknesses that can be used to improve programs

Future research on teacher preparation program evaluation is needed to understand the utility of various evaluation approaches in achieving these different purposes. For example, to ensure that evaluations are meaningful, more information is needed on how state evaluations can best complement other evaluation activities promoted by the federal government (such as those required for Title II reporting) and organizations such as NCATE/CAEP and the National Council on Teacher Quality and those undertaken by programs themselves. Research should also explore how to ensure the reliability and validity of evaluation data and the types of data and dissemination that best facilitate program improvement.

Limitations of the study

This report offers a state-level perspective on teacher preparation program evaluation, based on interviews with one informant and review of publicly available documents in each state. The availability of documentation varied across states, and data were collected at a single point in time. Continually evolving state plans, policies, and procedures may have been updated since the completion of data collection in October 2013.

Despite these limitations, this report is one way to gauge state efforts and plans related to teacher preparation program evaluation at a time when state approaches are changing nationwide.

Appendix A. Data and methodology

This appendix describes the study design, data collection, data analysis, and provisions to protect respondent confidentiality.

Study design

This descriptive study was conducted between May and October 2013 and included document review from all REL Central states (Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming) and interviews with state education agency representatives with primary responsibility for evaluating teacher preparation programs in six of the seven REL Central states (all but Wyoming).

Publicly available documents were reviewed to collect information about current and planned approaches for evaluating teacher preparation programs, including documents that described data sources, methods, and findings related to evaluation. Because approaches for program evaluation are undergoing change in REL Central states and across the country and because much of the work in this area is very recent, document review was limited to publications produced in 2007 or later. Types of documents reviewed included state documents describing current and planned policies or practices for program evaluation; state-vetted reports of evaluation methods and findings; articles in peer-reviewed journals and other publications that document data sources and methods used for evaluation; and conference papers, presentations, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations related to evaluation.

Because many state approaches to evaluating teacher preparation programs are under development, limited documentation is available about emerging methods. Interviews gathered in-depth information from the perspective of a state education agency staff member directly involved in evaluating teacher preparation programs. A representative of each state education agency was identified as the person best able to respond to questions about the state's current and planned evaluation efforts.

Participants were recruited through email and phone contact with state education agency staff identified by the study team as either a potential respondent or someone who could identify the appropriate respondent. These individuals received information about the study and a copy of the interview protocol and were asked to identify the state education agency staff member best able to address the questions. In each case the representative initially identified by the study team was the respondent who participated in the interview. In two states the respondent referred selected questions to another state education agency staff member who provided additional information by email. Respondents were state education agency staff members with primary responsibility for oversight and approval of teacher preparation programs.

Data collection

Publicly available documents were accessed from websites, including those associated with state education agencies, departments of higher education, journals, conferences, colleges and universities, and research organizations. Keyword searches were conducted using state education agency websites for each REL Central state; electronic databases, including

the Education Resources Information Center, Academic Search Premier, and Education Research Complete; and archived conference programs for the American Educational Research Association, Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness, and national conferences hosted by the National Center for Education Statistics. Search terms included the following: ("Colorado" or "Kansas" or "Missouri" or "Nebraska" or "North Dakota" or "South Dakota" or "Wyoming") AND ("teacher preparation" or "educator preparation" or "teacher education" or "teacher training") AND ("achievement" or "outcomes" or "retention" or "assessment" or "evaluation" or "accountability" or "effectiveness").

The review included any documents on current or planned efforts to evaluate teacher preparation programs in REL Central states produced in 2007 or later, including descriptions of current or planned efforts, data sources, analysis methods of those efforts, and documentation of findings from those efforts. Documents that appeared to meet these criteria were collected and reviewed by the principal investigator and at least one other member of the study team who each made a recommendation about whether to include the document in the review. Consensus guided whether the document was included in the study. Of the 137 documents identified and screened for review, 57 were excluded because they were not relevant to the research questions. The number of documents reviewed for each state ranged from 6 to 23. The 80 documents reviewed are listed by state in appendix B.

Some documents, such as federal grant and Elementary and Secondary Education Act waiver applications, policy briefs, and news stories from media outlets, were treated as secondary data sources—reviewed to inform conversations with interview participants—because information may have been inaccurate or represented plans that were not implemented. Only documents published by state entities with oversight for teacher preparation program approval were treated as primary data sources.

Interviews were conducted by telephone with the selected state education agency staff members in six of seven REL Central states. A respondent from Wyoming could not be reached to participate in an interview. Interview protocols were sent by email to respondents several days before the interview so that they could prepare for the interview by gathering relevant documents and consulting with colleagues. At least two members of the study team were present at each interview. Interviewers reviewed documentation to become familiar with state policies, initiatives, and language specific to the state's program evaluation efforts and reviewed the interview protocol to ensure a common understanding of its questions and probes. Interviews lasted about an hour and were digitally recorded and transcribed.

The interview protocol included questions intended to capture aspects of the state's current and planned evaluation activities (see appendix C). After the first interview, the study team met to review the protocol and responses and concluded that the protocol was effective and that no changes were needed.

Data analysis

Analysis of information collected through document review and interviews focused on each of the following content domains, intended to reflect key elements of state evaluation activities: questions being asked or objectives being served by the program evaluation, standards for teacher preparation programs, measures, reporting conventions, state education

agency use of evaluation findings, and confidentiality provisions. Two study team members, working closely with the principal investigator, reviewed the documents and coded the contents into the content domains. After completing the document coding, researchers wrote a document review summary for each state. Three researchers wrote summaries, with two writing them for two states each and one writing them for three states. The study team compared the document summaries to ensure a similar level of detail and to assess commonalities and variances. Study team members reviewed interview transcripts, coding text (sentences or paragraphs) by content domains. Additional categories were created to address topics that emerged in interviews, such as state legislation related to program evaluation and state efforts to support program evaluation by school districts and institutions of higher education.

To ensure uniform understanding of the content domains, study team members independently coded documents and interview transcripts for one state and discussed coding decisions. The study team discussed and reached consensus on the few coding discrepancies identified, selecting the domains that provided the best fit for the text and clarifying definitions as needed.

The study team generated reports of coded text from documents and interviews for each content domain that included all assigned text segments. These reports were used to create written summaries of findings from document review and interviews by state. Summaries were compared across states to identify similarities and differences, focusing on organization of information and level of detail. To ensure accuracy of the summaries, relevant draft report sections were sent to each state for review. Respondents from six states provided feedback, and minor changes were incorporated into the reports for four states. From these summaries, researchers created a matrix to identify similarities and differences across states in each domain, which was used as the basis for the report findings.

Protection of confidentiality

Respondents were told that information collected as part of the study would be treated confidentially and that no names would be used in any report. However, they were also told that, because of the small sample of respondents, a knowledgeable reader of the final report might be able to identify the individual from whom information was collected for a particular state. However, the information collected focuses on state agency practices and plans that would not be considered confidential or sensitive.

Respondents provided verbal consent to participate in the study after being provided with written and verbal information about the potential use of information gathered for this report. To maximize confidentiality, respondent names were removed from transcripts and interview notes. The computers on which the study team saved transcripts and analysis documents were password protected and available only to the study team. Digital files of interview recordings were destroyed after transcription, and all documents and data will be destroyed three years after completion of this study.

Appendix B. List of documents reviewed

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Appendix C. Structured interview protocol

The following introductory script and interview protocol were used when interviewing state education agency representatives.

Introductory script

Good morning (afternoon). My name is _____. I'm from RMC Research Corporation, Denver, and I'm calling on behalf of REL Central—the federal Regional Education Lab that serves your state. We are conducting a study that is examining approaches for assessing teacher preparation programs in the seven REL Central states, including Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. Thanks for taking the time to participate. The purpose of this interview is to gather your knowledge about the approach that is used to assess your state's teacher preparation programs and any plans your state may have for changes to that approach. This interview will take about forty to fifty minutes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. There will be no penalty if you do not participate or choose to withdraw from the study. REL Central treats all data collected through interviews confidentially, and does not include names in any project report. The interview asks no questions of a personal or sensitive nature and does not solicit your opinion. Instead, it asks only for information about your state's activities and plans. However, because we are interviewing a small number of respondents from each state and there are typically few respondents within a state department who are able to respond to questions on a topic as narrow as this, it is possible that you could be identified by readers of the report as an interview respondent for your state.

Do you agree to participate in this study?

We typically make audio recordings of interviews so that we can be sure to capture your responses verbatim, rather than relying on handwritten notes. Would that be okay with you? [IF "YES" BEGIN AUDIO RECORDING] Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview protocol

1. Please describe your primary job responsibilities. PROBE: What is your role with respect to your state's evaluation of teacher preparation programs?

2. How long have you been in this position?

The following questions are about your state's approach for the assessment or evaluation of teacher preparation programs. We know that, in many states, these approaches are changing, so we are interested in hearing about any aspects of TPP evaluation that are currently in place as well as those that are undergoing changes or are planned. Also, as we ask questions, if documentation is available that would provide further information about these topics or other individuals who we might contact, please feel free to refer me to those sources.

3. How does your state define "teacher preparation program?" What programs are included or excluded?

4. What are the primary analysis questions or objectives that underlie your state's current efforts or plans to assess TPPs?

5. Does your state have standards specifically related to the performance of teacher preparation programs?

6. Are there changes underway or planned by your state related to teacher preparation program standards?

Now we'd like to know about what measures are used by your state for the assessment of teacher preparation programs.

7. What measures, if any, are used to assess TPP program completions, graduate job placement, and/or graduate persistence in teaching? Please describe.

8. What is the source of these data?

9. When and how often are they collected?

10. For which programs and teachers are they available?

11. What measures, if any, are used to evaluate the achievement or achievement growth of the students of practicing teachers for the purpose of TPP evaluation? Please describe.

12. For which programs and teachers are they available?

13. What measures, if any, are used to evaluate the classroom teaching of practicing teachers for the purpose of TPP evaluation? Please describe.

14. What is the source of these data?

15. When and how often are they collected?

16. For which programs and teachers are they available?

17. Are any survey data collected for the purpose of TPP evaluation, such as principal surveys that ask about the performance of beginning teachers or surveys of the graduates of TPPs? Please describe.

18. What is the source of these data?

19. When and how often are they collected?

20. For which programs and teachers are they available?

    [IF MULTIPLE MEASURES ARE USED] How are multiple measures integrated for use in rating programs and how much weight is given to each?

21. Are there changes underway or planned by your state related to measures for teacher preparation program assessment?

22. What percentage of TPPs in your state are included in your state's TPP evaluation efforts?

    [IF NOT 100%] Which programs are excluded and why?

23. When making conclusions about TPP performance, does your state have minimum data requirements? For example, does the state require data for a minimum number of teachers on which to base conclusions about program performance? Please describe.

24. How are practicing teachers linked to their teacher preparation program?

25. Does your state use an overall indicator of TPP performance, such as an index or a categorical rating system such as "low," "medium" or "high-performing?" [IF SO] Please describe the indicator and how that indicator is created.

    [IF THE STATE USES OR PLANS TO USE VALUE-ADDED ACHIEVEMENT DATA] Is there additional technical documentation that you can provide that provides more information about how your state currently uses or plans to use value-added student achievement data to assess TPPs? For example, which variables are included in the model, which subject areas and grades are included in the assessment, and which metrics are used to report TPP performance?

26. Are there changes underway or planned by your state related to sampling and analysis methods for teacher preparation program assessment?

27. To whom and how are results from TPP evaluation activities reported?

28. Does your state provide additional information to individual TPPs that is not presented in public reports? What data are presented in each type of report?

29. Are there changes underway or planned by your state related to reporting results of teacher preparation program assessment?

30. What accountability mechanisms, if any, are in place to address low performance among TPPs?

31. Are there any provisions for recognizing high-performing TPPs? Please describe.

32. In what other ways, if any, are TPP evaluation results used?

33. Are there changes underway or planned by your state related to how findings from TPP assessment will be used?

34. What assurances are provided to teachers related to the confidentiality of data related to their effectiveness?

35. What issues, if any, has your state faced with respect to sensitive teacher or teacher preparation program evaluation data?

36. Are there any aspects of your state's current or planned approach to TPP assessment that you haven't mentioned?

37. Do you have anything else that you would like to add that I haven't asked about?

Thank you so much for your time!

Notes

1. This report focuses on teacher preparation rather than educator preparation, which includes formal preservice training for librarians, counselors, and school administrators as well as teachers because federal and state efforts to reform the way the preparation programs are evaluated have focused on those that prepare teachers.
2. Documents were reviewed in all states; however, an education official from Wyoming could not be reached to participate in the interview.
3. For Title II reporting, states count multiple certification or licensure tracks at a single institution of higher education as a single program.
4. For Title II reporting, program completers are those the state has documented as having met all the requirements of a state-approved teacher preparation program in a given year. Recommendation by the teacher preparation program to the state for an initial credential may or may not be used as a criterion for determining who is a program completer.
5. For this purpose, the states define a "program" as each subject- or grade-level-specific area in which an institution offers preparation for certification, licensure, or endorsement.
6. In July 2013 the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council were consolidated into the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation as a new national accreditation organization for educator preparation. Revised standards for accreditation of educator preparation were released in August 2013. See www.caepnet.org for more information. Because REL Central state agency staff still commonly refer to NCATE as the national accreditation organization, the term "NCATE/CAEP" is used throughout this report.
7. Educator preparation program approval in Colorado is based primarily on adherence to educator performance standards and additional endorsement standards reflected in the Colorado Educator Licensing Act of 1991 (§22–60.5 Colorado Revised Statute) and performance criteria expressed in Colorado Revised Statute §23–1-121(2) related to admission requirements, candidate advising and counseling, integration of theory and practice in coursework and field experience, supervised field based experience, and assessment of candidates' content and pedagogical knowledge and skill.
8. Rule 20 refers to the 2008 version of Chapter 20 of Title 92 of Nebraska Administrative Code. Under Rule 20 (Sections 005 through 007), all institutions must meet the basic requirements for program approval. Section 005 requires that programs have an officially designated administrator, admit only students who meet minimum scores on preprofessional assessments, inform students with certain criminal convictions that they are ineligible for certification, and provide required courses. Section 006 requires that programs have plans that identify teacher certification requirements, performance standards, and unit program standards and that programs provide assistance to new graduates. Section 007 requires institutions to provide a qualitative and quantitative report to the Nebraska Department of Education that provides institution- and program-level information about program details, plans, standards, and descriptors.
9. In Colorado, Senate Bill 10–036, which requires the department of education to prepare an annual report analyzing educator preparation program effectiveness using data obtained through the educator identifier system, was passed in January 2010; Senate Bill 11–245, which concerns educator preparation programs at institutions of higher education, was passed in May 2011.

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