



THE WOODROW WILSON
National Fellowship Foundation

Answering the Call for Equitable Access to Effective Teachers:

Lessons Learned From State-Based Teacher Preparation Efforts in Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, New Jersey, and Ohio

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Introduction

The pressures to improve teaching throughout the United States increase with each new academic year. A dozen years ago, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind) heralded the new era of the “highly qualified teacher.” More recently, in 2014, the U.S. Department of Education called on states to demonstrate how they would ensure equitable access to effective teachers, looking to states to determine how best to put strong teachers in all classrooms—not just in well-resourced schools. This June 2014 letter from U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan asked all of the nation’s chief state school officers to provide a specific plan for achieving this, plans due to the U.S. Department of Education this summer.

Providing all classrooms—particularly those in high-need schools—with excellent teachers is a national imperative. To answer these calls for qualified and effective teachers, the United States must also improve teacher preparation. The nation’s teacher education programs are not producing the quantity or quality of teachers needed, particularly in needed subjects. The future demands we do better. And the only way we can ensure a strong enough pipeline of effective teachers to ensure equitable access is to dramatically increase how states are preparing prospective educators.

The Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship

The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation established the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship program in 2007 to take up this challenge. Building on seven decades of experience preparing future leaders to address the challenges facing the United States, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation established a program to recruit, prepare, and support excellent teachers for high-need schools.

With a focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education, the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowships provide prospective teachers with the academic preparation, extensive clinical experience, and mentoring necessary to succeed in the classroom. The program is currently offered in five states, in partnership with



28 universities. This multi-state approach has led to the identification of several essential elements for the improvement of teacher education. These shared characteristics include:

1. Focusing on whole states, beginning with the governor and building a statewide, bipartisan coalition of stakeholders;
2. Requiring strong partnerships between universities and school districts as well as between colleges of education and schools of arts and sciences;
3. Establishing accountability mechanisms for participating universities, schools, and Fellows;

4. Creating efficient and effective clinically based yearlong (12–15 months) master's degree STEM teacher education programs;
5. Demanding high selectivity in student admissions and choice of participating universities and high-need school districts;
6. Mentoring both during the program and for several years after an educator is a "teacher of record"; and
7. Requiring third-party, evidence-based assessment of the program's impact.

To date, the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowships have enabled participating universities to create model teacher education programs in Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, New Jersey, and Ohio. In all states, the two key metrics of success are 1) improved teacher performance, as measured by Fellows' impact on student achievement, and 2) improved teacher persistence.

The approach adopted by these five states, and currently being explored by many others, is a direct response to the call issued by the U.S. Department of Education last year. Each state—Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, New Jersey, and Ohio—is working in partnership with both institutions of higher education and local school districts. Each state is developing a pipeline of effective teachers who have demonstrated mastery in subject areas where there are HR shortages. Each state has demonstrated a commitment to develop effective teachers for high-need schools, both urban and rural. And each state has invested in a long-term process, both to identify and prepare prospective teachers, and to ensure those educators remain in the profession and continue to serve in high-need schools.

The Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship Approach

In each participating Teaching Fellowship state, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation leads a rigorous selection process to identify those universities, both public and private, with the capacity, willingness, and leadership to create model teacher education programs—rigorous, highly selective, clinically based programs that integrate disciplinary content and pedagogical instruction. Each is tasked with developing programs that provide a strong pipeline of effective teachers for the state's high-need schools, both rural and urban. These 12- to 15-month master's degree programs, built on strong partnerships between local school districts and institutions of higher education, provide three years of mentoring to the new teachers they prepare. Partner universities have 18 to 21 months to create these programs. When they can demonstrate that they have created truly innovative programs that meet all of the criteria, the partner institutions receive their funding and are authorized to recruit Fellows.

The partner universities in each state are as follows:

Georgia: Columbus State University, Georgia State University, Kennesaw State University, Mercer University, and Piedmont College.

Indiana: Ball State University, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), Purdue

University, University of Indianapolis, and Valparaiso University.

Michigan: Eastern Michigan University, Grand Valley State University, Michigan State University, the University of Michigan, Wayne State University, and Western Michigan University.

New Jersey: The College of New Jersey, Montclair State University, Rowan University, Rutgers University—Camden, and William Paterson University.

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Ohio: John Carroll University, The Ohio State University, Ohio University, University of Akron, University of Cincinnati, University of Dayton, and University of Toledo.

The value of the state-based approach to teacher education reform cannot be overstated. Strong support from a governor, state higher education executive officer, state superintendent, and legislative leadership—both to launch the initiative and to ensure its success—is imperative. Partnerships between the universities that ultimately administer the degree program and the school districts that employ the Fellows ensure the flexibility to meet the schools' ever-changing staffing and educational needs, while providing a well-prepared teacher workforce to fill STEM vacancies.

In addition to providing all Fellows with one-year, \$30,000 fellowships to complete their master's degree program, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation also awards grants to partner universities to redesign their STEM-focused teacher education programs, according to the Foundation's standards. Signed agreements between each university president and the Foundation both empower and require the partner university to make sustainable changes to its overall approach to teacher education.

According to the terms of the Fellowship, all Woodrow Wilson Fellows commit to three years as teacher of record in a high-need school. The rigor of the program—particularly the classroom immersion experience that begins and ends with the public school year—is designed to equip Fellows with the skills and knowledge to perform in the most challenging districts, schools, and classrooms in the state.

Initial Findings In Woodrow Wilson States

The Woodrow Wilson Foundation contracted with the Center for the Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER) at the American Institutes of Research (AIR) to perform an independent external assessment of the Teaching Fellowship program.

In Michigan, for instance, CALDER analyzed a wide range of data, including school and course assignment, student characteristics, and other demographic data available from the Office of Assessment and Accountability in the Michigan Department of Education and the Center for Educational Performance in Michigan's State Budget Office.

While this research is still in the early stages, it does offer an important top-line finding: The Fellows are indeed taking on the challenge of Michigan’s high-need classrooms, and they are well prepared to work with students in those schools. As the figure below shows, students taught by Fellows are four times more likely to be black than those taught by inexperienced non-Fellows (61 percent, versus 15 percent). Students taught by Woodrow Wilson Fellows are two times more likely to be eligible for free/reduced price lunch than students in non-Fellow classrooms (80 percent, versus 44 percent for non-Fellows) and more mobile in changing schools (31 percent, versus 10 percent for non-Fellows). Woodrow Wilson Fellows are three times as likely than their peer non-Fellows to be teaching English language learners (10 percent, versus 3 percent for non-Fellows), and more likely to have special education needs in their classes (16 percent, compared to 10 percent for non-Fellows).

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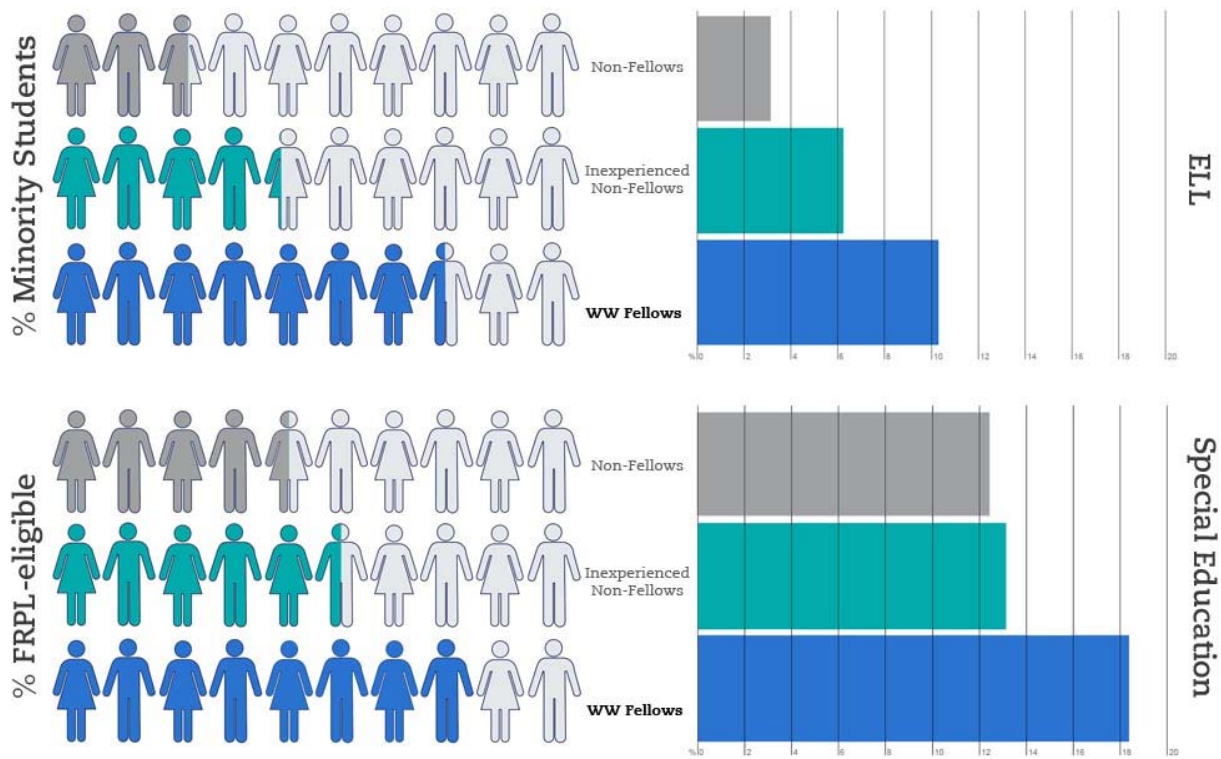


Figure 1: Students of Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellows in Michigan are four times as likely to be black, about twice as likely to be eligible for free/reduced price lunch, likelier to have special education needs, and three times as likely to be English language learners.

Not only are the Fellows placed in some of the state’s most challenging teaching assignments, they are also bringing more subject matter expertise to Michigan classrooms than their peers. Fully 100 percent of the Fellows held a Michigan STEM license. By contrast, just 87 percent of new Michigan teachers statewide who taught core STEM classes have STEM licenses.

In Indiana, AIR/CALDER found that Woodrow Wilson Fellows outperformed both experienced and inexperienced non-Fellows, as measured by performance by minority students in middle school math, middle school science, and algebra. WW Fellows also outperformed non-Fellows in biology. It is important to note, though, that there are some limitations to the available Indiana data, beginning with the fact that the state does not test in a number of subjects Woodrow Wilson Fellows now teach, including advanced math, physics, chemistry, and earth science.

Researchers were able to look at teacher persistence in Indiana and the impact the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship is having. Among their findings were the following:

- The placement rate of teachers certified in the Woodrow Wilson Indiana Teaching Fellowship program is 100 percent;
- 80 percent of Woodrow Wilson Indiana Teaching Fellows who began in 2009 remained in classrooms in high-need schools in their fourth year on the job, the year after their three-year commitment was completed.
- Woodrow Wilson Indiana Teaching Fellows are significantly more likely (1.9 times) to persist in Indiana's public high-need schools compared to non-Fellow teachers (based on 2009–2012 cohort data).

Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellows in Indiana are almost twice as likely to persist in the state's high-need schools.

In addition, almost half of STEM teachers hired in Indiana each year since the establishment of the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship are Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellows. Nearly half (49 percent) of all Indiana Teaching Fellows have been career changers.

Both the development of the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship program in these states, as well as the results demonstrated in states such as Indiana and Michigan, show specific efforts that meet the challenge put forward by the U.S. Department of Education. Each of these states is leading specific efforts to ensure a pipeline of effective educators for high-need schools, while preparing teachers who are remaining in the schools and classrooms that need their leadership the most.

Lessons Learned from the WW Teaching Fellows Program

Both the quantitative data gathered by the American Institutes of Research and the qualitative information acquired throughout the development and implementation of the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship program across the nation yield several lessons for establishing and improving teacher education efforts in a strategic way that ensures a robust pipeline of effective educators for our nation's high-need schools. Some of the key points are as follows:

Programs must be selective and must focus on the recruitment of excellent teacher candidates. As the demands on classroom educators have grown significantly in recent years, it is evident that prospective teachers need higher levels of skills and knowledge than ever before. To meet the staffing needs and the

demands of school districts for well-prepared candidates—particularly for those interested in hard-to-staff schools—universities must have access to a pipeline of excellent prospective teachers who already possess deep content knowledge. Program candidates, particularly those in fields like STEM, must be committed to teaching in high-need schools, with all that such an assignment entails. Finally, university programs must be forward-looking and first-rate in order to attract students of the necessary caliber.

Rigorous coursework, extensive clinical preparation, and substantial mentoring through the first years in the classroom are the essential components of strong teacher preparation. Woodrow Wilson’s experiences across the nation have highlighted states’ urgent need for teacher candidates who are ready for the challenges and opportunities of the classroom. To ensure subject-area mastery, the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship requires that Fellows bring to the program a substantial background in an academic field. To that background, the Fellowship adds master’s-level teacher education and a full school year of experience in a K–12 classroom, learning from and with experienced educators. This joint experience is then brought together with results-based mentoring, both during the academic program and for the initial years as a teacher of record.

Accountability for all stakeholders is essential, but good data is a prerequisite to make accountability real. From the outset of the Woodrow Wilson program, universities and school districts are clear on expectations regarding student recruitment, academic and clinical preparation, and placement. They understand the metrics regarding how success will be measured.

Strong educator preparation requires coursework, clinical work, and mentoring—no shortcuts.

Ultimately, the success of teacher preparation programs is measured both in student learning outcomes and in teacher retention. Proper measurement, though, requires access to relevant data aligned to these metrics. While many states are improving both their collection of and access to such information, there is still much work to be done to ensure every state is able to determine its true ability to get excellent teachers into high-need schools, keep them in the classrooms that need them the most, and measure their effectiveness. In the states where it works, to help broaden its range of data and provide greater accountability in its desire for improved student and educator success, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation has developed a program of formative assessment with new partner institutions in new states, and will draw on findings to complement CALDER data.

Improvements to existing teacher education programs need to be developed for the long term, with clear plans for sustainability if proven effective. Demands for increased student performance and reforms to K–12 education have resulted in a flurry of new ideas and promising practice. Unfortunately, many of these innovations are abandoned once the initial funding is spent. New programs, good or bad, are more often unstudied at the time when initial funding ends. Sustainability or institutionalization plans are essential from the start of the program. Sustainability plans are crucial in a time like the present, one of continuing and rapid change, with a vast array of competing reform agendas and decentralized short-term funding opportunities.

To transform teacher education, states and universities must invest in those ideas with the greatest promise and have clear sustainability plans for how those innovations can be integrated into all institutions of higher education across the state. Such a long-term view is necessary if the result of these efforts—a cadre of excellent educators—is to have the desired impact on the state's high-need schools.

Recommendations

The Woodrow Wilson Foundation's Teaching Fellowship offers significant lessons for teacher preparation nationwide. Woodrow Wilson's ongoing work in five states—Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, New Jersey, and Ohio—reflects those lessons, and will continue to refine them. The Fellowship's approach is also reflected in the draft teacher preparation regulations released by the U.S. Department of Education in late 2014.

These lessons, coupled with more than a century of practical experience embodied by Woodrow Wilson leadership and staff, serve as the basis for recommendations on how to use the available quantitative and qualitative data on the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship to improve the field as a whole.

For state policymakers:

- Focus on improving teacher education for the entire state, not just in one city or at one university;
- Ensure data systems have the ability to connect student learning outcomes to teacher preparation programs;
- Mandate the release of student outcomes data to school districts as well as to independent research entities connected to teacher education reform efforts, so school districts can see where their strongest teachers are prepared;
- Provide universities with the financial resources and time necessary to develop excellent, cutting-edge programs; and
- Require a sustainability plan that will involve all relevant universities.

For federal policymakers:

- Require universities to have "skin in the game," insisting that in addition to public funding universities make their own investments in teacher education improvement;
- Recognize the needed balance of strong inputs (high admission standards, enrollments tied to school subject needs and numbers and a research-based program of instruction) and equally strong outcomes (driven by student learning and teacher retention); and
- Work through states and their governors to carry out teacher education improvements that meet demands of states and their schools.

For school district leaders:

- Ensure the school district is an equal partner in developing program goals, design, and standards with the university;
- Demand that new teachers receive strong induction and effective mentoring from well qualified classroom educators, recognizing that mentoring and teaching are two different skill sets;
- Communicate staffing needs and hiring capacity, both current and projected, to ensure that local universities are specifically addressing potential gaps; and
- Require universities to work as partners with school districts in designing programs to prepare prospective educators, with districts providing feedback to universities on the quality of teacher prepared and placed in local schools.

For teacher preparation programs:

- Emphasize intensive, yearlong master's degree programs that not only focus on pedagogy, but also offer intensive clinical preparation and mentoring rooted in content knowledge;
- Invest in recruitment to ensure high-quality candidates and students;
- Take the time necessary (18 to 24 months) to build an excellent program correctly the first time, and reevaluate and improve the program three years after implementation to achieve the desired program; and
- Focus both on what is needed now and what is expected to meet educator pipeline needs for the future, rather than on what has been deemed adequate in the past.



For all:

- Recognize that long-term improvement in student learning opportunities and outcomes arises from the development and support of effective educators to lead those improvement efforts. After all, as research has repeatedly shown, the most influential lever in student learning is a great teacher;

- Demand accountability, from the top down and from all sides;
- Require third-party evidence to demonstrate effectiveness and identify those areas that need to be improved; and
- Understand that teacher education can be improved to meet current and future needs, and that the path to its transformation is visible throughout the nation, in programs large and small, as the Woodrow Wilson experience demonstrates.

About the Woodrow Wilson Foundation

For the past 70 years, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation has identified and developed the nation's best minds to meet its most critical challenges. This work began in 1945, as the Woodrow Wilson Foundation responded to the significant number of American GIs returning home from World War II with a promise of a higher education under the GI Bill. Then, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation helped recruit and prepare the generation of college professors necessary to meet post-war higher education needs. Now, the nation's greatest need for education leaders is at the secondary level, and particularly in the urban and rural schools that serve so many of America's low-income young people.

There is little question that effective teacher preparation is a critical challenge currently facing our nation. Through the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship, we are attracting, preparing, and placing talented, committed individuals into teaching in high-need secondary schools. With programs currently in Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, New Jersey, and Ohio, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation is working to change the way top teachers are prepared. The Foundation partners with colleges and universities to create a more effective teacher education program focused on a yearlong classroom experience, rigorous academic work, and ongoing mentoring. Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellows will touch the lives of more than a million students over a 15-year teaching career.

Because principals are the next most important influence on teacher effectiveness, after high-quality preparation, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation now offers the Woodrow Wilson MBA Fellowship in Education Leadership, a new program that blends transformational education coursework and a tailored business curriculum with intensive clinical experience in schools, corporations, and not-for-profit organizations, as well as involvement with innovative schools abroad. One of the first programs of its kind, the Woodrow Wilson MBA Fellowship is a model for next generation, results-focused school leader preparation. The program, currently offered in Indiana, New Mexico, and Wisconsin, is designed to prepare leaders who will drive innovation, expand the use of analytics and evidence-based practices, raise student performance to international standards, and improve the quality of school systems and teaching over time.



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