

Bringing an Implementation Science Lens to Program Transformation:

Stakeholders' Perceptions of US PREP's Technical Assistance for Inaugural Sites

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Introduction

In 2015, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (“the Foundation”) awarded Texas Tech University a grant to fund the University-School Partnerships for the Renewal of Educator Preparation (US PREP). The goal of the initial grant, part of a \$34 million investment in five teacher preparation Transformation Centers, was to support the development, implementation, and scale-up of sustainable, high-quality teacher preparation programs (TPPs).

To help US PREP and the Foundation evaluate the implementation, progress, and impact of US PREP’s technical assistance, in the fall of 2018 the Foundation awarded a four-year grant to the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As part of this work, EPIC conducted two-day site visits in late 2019 and early 2020 with institutions in US PREP’s inaugural (Cohort 1) and second cohorts (Cohort 2). Each visit included interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders, including TPP leaders, faculty, Site Coordinators, teacher candidates, graduates, and K-12 district personnel. The purpose of the site visits was to better understand stakeholders’ perceptions of the implementation and impact of US PREP technical assistance on TPPs’ transformation process. In addition to the site visits, EPIC conducted virtual interviews with US PREP personnel, including the leadership team, RTSs, and Clinical Coaches to document the internal processes, goals, and systems of the organization.

Grounded in this trove of interview and focus group data, the current report takes a retrospective look at US PREP’s engagement with four Cohort 1 institutions and highlights common themes, challenges, and impacts in program transformation. To assess US PREP technical assistance and its impact on TPP transformation, EPIC applied to its analysis and reporting a conceptual model grounded in implementation science and school improvement.¹ Specifically, EPIC adapted an implementation framework for K-12 school improvement to identify key drivers of program transformation and to assess how US PREP, as the primary implementation team, guided TPPs through the four stages of implementation:

- **Exploration**
- **Installation**
- **Initial Implementation**
- **Final Implementation**

Framing US PREP’s technical assistance in implementation science is an important contribution of this work, especially given the critical role of systematized and purposeful implementation practices in the scaling and sustainability of TPP transformation.

The following executive summary shares the major findings from EPIC’s analyses of stakeholder perceptions. Concluding the summary are EPIC’s recommendations for US PREP’s ongoing work with current and future coalition members.

¹Jackson, K. R., Fixsen, D., & Ward, C. (2018). *Four domains for rapid school improvement*. National Implementation Research Network University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED583980.pdf>

Findings

Participants from across the sites experienced pronounced shifts toward more data-driven practices and experiences, deeper and mutually beneficial K-12 and TPP partnerships, and well-prepared, confident, and effective candidates and graduates. The major actors and activities driving these outcomes, as well as the barriers challenging transformation, included:

Strengths and Drivers

- US PREP serves as the primary implementation team and is guided by the Developmental Framework and data for continuous improvement. These resources provide a common language and are essential to facilitating local implementation teams at each provider site.
- Technical assistance personnel, namely Regional Transformation Specialists, and provider-based transformation staff, especially Site Coordinators, were highly instrumental in successful implementation.

Barriers and Areas for Growth

- Challenges with effective communication by US PREP and local implementation teams impede faculty buy-in;
- Concerns about scaling and sustainability, particularly financial commitments and deepening K-12 partnerships, linger in post-transformation. Both US PREP and site stakeholders acknowledged that US PREP can further expand its capacity for explicit equity work in teacher education.



Recommendations

First, EPIC acknowledges US PREP's commitment to supporting teacher education that is grounded in the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). As such, EPIC recommends that US PREP continue to build their capacity for understanding and reflecting on their role in supporting culturally responsive education for themselves, teacher educators, and teacher candidates. Part of this work could be to purposefully research and identify explicit theories and practices or pedagogies to incorporate into technical assistance. Continuing to seek external professional development, creating an internal position strictly dedicated to equity in teacher education, and assessing the knowledge and practices of the US PREP staff and coalition members are other potential strategies for bolstering culturally responsive pedagogy and DEI throughout the organization. Other recommendations include:

Exploration & Installation Phases

- Ensure best fit between each prospective institution and US PREP through extensive and early research into the climate, locale, demographics, leadership style, TPP strengths, and goals of each program.
- Determine leadership characteristics within each institution, including leadership roles, retention, styles, and hierarchy.
- Preemptively strategize communication and transformation roll-out to faculty in partnership with local implementation teams to help secure early buy-in and ensure clarity in objectives and expectations.
- Help local implementation teams assign roles and decision-making structures at the beginning of implementation to overcome potential barriers to momentum.

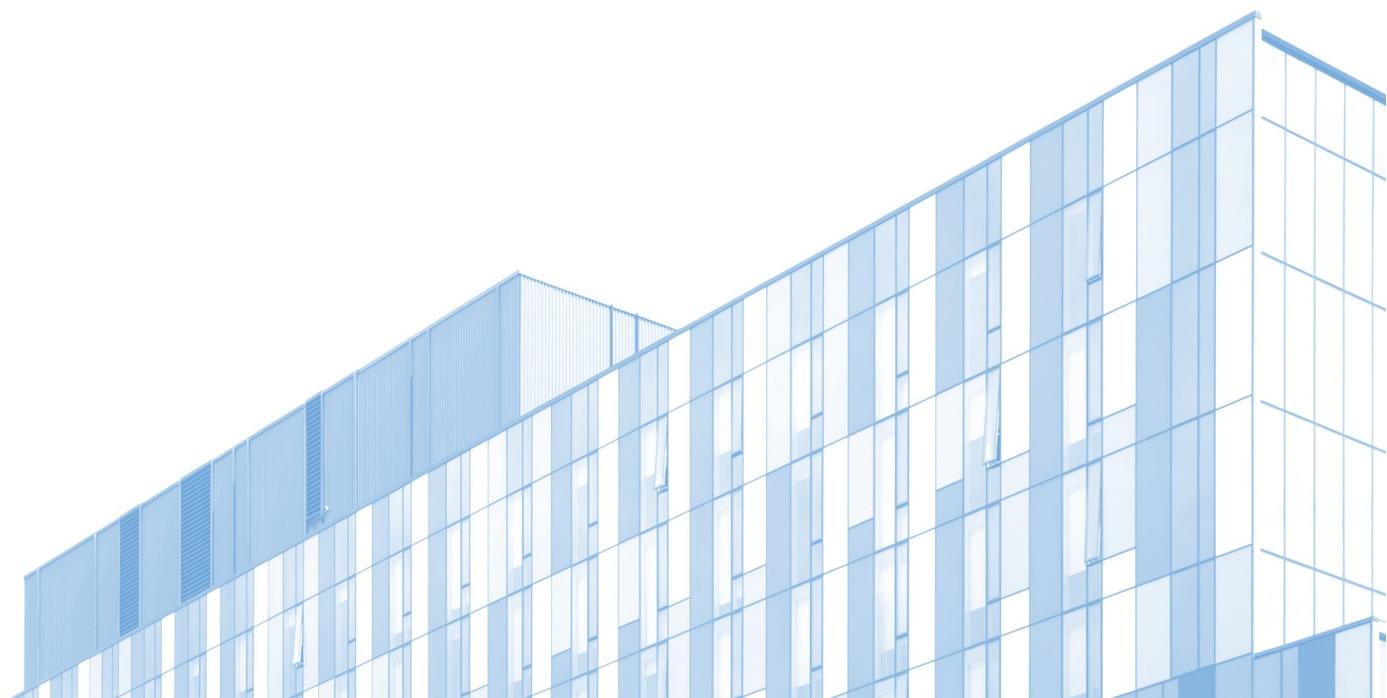
Initial Implementation Phase and Beyond

- Help programs cluster their clinical placements sites, either by proximity or within specific types of districts and schools, to diminish logistical burdens for Site Coordinators and teacher candidates.
- Clarify mentor teacher criteria early in the partnership to ensure proper selection and training for quality clinical experiences.
- Assist sites with identifying potential external funding sources for scaling and sustainability and help them build relationships with local and national funders as a bridge toward developing more internal, self-sustaining financial models.

The findings from this qualitative report tell only portions of the Cohort 1 transformation story. This report will be used to provide more context for quantitative analyses of stakeholder surveys and candidate, as well as graduate, outcomes. Further, this report will help inform subsequent analyses of data on the initial stages of program transformation at Cohort 2 institutions. Changes across Cohort 1 and 2 may mark growth in US PREP's learning and technical assistance practices.

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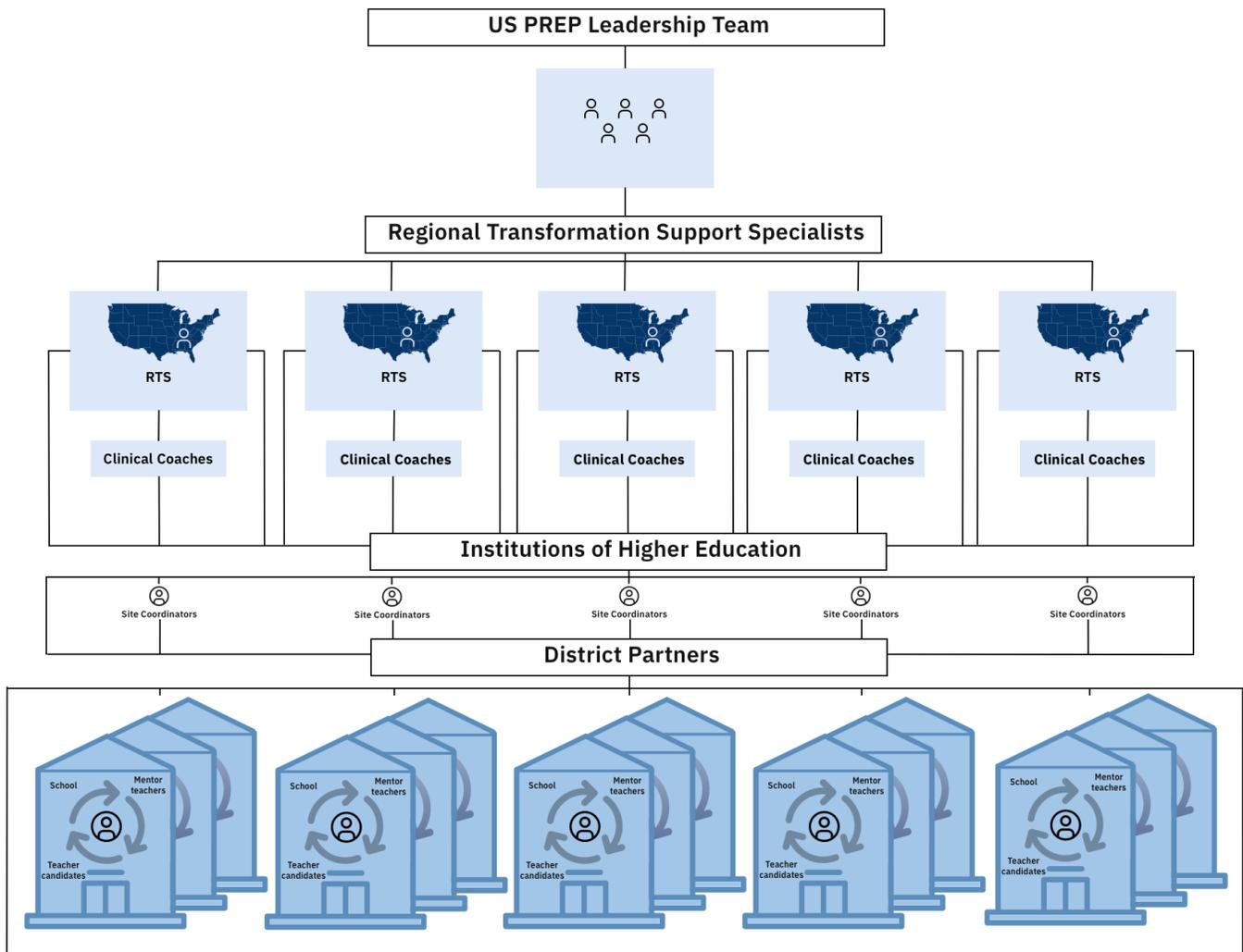
Introduction

In 2015, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (“the Foundation”) awarded Texas Tech University a grant to fund the University-School Partnerships for the Renewal of Educator Preparation (US PREP). The goal of the initial grant, part of a \$34 million investment in five teacher preparation Transformation Centers, was to support the development, implementation, and scale-up of sustainable, high-quality teacher preparation programs (TPPs).

With the initial grant award, US PREP developed a pilot coalition of six universities dedicated to transforming their TPPs across four quality domains: (1) building teacher candidate competencies; (2) using data for continuous improvement; (3) support-

ing teacher educators; and (4) building strong partnerships with K-12 districts and schools. Over a three-year period, US PREP offers technical assistance that includes the support of Regional Transformation Specialists (RTSs) and Clinical Coaches who train and develop Site Coordinators, program faculty, and mentor teachers to lead transformation. US PREP designs its technical assistance to build the capacity of TPPs to deliver clinically rich experiences. Since its inception, US PREP has created a coalition of three cohorts of university-based TPPs at various stages of program transformation. See Figure 1 for an organizational chart of US PREP.

Figure 1. US PREP conceptual organizational chart



To help US PREP and the Foundation evaluate the implementation, progress, and impact of US PREP's technical assistance, in the fall of 2018 the Foundation awarded a four-year grant to the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Since that time, EPIC has begun to collect and analyze data to measure program implementation, utility, participation, and outcomes at the TPP, K-12 district, candidate, and graduate levels.

In late 2019 and early 2020, EPIC traveled to all currently participating Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 institutions to conduct two-day site visits. Each visit included interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders, including TPP leaders, faculty, Site Coordinators, teacher candidates, graduates, and

K-12 district personnel. The purpose of the site visits was to better understand stakeholders' perceptions of the implementation and impact of US PREP on TPPs' transformation process. In addition to the site visits, EPIC conducted virtual interviews with US PREP personnel, including the leadership team, RTSs, and Clinical Coaches to document the internal processes, goals, and systems of the organization.

Grounded in this trove of interview and focus group data, the current report takes a retrospective look at US PREP's engagement with four Cohort 1 institutions¹ and highlights common themes, challenges, and impacts across the stages of implementation and post-transformation.

A Conceptual Framework for Implementing Technical Assistance for TPP Transformation

The purpose of this report is to document stakeholders' perceptions of the implementation and outcomes of US PREP's technical assistance. To assess the implementation process and the extent to which implementation impacts TPP transformation, EPIC has chosen to apply to its analysis and reporting a conceptual model grounded in implementation science and school improvement.² Framing US PREP's technical assistance in implementation science is an important contribution of this report, especially given the critical role of systematized and purposeful im-

plementation practices in the scaling and sustainability of TPP transformation. As such, the current report details the actors and conditions driving the implementation of US PREP's transformation work with each Cohort 1 institution, with a particular focus on implementation stages and the strengths, challenges, and enabling conditions pushing TPP transformation forward.

¹Three of the institutions are considered full-fledged Cohort 1 institutions, while the fourth began its transformation about a year and half after the others. Despite the differences in timeline, we believe the fourth institution experienced similar implementation strengths, challenges, and outcomes as the other institutions at the same time.

²Jackson, K. R., Fixsen, D., & Ward, C. (2018). *Four domains for rapid school improvement*. National Implementation Research Network University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED583980.pdf>

Implementation Science and School Improvement Framework

Scholars define *implementation science* as “the scientific study of methods to promote the systematic uptake of research findings and other evidence-based practices into routine practice.”³ Although it originated in health science, implementation science often refers to practices in education, specifically interventions in special education, school psychology, speech and language pathology, and early childhood. Within these areas, implementation science researchers have identified specific factors, characteristics, and drivers that make implementation of best practices more successful, scalable, and sustainable.

Most relevant to US PREP and the current report is the work of the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) and the Center for School Turnaround. NIRN and the Center for School

Turnaround have developed an implementation framework for driving K-12 school improvement. The framework identifies important characteristics of K-12 school transformation implementation—fostering leadership, talent development, instructional transformation, and a transformative culture shift. While there are notable differences between the turnaround of K-12 schools and the transformation of university-based TPPs, the mission, processes, stages, and drivers of transformative implementation are similar in both contexts. As such, EPIC views the implementation framework as a compelling guide to understanding US PREP’s transformation model, technical assistance, and TPP outcomes.



³Eccles, M. P., & Mittman, B. S. (2006). Welcome to implementation science. *Implementation Science*, 1(1). Retrieved from <https://implementationscience.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1748-5908-1-1>

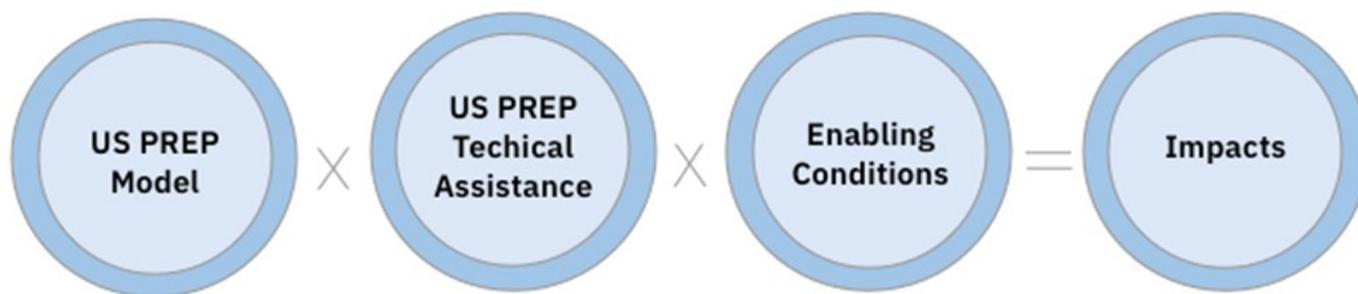
Formula for Success

EPIC’s analysis of US PREP and its engagement with Cohort 1 institutions to create transformative change is largely grounded in what NIRN defines as the *Formula for Success*. This formula illustrates the critical components, namely the what, how, and where necessary to induce the desired outcomes of a program, set of practices, or, for US PREP, TPP transformation. Specifically, NIRN’s formula asserts that effective practices (the what) combined with effective implementation (the how) and enabling conditions (the where) results in educationally significant outcomes.

EPIC has modified the formula to better fit with US PREP’s work and the actors creating transformed TPPs through each implementation stage. EPIC conceptualizes the *what* as US PREP’s teacher preparation model—data driven, mutually beneficial K-12 partnerships, frequent feedback, practice

-based learning, and clinically rich experiences. The *how* consists of the technical assistance US PREP provides to TPPs to facilitate program transformation (e.g., convenings, RTS coaching, transformation and sub-project management, professional development, financial support). The *where* are the enabling conditions, including the geographic, political, cultural, demographic, social, and institutional contexts in which Cohort 1 institutions perform their transformation work. Multiplying the *what*, *how*, and *where* together results in a *scaled, sustainable preparation* model that produces effective teacher candidates and graduates working in partnership schools. Importantly, if one aspect of the formula is missing, then the desired outcomes become unattainable. Figure 2 illustrates our conceptualization of the *Formula for Success*.

Figure 2. Formula for Success



Implementation Stages, Drivers, and Teams

In addition to the Formula for Success, implementation science espouses a set of implementation stages necessary for the success and sustainability of evidence-based practices and interventions. There are four stages—*Exploration*, *Installation*, *Initial Implementation*, and *Full Implementation*. Each stage, while distinct, is not necessarily linear in progression. That is, stages can overlap, revert, or repeat throughout active implementation.

The *Exploration Stage*, often overlooked or rushed in traditional implementation practices, is the first stage and provides the space and time to determine organizational readiness, identify key partici-

pants and stakeholders in implementation, and establish decision-making processes and shared goals.

Next, the *Installation Stage* readies actors and resources for implementation work. This stage requires intensive, hands-on preparation including planning for training and coaching, developing assessments and evaluation plans, and talent recruitment. *Initial Implementation* follows, beginning when the model is moving into place and trainings have started. This stage requires real-time problem-solving cycles, data collection and analysis of implementation activities, building program capacity, and fostering culture shifts. After

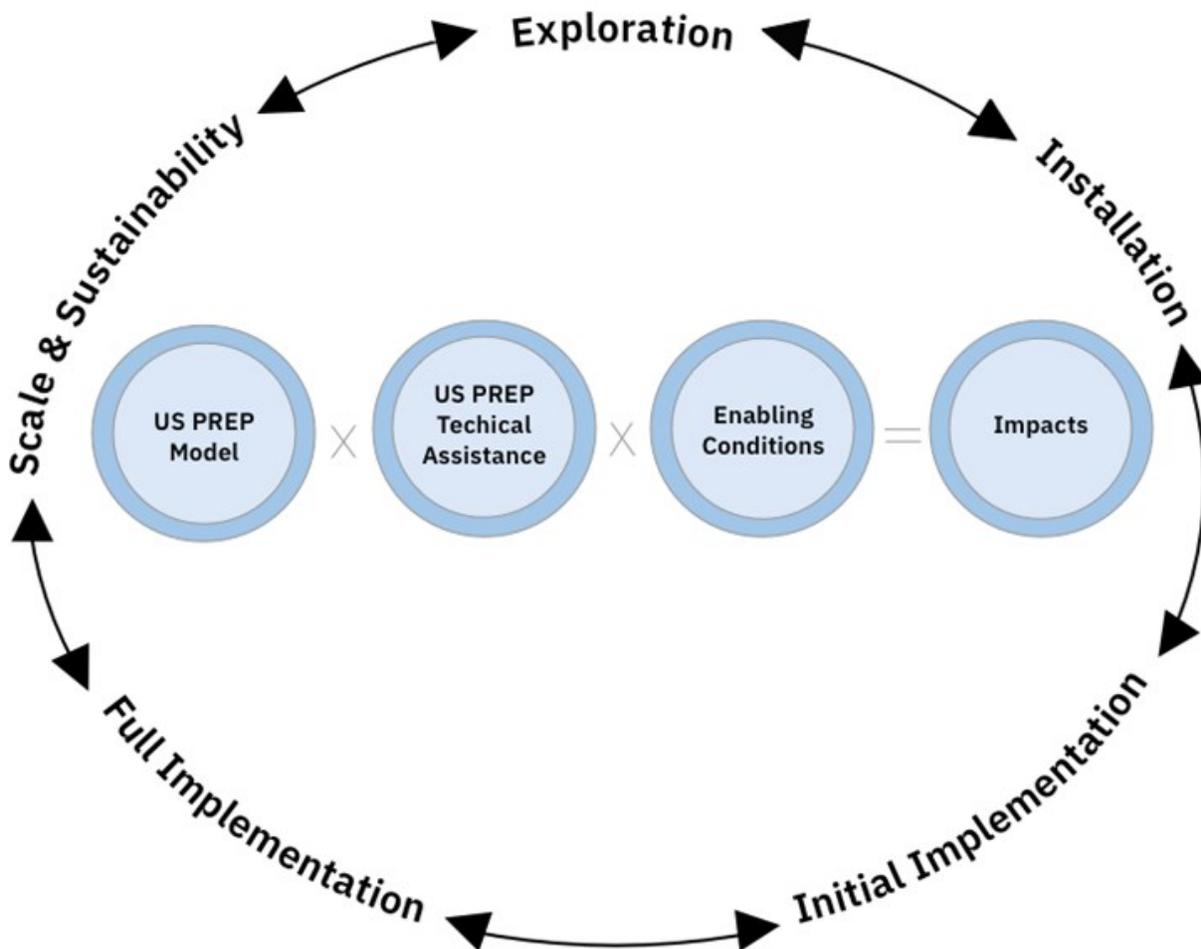
two to four years of implementation, organizations reach the *Full Implementation Stage*, marked by at least 60% of high-fidelity participation, with all implementation drivers fully functioning and working independently. At this stage, the innovation is business-as-usual.

Pushing organizations through these stages are implementation drivers and implementation teams. Implementation drivers are entities and actors that facilitate effective and sustainable implementation. NIRN identified the following implementation drivers—competency drivers (e.g., staff selection, training, coaching, and evaluation); organization drivers (e.g., shared accountability, data-driven decision-making, dedicated capacity and resources, facilitative administration, and systems interventions); and technical/adaptive leadership drivers (e.g., responsive, consistent, managing change process).

Ensuring that implementation drivers are in place and functioning is part of US PREP’s technical assistance.

Finally, effective and sustainable implementation rests on the work of a competent implementation team. An *implementation team* is a group (or groups) skilled in implementation practice and organizational and systems change. The role of the implementation team is to build cascading systems of supports across all levels of stakeholders. EPIC conceptualizes the US PREP staff as the primary implementation team; US PREP fosters and supports the development of local implementation teams at each institution. Figure 3 shows the relationship between the Formula for Success and the implementation stages.

Figure 3. The Formula for Success and the Implementation Stages



Site Interviews and Focus Groups

In September and October 2019, EPIC completed two-day site visits with four Cohort 1 institutions in the US PREP coalition. Those institutions are Jackson State University (JSU) in Jackson, Mississippi; Southeastern Louisiana University (SELU) in Hammond, Louisiana; the University of Houston (UH) in Houston, Texas; and Sam Houston State University (SHSU) in Huntsville, Texas. JSU, SELU, and UH began their engagement with US PREP in the 2016-17 academic year, while SHSU began its engagement with US PREP in the 2017-18 academic year.

During these site visits EPIC conducted interviews and focus groups with a range of university and K-12 stakeholders involved in transformation efforts. Specifically, TPP leadership (deans, associate deans, department chairs), program faculty, Site Coordinators, K-12 district partners (principals, mentor teachers, HR leadership), data professionals, teacher candidates, and program graduates all shared their insights on US PREP's implementation and impacts within their respective TPPs. EPIC conducted interviews and focus groups in person and over the phone/video (in rare circumstances). Table 1 presents summary counts of the interview/focus group sample.

Table 1. Summary of Interview/Focus Group Sample (Cohort 1 Institutions)

Participant Role	University Sites ⁵			
	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4
TPP Leadership	4	6	2	4
Program Faculty/Staff	5	7	8	8
Site Coordinators	3	2	3	1
Candidates/Program Graduates	8	6	6	1
K-12 District Personnel	2	5	3	2
Total	22	26	22	16

US PREP Interviews

In the summer and fall of 2019, EPIC also conducted video interviews with US PREP personnel, including the Executive Director, the Senior Director of Content Development and Programming, Regional Transformation Special-

ists, and Clinical Coaches. With these interviews, EPIC examined the internal processes, goals, and systems of US PREP.

⁵Institution names have been changed to site numbers to protect participant anonymity.

Analysis

EPIC generated initial qualitative codes from a group mapping session among evaluation team members who read interview and focus group transcripts and noted recurring themes. Based on these themes, EPIC defined codes and created a codebook to schematically reflect implementation stages (*Exploration/Pre-Implementation, Installation, Initial Implementation, Full Implementation, and Scale and Sustainability*) and implementation team characteristics (e.g., sizes, roles, contextual factors unique to different sites). EPIC piloted the preliminary codebook among four coders reading the same transcripts. From these sessions EPIC modified the codebook, developed additional codes, and conducted reliability sessions to measure agreement among coders and to resolve coding inconsistencies. The same four EPIC team members coded the remainder of the transcripts from December 2019 through February 2020. EPIC coded within and across sites and used Dedoose software for all organization, reliability testing, and coding.



Findings

The remainder of this report details the site visit findings through an implementation science lens. EPIC starts by describing the perceived outcomes of Cohort 1 institutions' transformation work. What follows is an analysis, grounded in the Formula for Success and implementation stages, of how those outcomes came to be. In particular, EPIC illustrates how US PREP functions as the primary implementation team in guiding TPP transformation and identifies successes, challenges, and enabling conditions in each implementation stage. By analyzing the perceptions of Cohort 1 stakeholders alongside the implementation framework, EPIC makes recommendations for how US PREP can strengthen its technical assistance and engagement with TPPs.

The What: Post-Transformation Outcomes and Impacts

The following section presents the outcomes and impacts most frequently experienced by Cohort 1 institutions and stakeholders as a result of their engagement with US PREP. Overall, participants from across the sites experienced pronounced shifts toward more data-driven practices and experiences, deeper and mutually-beneficial K-12 and TPP partnerships, and well-prepared, confident, and effective candidates and graduates. However, US PREP's focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and culturally responsive teacher preparation practices was limited.

Programs experienced a culture shift toward more data-driven practices and aligned experiences

As a result of their engagement with US PREP, the four Cohort 1 sites made institutional and systemic changes in how they collect, share, analyze, and use data. According to participants from each site, such changes resulted in an overall culture shift toward more data-driven practices across faculty and K-12 districts. One significant impact, often attributed to Data Days and changes in internal data structures, is faculty members' increased awareness of and engagement in data collection and analysis.

There was not that focus on [data] and what has happened is since we have this focus of data to inform, now, everyone in the department, now has a more scholarly outlook on what's going on. That's part of that culture shift. Hey, I'm an instructor, I do have a PhD,

but I'm going to use this data to adjust this when I teach it again and reflect on things and revise them. I think it was just a matter of the leadership started treating everyone like professors and so they started acting like it. (Site 2 faculty)

With the consistent implementation of Data Days, faculty and stakeholders had a dedicated space for reflection. This increased buy-in for program transformation. According to Site 2 interviewees, some of the more reluctant program faculty became more invested after seeing data showing positive trends coinciding with transformational changes. Further, a more data-driven culture fostered by training and norming on the teacher candidate evaluation rubrics helped to break down well-established silos and build consistency, coherence, and a common language. Site 1 interviewees described how co-scoring has made the program better because it established inter-rater reliability and consistent feedback for teacher can-

didates across courses and field experiences. Representatives from Site 4 agreed, sharing how the consistent and common use of the rubric for Site Coordinators, mentor teachers, and teacher candidates helped all stakeholders recognize and use the same language and expectations.

The shift to a more data-driven system also influenced how faculty and programs worked to realign their courses and curriculum. Faculty have incorporated data to ensure not just vertical course alignment (i.e., semester-to-semester) but also what candidates are exposed to and learning across experiences within the same semester (a.k.a. horizontal course and program alignment). For instance, Site 1 faculty used POP cycle data showing that teacher candidates were not performing well in questioning to refine their teacher competencies rubric and incorporate questioning in more course instruction.

I think that it's a lot more robust. It feels, to me, like when I first came here as a clinical faculty member, it felt like the courses were all very isolated, very siloed. I feel like now, it feels more like it did when I worked in K-12. I feel like we're working more as a team and collaborating more, and we talk more about students in the program and benchmarks in the program. (Site 1 Site Coordinator)

I think we do more talking between the methods courses because we're sharing students and you can say, well have you noticed this? I don't get to see as a methods instructor, I don't get to see them teach as much, so I have to invent ways to...whether it's they teach in front of the class or they bring a snippet of a lesson for me to be able to say, yes they can teach science and social studies, but how it matches up is we do a lot more talking. We bring in a lot more about what's going on in their particular placements in the class than we used to because we have real kids to talk about and real situations. (Site 2 Site Coordinator)

US PREP has helped cultivate mutually beneficial university-school district partnerships aimed at creating a TPP to K-12 district pipeline

TPP and K-12 personnel across the four Cohort 1 sites described stronger partnerships as an overwhelmingly positive impact of the US PREP transformation work. While traditional student teaching models require TPPs to work with K-12 districts and schools to identify placements, participants said that those relationships were often superficial and transactional rather than mutually beneficial and intensive. Specifically, stakeholders described the use of Governance Meetings and shared data as a way of building co-ownership and accountability for the teacher candidates and their preparation experiences. These meetings and shifts to a more inclusive, data-driven culture help keep K-12 district partners informed about how the preparation program is working and keep program faculty abreast of the experiences of teacher candidates and graduates.

I do believe there is a true mutually beneficial aspect to [the district partnership] in that we are actually able to see what's happening in the schools and help our candidates understand that and not just have this view of this is what you need to be doing. That's why I do believe that the faculty piece is so important. (Site 1 leader)

Participants from all four sites identified the Site Coordinators as integral in fostering strong relationships and bridging the TPPs, teacher candidates, mentor teachers, and K-12 district and school leaders. Site Coordinators help keep all stakeholders informed, provide stakeholders with a common language to discuss goals, and create learning opportunities for teacher candidates that push them to be better teachers. Site Coordinators also had opportunities to gain greater insight into how school leaders and mentor teachers evaluate their teacher candidates and help refine candidate learning.

Finally, K-12 district personnel appreciated the year-long residencies, as they allowed candidates to experience a full-year within their schools. Traditional student teaching models could be disruptive to the candidates, mentor teachers, and K-12 students. According to one Site 4 district leader, the former model was not conducive to solid instruction and preparation.

Moving from these half semesters and saying we're going to leave them in the elementary schools for this number of days and then move them to the middle school or move them to the high school, all of that has dissipated. You're going to be placed at one particular site and that's where you will be. It doesn't matter whether you're at elementary, middle or high school, instruction, good solid instruction is good solid instruction at any level and you should be able to demonstrate that. That has been the greatest change. I just believe that it is the greatest change for the good. (Site 4 district leader)

The intensive residency experience also provides opportunities for teacher candidates to immerse themselves in the full teaching profession, including IEP meetings and other duties, such as car duty and attending professional development sessions.

District leaders shared that having teacher candidates train for a single year within the district makes them highly desirable for open teaching positions. Given the large commitment that K-12 districts make to partner with transforming programs, districts see the work as an investment that will yield highly effective teachers who already understand the communities in which they will work.

Districts know that the graduates will be what they are looking for because programs included district personnel in decision-making. Site 4 district personnel attend university job fairs and the superintendent, principal, and graduates share their experiences to help recruit potential candidates. One Site 2 district leader mentioned that they use recent-graduate hires as a form of advertising for the transformed program and are eager to snatch up any program completers.

We want to hire them. We want to say, look, you stay in education, when you walk across that stage, we'll be there with the contract.

That is our goal. We know the type of product quality that we're going to get. With this partnership, we were even more positive that the product is going to be even better because of us coming to the table and talking. (Site 2 district leader)

Both Site 1 and Site 2 partnerships are working together to build a "grow-your-own" model, where the K-12 district pushes their graduating students to attend the transformed TPP and return to the district as teachers. This is further evidence of TPPs and K-12 districts viewing teacher preparation as a collective enterprise.

Candidates and graduates are better prepared, more effective, and more confident, although they need more explicit training in DEI and culturally responsive teaching

As a result of the enhanced coursework, K-12 partnerships, and year-long residencies, program and district stakeholders perceive teacher candidates and graduates to be more effective than traditionally prepared candidates. One goal of the transformed program is to develop graduates who are "first day ready" or who perform like second-year teachers upon entering the classroom. Many participants believed that graduates from the transformed programs met these goals. Site 4 K-12 district personnel found graduates to be better prepared and more effective at differentiating instruction and planning to meet student needs. District personnel from Sites 1 and 3 echoed this perception, saying that because candidates participate in the whole cycle of teaching, they are very well-prepared compared to graduates before the transformation.

I hope that more universities will look at a model like this because I really and truly have seen it on both sides from the campus perspective and now from the district perspective and to see how wide and vast it can grow from a program over a course of a few years. It can really impact a district and their training. Those students that go through programs like this, it's very different for them their first year, I believe. They don't have their own classroom, but it's still different than having 8 weeks of training. (Site 3 district leader)



In interviews, candidates and graduates reported feeling highly confident in their knowledge and teaching practices as a result of their programs. Relative to peers in traditional models, Site 3 candidates felt better prepared, had more hands-on experience before entering their residency, and felt more confident upon entering the classroom. Specifically, the year-long model allowed them more time to follow their mentor teachers, to use data to gauge their students' progress, and to create a classroom community.

...Wherever my mentor teacher is at, I'm right there with her. A lot of the other teachers are starting to know my face. One thing my mentor teacher told me is that I'm part of this team, the kids know you as we're their teacher. (Site 3 candidate)

Candidates from Site 1 had similar experiences and found that they were better prepared to write goals and had more diverse sets of skills than their counterparts who completed a "rush certification."⁶ One Site 4 mentor teacher explained, "[A year-long residency] gives [candidates] a sense of confidence because you know that I did this for a year and now, all of the trepidation, the fears...it has decreased significantly because you know that you have been engaged in this for a whole year." Although there were many positives, candidates and graduates identified challenges with heavy workloads, lack of compensation, and feeling unsupported in offering bilingual education or special education.

Some candidates and graduates also expressed concerns regarding their preparation to teach high-priority students (e.g., Black, Latino, and low-income). According to interviews across the sites, US PREP does not explicitly provide intentional support for culturally responsive instruction to programs or candidates unless there is a specific request or need. "I haven't seen that as part of [US PREP's] vision or as part of what they helped us

formalize. In fact, that made me kind of sad that those weren't the things we were focusing on," said one Site 1 faculty member. As such, candidates are only exposed to what professors provide prior to entering the classroom. Some candidates and graduates said that they often discussed issues of social justice and equity in their classrooms. For instance, Site 3 traditionally has served under-represented populations of K-12 students, and as such, has made diversity and cultural competency a cornerstone of their work.

I don't think it's US PREP that's doing that. I think that our students, day 1, [faculty member] is going to hammer it into their head. The whole thing is our whole program includes diversity of intellectual, diversity of color, diversity of socioeconomic status from day 1 in all classes. The US PREP is now the practicing piece. Yes, we have some practice, supervised practiced, but I think our candidates really understand that students are different by the time they get into that. (Site 3 faculty)

Though stakeholders from one site shared how they incorporate discussions about institutionalized racism (Site 1), when asked to what extent candidates are prepared to teach students from under-represented populations, most sites shared that their only common and purposeful strategy for exposing students to culturally competent teaching is through diverse school placements. As such, candidates who are not exposed during their coursework may feel less prepared when starting a residency in a K-12 school serving high-priority populations. Site 2 candidates wished that they could have explored other districts and cities to gain a better understanding of different populations of students. Overall, none of the sites mentioned a comprehensive and cohesive effort to address culturally responsive pedagogies as a result of working with US PREP.

⁶The participant did not define "rush certification" during their interview.



The Who: US PREP Functions as the Primary Implementation Team

As a result of their transformation work with US PREP, stakeholders described impacts to their TPP, faculty, district partners, and teacher candidates. However, it is not enough to identify outcomes of US PREP’s model and technical assistance. Given US PREP’s ongoing work with TPPs, it is also important to examine the role played by US PREP in implementing technical assistance. As such, this section describes what implementation teams are and how they guide implementation locally and across support systems. This section also considers US PREP’s internal processes and systems as an implementation team.

Implementation teams⁷ serve as the primary catalyst for transformative implementation practices. These teams are made of three to five members with expertise in the following implementation practices:

- Developing and using a common language around implementation and transformation
- Engaging in talent development (e.g., recruiting, hiring, training, and placing high-quality personnel)

- Consistently applying data systems to monitor and evaluate internal systems and processes in reaching implementation outcomes
- Creating enabling conditions for transformation to succeed
- Building and fostering “cascading systems of supports” with common implementation frameworks for systemic change across stakeholders
- Guiding culture shifts toward shared accountability and learning

EPIC conceptualizes the US PREP staff, including leadership, RTs, and Clinical Coaches as the primary implementation team for the transformation work. In the following section, EPIC describes the team’s strengths, the challenges in functioning as an implementation team, and the role of the US PREP implementation team in developing Cohort 1 institutions’ implementation capacities.

⁷Jackson, K. R., Fixsen, D., & Ward, C. (2018). Four domains for rapid school improvement. National Implementation Research Network University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED583980.pdf>

US PREP is guided by common objectives, transparency, and data for continuous improvement

The main implementation team comprises the Executive Director, Senior Director of Content Development and Programming, Senior Director of Operations and Strategic Initiatives, and the Director of Data for Continuous Improvement. Overall, according to most of the US PREP interviewees, US PREP's talent and program development, site recruitment, data use, and implementation of local support systems are driven by the four quality objectives of its Developmental Framework:⁸

1. Programming builds teacher candidate competency to meet the needs of Black, Latino, and low-income students
2. Commitment to using data for continuous improvement
3. Ensuring teacher educators are effective in preparing novices to work with Black, Latino, and low-income students
4. Responsive to K-12 school systems and the communities they serve

By grounding their work in these objectives, US PREP builds a common language for implementation and transformation that transcends the internal team. The team also strives to model these practices for their coalition members. In describing the mission and vision of US PREP one leadership team member said:

This is an organization that's willing to take on some of the challenges that exist in teacher preparation and is willing to be brave and bold, and go across state lines and enter areas where there are different policies and procedures and different demographics. We have R1s all the way to historically Black colleges and universities, different demographics and dynamics and levels of capacity, and resources, and even cultural differences and changes. And say, 'What is our shared vision for teacher preparation? How do we learn from each other in teacher preparation? How do we improve together in teacher preparation?'

Using the quality objectives as a compass, US PREP interviewees describe their major responsibilities as listening to the university providers, being thoughtful about asking the right questions when engaging with university and district partners, and being intentional about breaking down silos and building a community of shared accountability. As one member described

This is what's interesting about US PREP and what I celebrate, that none of this is done in closed doors with a group of four people. Everything is collaborative, so it's open... That's something to celebrate. That's the anchor, that's the foundation.

The team's talent development strategy hinges not only on the expertise of personnel, but also, on their commitment to collaboration, data use, and equity for all students. In recruiting RTSs and Clinical Coaches, they select staff who are deeply knowledgeable about teacher preparation and who are open and transparent learners. US PREP also provides professional development for staff around equity and hosts retreats to foster open lines of communication between roles so that everyone is aware of what is happening in the field.

Given the open nature of the team, US PREP endeavors to incorporate the collection, analysis, and sharing of data for continuous internal improvement. US PREP holds internal, end-of-year staff meetings to review data—e.g., student perception surveys, individual transformation plans, quarterly progress reviews—and identify common trends across universities. The team then uses the data to develop more trainings—both for university providers and internally. One participant described the role of the Director for Data and Continuous Improvement:

...[The position helps] us to look at data in a different light because if data for continuous improvement is one of our quality objectives in the framework, then we need to spend a lot of time focusing on this. Plus, we need to model how we're using data to support university partners with using data in those same ways. Also, through Data Days, a lot of times we attend Data Days and we're using those

⁸US PREP developed the current Developmental Framework in collaboration with Cohort 1 stakeholders after their initial implementation period. As such, the formal framework was not in place during the first phases of Cohort 1 implementation.

opportunities to get additional data that maybe we haven't been able to collect and that data also helps to drive the work that we do as an organization internally and then also externally.

Despite the commitment to collecting and using different types of data for internal and external team improvement, US PREP interviewees say that their systematic use of data is still a work in progress. Specifically, they would like more space and time during the year to review and reflect on the data rather than in large chunks at the end of the year.

I think in part, we are constantly learning and trying to improve. A lot of that is motivated by what's happening on the day-to-day, and we rarely, particularly with our data use practices, we have not necessarily gone back to sit down and have our own US PREP data day, which we promote within the coalition, and say, what have we learned from our data this year? And I don't think it would just be one day. That is probably limited in terms of the resources that we have, the human capacity that we have, related to that and use practices.

US PREP strives to be more efficacious in providing equity-based technical assistance

According to US PREP interviewees—as well as the US PREP Developmental Framework—promoting DEI is a bedrock of the model and their technical assistance. Externally, staff believe that their model for high-quality teacher preparation (i.e., the “what” in the Formula for Success) is inherently equitable, as it provides high-quality and efficacious beginning teachers for K-12 students. However, in practice, equity is driven by promoting social justice in coursework and clinical experiences, encouraging the development of K-12 school partners and teacher candidates around social justice in education, and creating a mindset that all students can learn at high levels. For instance, one member of the US PREP leadership team said,

“That’s the key principle of our work and our Development Framework, is how diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice practices are part of every course and not seen as a separate course or something that operates outside of that.”

Internally, US PREP discusses cultural responsiveness, the importance of being open and having difficult conversations, and reviewing the data around race and ethnicity for teacher candidates and their partner districts. Interviewed staff members acknowledged that while US PREP is making strides toward more equitable practices within their model and technical assistance, there is still much work to be done. For instance, one US PREP staff member described the need to move toward more intentionality in how they collect, analyze, and share data, as well as make data-informed suggestions to instill culturally responsive pedagogies, particularly for high-priority populations and contexts.

I do not know that we have been intentional on either looking at research, addressing issues of inequality and education, addressing access, and others which are typically related to Hispanic, African-American, and low-socioeconomic status, and then have gone back to providers and said, ‘This is research-based practices that you need to adopt to address these particular student populations.’

Interviewees shared how US PREP staff are continuing their journey towards internal growth around issues of DEI. For instance, US PREP staff participated in experiences such as UnboundEd and continue to learn more about developing emotional intelligence and sharing materials with their coalition members. However, they are also relying on experts outside of their team to help them learn and reflect on their internal practices and those of their university partners.

I want to say that we are not experts in any way, nor do we even—we’ve cautioned our team, like, your job is not to facilitate crucial conversations about race with our providers. That is not our job. If we cross that line, then I think it could hurt us and hurt them...We’re not experts in that, and we don’t pretend to be. Framing is crucial.

US PREP develops multi-layered cascading systems of support across stakeholders

Implementation teams work to develop and foster a set of comprehensive systems of support. Such systems are put into place to establish enabling conditions, resources, and problem-solving strategies for each level of implementation. Furthermore, each system of support builds its own implementation team responsible for aligning its practices and language with the rest of the supports. The major purpose of the cascading system of supports is to build implementation capacity at each stakeholder level (e.g., university leadership, program faculty, K-12 personnel) and to provide resources to overcome barriers.

US PREP technical assistance creates systems of support at every level of implementation. In doing so, US PREP aims to facilitate opportunities for frequent communication between stakeholders, increase engagement in the transformation process, and extend participation in the monitoring of needs and maintaining open lines of communication. Establishing systems of support breaks down silos across systems and facilitates data sharing to improve practices. However, it is important to maintain a balance of top-down and bottom-up approaches to communication and implementation.

The Implementation Team extends beyond US PREP to stakeholders at each university. Local implementation teams become part of the “family” through trust and relationship building. According to US PREP, the work begins by establishing a “guiding coalition”, about 20 percent of willing and able faculty at each institution to spearhead the transformation. The cascading hierarchy of systems helps to ensure that work continues to progress and that there is support when teams hit barriers. This strategy also works to foster sustainability for post-transformation work. One RTS described the development of support systems as

...Providing [coalition members] with all the levels of support required for them to achieve their transformation goals...includes going there, to the university, minimally once a month, and rolling up sleeves, and doing the work of the work...The more forward-facing is

the support and working with them to ensure that they reach success with those goals.

Recommendation for US PREP as the primary implementation team

EPIC acknowledges US PREP’s commitment to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion within teacher preparation and beyond. First, US PREP grounds their Developmental Framework and Teacher Educator Practice Framework in issues of equity for Black, Latino, and low-income students, noting that high-quality teacher preparation incorporates DEI principles. US PREP leadership and staff have also participated in trainings with UnboundEd to build their internal competency around conscious and unconscious biases. Further, US PREP provides opportunities for coalition members to receive professional development through workshops and convenings and offers sessions with groups such as TeachingWorks and the Fellowship of Black Male Educators.

Despite these efforts, US PREP leadership and staff indicated a lack of self-efficacy around their ability to explicitly engage in critical conversations with coalition members about DEI and social justice in teacher education. EPIC commends US PREP’s acknowledgement of these challenges and agrees that disrupting practices that perpetuate educational inequities is a complex process. As such, EPIC recommends that US PREP continue to build their capacity for understanding and reflecting on their role in supporting culturally responsive education for themselves, teacher educators, and teacher candidates. Part of this work could be to purposefully research and identify explicit theories and practices and pedagogies to incorporate into technical assistance and to include them in the US PREP frameworks. Another potential strategy for bolstering DEI and culturally responsive pedagogy is to create an internal position at US PREP that is strictly dedicated to equity in teacher education and assessing the knowledge and practices of coalition members and US PREP staff.

The remaining sections include stakeholders’ perceptions of the role that US PREP staff play in developing these support systems and in providing technical assistance that helps TPPs implement the preparation model.

The How: Implementation Stages

Part of US PREP's responsibility as the primary implementation team is to guide TPPs through the four implementation stages. The following section explores stakeholders' perceptions of the activities, supports, successes, and challenges that Cohort 1 programs encountered throughout each of these stages—Exploration, Installation, Initial Implementation, and Full Implementation. Within each stage, EPIC identifies recommendations for US PREP as they continue to refine their technical assistance and implementation efforts.

Exploration and Installation

The first and second phases of active implementation are Exploration and Installation. During the Exploration phase, the Implementation Team regularly meets with relevant stakeholders to determine the needs of the site, the roles of local implementation team members, capacity for transformation, and fit with other concurrent initiatives and priorities. Typically, this stage can last for months before moving to the next. The hallmark of this time is that both the site and the Implementation Team come to a mutual decision to proceed. Coming to this shared conclusion requires the site to have clarity and understanding of the goals of the work, the involvement of staff, and pertinent timelines. Likewise, this time should result in the Implementation Team gaining a clear picture of the organization's commitment to transformation and its capacity for change in its setting and context. Implementation Teams often disregard or rush through this stage.

In Installation, the stage is set for progression. The stage begins as Exploration progresses and resource needs, tasks, and roles become clear. This is also the time when the Implementation Team readies local teams through intensive trainings, supports, and personnel recruitment. The Implementation Team identifies the pilot programs, meets with key stakeholders, begins adjusting structures and schedules, and fully installs activities to move toward Initial Implementation.

To analyze stakeholders' perceptions of these early implementation stages, EPIC categorized processes and events that occurred from the introduction of US PREP to the member universities through the

initial implementation of pilot programs. This period includes any initial meetings or convenings participants had with US PREP, the application process, onboarding, and the initial training and coaching sessions.

Regional Transformation Specialists and coalition activities were the most impactful technical assistance during Exploration and Installation

Three of the four universities expressed that US PREP personnel, particularly the Executive Director and their assigned RTS, were most critical to working through the initial stages of implementation and building local implementation teams. University personnel especially appreciated US PREP's assistance in connecting their TPP with K-12 district and state leaders, as well as helping to design their action plans. A Site 2 faculty member felt that US PREP's human capital grounded in consistent, two-way communication was most critical to initial success. A local implementation team member from Site 3 agreed, saying *"[The RTS] is coming several times, she's doing PD, she's working with faculty."*

The RTSs are chiefly responsible for "boots-on-the-ground" installation, moving programs into the first phases of Initial Implementation. According to US PREP staff, the RTS is responsible for vetting potential coalition members, helping staff local implementation teams (e.g., Site Coordinators, K-12 partners), and keeping teams on track. As one RTS put it, reminding local implementation teams, *"What is the worth of our work?"* One Site 1 faculty member said, *"They just helped us think through various things like student teaching in class, mentor teacher trainings, Governance meetings, support for Site Coordinators, training the Site Coordinators, all those things. It really was boots-on-the-ground with helping us roll [the transformation] out."* Stakeholders at Sites 3 and 4 mentioned that the RTSs' passion and understanding of the transformation work helped to keep the local implementation teams focused and moving forward.

Specific activities, such as convenings, also helped to smooth the transition of programs into early implementation. Stakeholders across all four sites found the initial convenings, though at times disjointed or unfocused early on, largely beneficial for

networking purposes and to get district partners on board. Faculty members from Sites 1 and 3 appreciated US PREP's inclusion of university faculty and K-12 district partners in the convenings, especially as they were initiating deeper partnerships. University leaders also valued the time specifically for administrators to discuss challenges and to build their network. As one Site 4 administrator said *"It's an a-ha moment when you say, 'These other universities have the same challenges that we're having' and we all commiserate."*

Regardless of needs assessments, US PREP did not get a complete understanding of some programs' contexts

As part of its Exploration activities, US PREP contracted TPI-US to conduct evaluations of each Cohort 1 program as a needs assessment. Several stakeholders found TPI's assessments to be helpful in orienting their work and understanding their areas of focus. *"...TPI and trainings, that has just blown up for us in a positive way,"* said one Site 3 faculty member. Despite these initial evaluations, participants from Sites 1 and 2 expressed frustration that US PREP did not research the historical and cultural contexts of their programs early in the implementation process. For instance, faculty from Site 1 felt that US PREP was not prepared for the high level of diversity within their teacher candidate population, nor to what extent the transformation model could be adjusted to fit candidates' unique needs.

For Site 2, stakeholder perceptions conflict regarding whether and how well US PREP understood the contexts in which the program was set. Site 2 leadership expressed their satisfaction with the time US PREP spent researching and asking questions about the program. However, faculty shared different opinions. As one faculty member stated about a geographical challenge with clinical placements, *"Some of it is they had to get to know what our issues were because our issues are not their issues. We are not in an urban area where [the program] can have 17 student teachers in 3 schools."*

Not having a complete understanding of programs' contexts hindered initial buy-in efforts, according to stakeholders in these sites. For instance, Site 1's history of top-down initiatives with little faculty input made faculty skeptical of US PREP's motives. As one faculty member said,

"...there was skepticism because of how this would be forced to take place as opposed to how do we generate buy-in around ideas, so how do we get people focused on the end goal..." Faculty at Site 2 felt that US PREP did not value their expertise and knowledge in teacher preparation, making the transformation processes initially off-putting to faculty.

In contrast, participants from Site 4 noted that US PREP requested more contextual data on the institution's and program's history and culture to better understand the TPP, including its focus on social and emotional learning. Having this understanding was helpful to buy-in and building a more responsive model.

Selection and inclusion of Site Coordinators in the local implementation team is critical to successful installation

Part of the Installation Stage involves early clarity around the selection criteria and role of the site coordinators. Such proactive clarity can help ensure that recruitment, hiring, and training is completed with ample time to include Site Coordinators in the earliest stages of transformation work with the local implementation team. US PREP views the Site Coordinator as the crux of their model, bridging the TPP to the K-12 district and to the teacher candidates. Though there are slight nuances depending on each program's needs and settings, US PREP recommends that programs look for individuals who have led adults as clinical faculty, coached teachers, and worked on curriculum revisions. Site Coordinators should be able to build relationships with principals, help select mentor teachers, build close relationships with K-12 district leaders, and use data to foster faculty discussions. Other helpful qualifications include ties to the K-12 district and knowledge of the community (Site 1), responsiveness with feedback and coaching support (Site 3), and an ability to honor faculty experiences and knowledge (Site 4).

With these qualifications, Site Coordinators need to be able to build a bridge between the different stakeholders, especially early on, as part of the local implementation team. As one Site 2 faculty member shared:

We had a Site Coordinator who kept everything very close. All the cards were hidden

and then once it was opened, which I think lessons learned, because now when we go in, we immediately do that. We're like, 'Bring everybody to the table', but that was something that we needed."

The inclusion of Site Coordinators in the initial implementation team ensures that all necessary stakeholder support systems are represented during the Installation and Initial Implementation periods. Broadening representation in the local implementation teams is critical to garner buy-in and amass proper resources.

At [CITY] Public School District, they see [the Site Coordinator] as their employee, but she's also our employee. I think that's the kind of relationship you need. The lines need to blur about who works for who because we all have a common goal. (Site 4 Leadership)

Enabling Conditions and Recommendations for Exploration and Installation

The Exploration and Installation Stages require the Implementation Team to conduct deep research on the site settings, culture, history, geography, and concurrent initiatives and values. This understanding and knowledge helps foster smooth transitions. This research is crucial for US PREP, particularly when recruiting and interviewing potential coalition members to (1) ensure best fit between both the institution and US PREP; (2) determine leadership characteristics of the institution; (3) pre-emptively strategize communication and roll-out to faculty; and (4) assign roles and decision-making structures early on.

Ensure best fit between the institution and US PREP.

Stakeholders from all four sites agreed on the importance of establishing a shared mission and values with US PREP at the start of the transformation journey. For instance, institutions that were already shifting towards a year-long residency model—as a result of new state policies or an internal recognition of a need to improve—felt that the alignment needed for successful transformation was already established. In addition, participants and US PREP staff recognized the importance of ensuring that a

broad representation of stakeholders are invested in changing the program to meet more evidence-based standards and practices amid other, potentially competing initiatives. As one US PREP staff member explained:

Knowing that [institutions] are balancing other agendas, right? Like we're not their only agenda. They're balancing state policies and state initiatives, quite possibly, and more likely several different other grants...Ensuring there's a lot of communication with faculty, and then how to position this work so that it's all one program where we're moving as opposed to separate initiatives that are happening.

To ensure common motivations and aligned initiatives, US PREP should first define criteria for and then ensure best fit between the institution and themselves. US PREP can use the Exploration and Installation phases to dive deeper into the state and local policy landscape to ensure that their model is compatible with current and upcoming changes. Further, US PREP should understand how other initiatives and grants in the TPP may conflict with the transformation work or stretch TPP personnel too thin.

Determine leadership characteristics of the institution.

Leadership styles and dynamics within and across programs can greatly impact early implementation and successful scaling and sustainability. US PREP should continue to deeply investigate and assess the power structures of a potential coalition member before partnering with them. According to Cohort 1 stakeholders, strong, open-minded, and committed leaders, such as Deans, Department Chairs, and even Provosts, can help ensure cohesiveness and faculty buy-in. Prominence and clout, as well as limited leadership transitions in the program, are also important. For instance, one Site 3 participant believed that the partnership with US PREP was not a good fit because of the shifts and disorientation within the program.

The thing that doesn't make it a good fit is we had a huge organizational upheaval. We've gone through multiple mid-level organizational leadership changes within our teacher education programs. It all just bounces around. We're not just this perfectly stable entity that joined US PREP...It's just a big mess thrown up against the wall.

Preemptively strategize communication and roll-out to faculty.

When embarking on program transformation, it is difficult to include all stakeholders and ensure that everyone is well-informed and has a voice. As such, communication via US PREP and/or the local implementation team is essential to gain buy-in and move the work forward. Challenges around initial communication with faculty were prevalent across the four Cohort 1 institutions. Often, stakeholders felt that US PREP's framing and presentation of the initiative was off the mark and did not consider the cultural or historical contexts and experiences of the faculty. For instance, Site 4 participants interpreted the presentation of information as "dumped on them," especially as leadership did not share the initial process or decision making with faculty. Similarly, one faculty member from Site 1 explained

...I don't ever believe that US PREP's intent was ever to come in and be like, 'You all are not doing a good job.' It was how do you re-frame that this idea—that there are things that we're doing well and there are things that we can improve and we're here to ensure that we can do that and support that process.

To address unease and frustration with "top-down" initiatives, stakeholders suggest US PREP provide more training to Deans and Department Chairs who are charged with communicating the transformation work to faculty and staff.

I truly think because as professionals, we all see the benefits of US PREP and value the expertise there. If it isn't already, I think it will be great for it to be considered going forward if there's a piece added to train department heads on how to present such information so that you can make sure that you have buy-in from day one. I think that would be really critical because you need the faculty to make it work. (Site 4 faculty)

Assign roles and decision-making structures early on.

Determining roles—across the support systems and local implementation team—and the flow of decision-making helps to overcome barriers. Site 1 participants found that the lack of clarity around who had decision-making authority, particularly related

to rank across clinical and tenure-track faculty, was challenging. Most stakeholders agree that assigning roles to a broader range of program personnel is essential to building owner equity.

I don't think there was as much collaboration as there was. It was very much a top-down event. At some point, we actually questioned [US PREP]—'You said collaboration but this doesn't feel like collaboration.' We were told that it's really not collaboration. It'll be collaboration once we're on the same [page]. That was a little problematic. (Site 1 faculty)

As such, US PREP could require representatives from all program and K-12 stakeholders to be included on initial applications and interview processes to ensure maximum buy-in. This group would be like one site's Task Force, comprised of faculty, leadership, K-12 partners, and teacher candidates.

US PREP should assist with determining decision-making procedures and authority. Both Sites 1 and 2 worked to establish clear roles and designate decision-making authority and day-to-day responsibilities. Specifically, Site 1 leadership chose to support the initiative from afar, giving faculty leaders space to effectively communicate, implement the transformation work, and gain faculty buy-in. *"I want to get a little more involved in the Data Day work, but initially, we just decided that I was a distraction and it underscored my investment of confidence in [faculty member] and [faculty member],"* said the Site 1 Dean. Knowing who would be leading transformation efforts and who would be capable of making administrative decisions was key to more efficient implementation.

Overall, stakeholders' perceptions indicate that US PREP can embed opportunities for further research and assessments of potential coalition members' readiness, fit, context, and leadership styles during a deepened Exploration Stage. Once signed on and moving into the Installation Stage, US PREP should provide specific training on communication for staff and faculty and help designate roles and responsibilities for a broad range of stakeholders. It should be noted that, according to US PREP, the organization instituted information gathering sessions for Cohort 2 institutions to learn more about each program's context, strengths, deficiencies, and how to leverage their expertise in the coalition. Further, US PREP asked Cohort 2 teams to

self-assess on the Developmental Framework as part of their transformation kick-off. These changes indicate that US PREP may already be addressing concerns related to Exploration and Installation.

Initial Implementation

This section describes the initial implementation and early outcomes of the transformed model and the role of US PREP's technical assistance in driving towards those outcomes.

According to US PREP staff, the essential ingredients or non-negotiable elements of their high-quality, scaled, and sustainable teacher preparation model are centered around three foci—(1) rigorous and practice-based coursework, (2) effective teacher educators, and (3) data collection, analysis, and usage. More specifically, staff identified the following elements as critical to the model:

- POP (pre-observation, observation, post observation) Cycle
- Governance meetings between TPPs and the K-12 district partners
- Diversification of student clinical placements
- Site Coordinators
- Clinical Coaches
- Intentionally selected and trained mentor teachers

While there are other important foundations to the model, such as the year-long residency, Data Days, and establishing a common vision for teacher and teacher educator practices, US PREP interviewees identified the bullets above as the most important components to a successful model. Additionally, they say flexibility in which components of the model are implemented and when those components are implemented is important to ensure owner equity and sustainability.

...It's okay to be flexible. Still have those foundational things where we say these are the things that, for lack of a better word, are not negotiable, but we're learning that we can be somewhat flexible in what it looks like and sounds like for each university based on, you know, their human capital, what their state and policy is saying teacher prep should consist of. (US PREP leadership)

RTSs were critical in providing much needed support in communication and high-quality PD

Like the Installation Phase, all four Cohort 1 sites indicated that their RTS was critical to the initial implementation and faculty roll-out work. Namely, the RTS helped keep the central tenets of the model at the forefront, particularly when local implementation teams faced negative feedback from faculty and staff. Stakeholders from Site 2 felt that their RTS brought different perspectives to the work, allowing for more creative ways to solve problems based on their experiences with other universities. RTSs were also viewed as valuable human capital, and always responsive to the needs of their coalition members.

She came once a month starting out my first year and she assisted me in planning my syllabus and making the transition...at the same time, we had two dual programs going on. We had our traditional where they weren't going through the US PREP model and then we had those who were going through the US PREP model. We were very strategic in planning out the differences to make sure that we were fulfilling the criteria for the US PREP model. (Site 4 faculty)

In addition to supporting the initial communication about implementation, RTSs were responsible for providing professional development opportunities for faculty and K-12 staff. Stakeholders across all sites found the US PREP trainings to be beneficial, valuable, and available for all actors. According to one Site 1 participant, previous program improvement efforts centered on how to "better the program" and face-to-face meetings were compliance-based. However, US PREP's PD also focused on how to improve faculty practices as teacher educators.

It was always about the students and how they're doing and what their outcomes were, which I guess, indirectly, we also care whether or not we're good teacher educators, but we weren't really putting that up top of, how are we developing ourselves as a program and as faculty members and as teacher educators and then what are we doing to support students... That was a key piece of the US PREP, and that it had not been before. (Site 1 faculty)

Professional development opportunities, especially presented by the RTSs were essential

in the beginning stages of buy-in and unification. As Site 2 stakeholders explained, early buy-in at their site was limited as only a select group of faculty, including the Site Coordinator, received trainings and materials from US PREP. However, once the PD was extended to all faculty, there was a noticeable shift in enthusiasm. As such, the PD began to build a more common language and vision around cohesive learning opportunities.

Shifting to a year-long residency model was the first, and often, most arduous task

When asked about the initial implementation steps, most stakeholders across the four Cohort 1 sites said that their first, and often most difficult task, was initiating a year-long residency model. While most saw the need and potential for incorporating a full year of clinical experience, there was pushback and challenges during the initial roll-out. For instance, Site 2 faculty felt that such a drastic shift so early in the transformation felt forced and mandated rather than a collective action. Site 4 participants indicated that trying to align the year-long experiences with the university's timeline and policies made the transition very challenging.

In the beginning, with the pilot, I know one of our goals was we wanted to go to the year-long internship, but we ran into some challenges with it as far as university approval times and deadlines where you have to notify students. It has to be in the catalog. But one way we worked around it is we allowed students to volunteer for the one-year internship and some did and some didn't. Some saw it as possibly slowing them down for their graduation. (Site 4 leadership)

Further, Sites 1, 2, and 3 expressed difficulty in accommodating their teacher candidates' needs while still adhering to the transformation plan. For instance, many of the teacher candidates enrolled in the programs have limited financial resources. As such, transportation to their clinical placements or not being able to work because of the full-time hours that year-long residencies require are hardships for many teacher candidates. Clinical placements that were located far from campus or candidates' homes exacerbated these challenges. As such, Site Coordinators and administrators were tasked with balancing the requirements of the program with the needs of their teacher candidates.

Most of our kids work three jobs and do school full-time. So five days a week, we'll lose them financially because they cannot financially go five days a week without having to work some time during the day. It's something we need to consider with our population. So what does that look like? What's the options for those kids? (Site 3 faculty)

For Site 4, recruiting teacher candidates to participate in a year-long residency was also difficult given little incentive. As one Site 4 district leader said, "...[Teacher candidates] are giving a year, how can we reward them for this?"

Other challenges included disjointed models based on specific courses or instructors, lack of consistency across teacher candidates, and a lack of clear guidelines and expectations. As one Site 1 teacher candidate described, "*The guidelines that were taught the first semester, they switched in the second semester, so it confuses us.*"

Implementation of the year-long residency looked different across the four universities based on their unique contexts. Some sites required teacher candidates begin the year in the classrooms with their mentor teachers before the K-12 year officially began. For instance, Site 2 candidates attended pre-opening staff professional development sessions with their mentor teachers to gain the full teaching experience. Site 1 Site Coordinators required teacher candidates remain afterschool to build relationships with families and community members within their placements. At other sites, student teachers started the year by attending their placements for several half-days for the fall semester and then moving to full days for the spring.



Centering data through Data Days and Governance Meetings brought collective accountability

A major element of US PREP's model for high-quality and sustainable teacher preparation is for programs to collect and analyze data for program improvement routinely, purposefully, and collaboratively. Put more succinctly, US PREP works to help institutions explore and apply best practices in data use. To help Cohort 1 programs become more data-driven, US PREP offered technical assistance in the form of co-developing data action plans, working with relevant parties to structure data management systems, and helping Site Coordinators facilitate Data Days and Governance Meetings. For instance, US PREP encouraged faculty, K-12 principals, and Site Coordinators to ground their meetings in the most recent data. Further, though Site 2 was already moving toward more data-driven practices, stakeholders there acknowledged that US PREP provided more structure and momentum by making data more accessible for faculty and stakeholders. One Site 2 participant shared that US PREP's attention to data and challenges to the local implementation team to examine how they collect and use data was most helpful to them in working through their transformation.

Stakeholders across the four sites most often referred to teacher candidate evaluation data as being some of the most impactful to their transformation work. Participants agreed that because US PREP provided space for sites to refine the TAP rubric to best fit their individual needs, faculty and staff were more responsive to the shift in their use. Each site described how US PREP allowed them to align their evaluation protocols and tools based on either state rubrics or by focusing on only a subset of indicators. One Site 1 faculty member explained, *"We said these are the things that we want to observe. These are the practices that we care about and so this is what we're going to focus on as part of the rubric."*

Collaborative sensemaking of the teacher candidate evaluation rubrics also helped build a common discourse across support systems. Participants from Sites 1 and 2 described the collaborative processes they engaged in to select the rubrics and focal indicators which helped create a

common goal and language across faculty, staff, and Site Coordinators.

We were a collection of really good classes, really good courses...can't really say we were a program. We were individually doing good things. I don't know if anybody, except me and another person that was in charge, knew what rubric we were using in student teaching to assess students. It was like student teaching was this other thing. (Site 1 faculty)

While US PREP provided PD for program faculty around their teacher candidate evaluation rubrics every other month, participants from Site 4 still indicated that some faculty felt isolated when the team did not explain changes made to the TAP rubric.

We even had instances where it was hard to get faculty to attend the PDs...I think some of the faculty members who were not attending started to feel left out. They started to see that this has been going on for a while and they start hearing people talking about TAP rubric, POP Cycle, Governance Meetings and all these buzz words of US PREP and they just didn't know what that meant. (Site 4 leadership)

Participants from the four Cohort 1 sites agreed that US PREP's introduction of Data Days and Governance Meetings helped to build collaboration and equitable ownership of transformation. Data Days are conceptualized as internal program meetings wherein all program faculty and staff come together to review teacher candidate data. Governance Meetings are typically conducted alongside K-12 district and school leaders and mentor teachers and often incorporate teacher candidate and K-12 district data.

Despite these definitions of Data Days and Governance Meetings, sites adopted their own processes and procedures. For instance, Site 3 conducted reviews of the data by unit area and then shared with the rest of the faculty. Faculty from Sites 1 and 4 invited their K-12 district partners to TPP Data Days to continue to strengthen the relationship between faculty and K-12 administrators.

Further, Site 1 participants said that the first Data Day was the first time everyone came together as a group to examine the data and make decisions about the program. Discussing the data together helped to validate or challenge faculty assumptions about the program.

Sometimes, we would have Data Days that would be with [K-12 district stakeholders], so we'd have Site Coordinators and we would have faculty and those were probably some of the most valuable days that we had. Those would be specifically where we'd be looking at lesson observation or POP Cycle data. (Site 1 faculty)

Site 3 participants found that facilitators shared timely data during Data Days, making it more efficient to make real-time changes, where possible. *"I think that the transformation model is looking at data in a timely fashion where you can actually do something about it,"* shared one Site 3 faculty member. Shared data also helps US PREP staff pivot their technical assistance, as needed. As one US PREP staff member stated, *"A lot of times we attend Data Days and we're using those opportunities to get additional data that maybe we haven't been able to collect...to drive the work...internally and then also externally."*

Stakeholders across the four Cohort 1 sites and their K-12 district partners agreed that the introduction of Governance Meetings also helped to build equitable ownership of the teacher candidates' preparation. Mutual conversations about TPP and K-12 district data helped to solidify the bridge between the two systems. US PREP provides Site Coordinators with templates for running the Governance Meetings, which helped them go smoothly at the beginning. Similar to Data Days, Governance Meetings also help system stakeholders develop and define their vision for effective teaching. Governance Meetings also create more buy-in across stakeholders when they are confronted with data about teacher candidates and mentor teachers.

When we have the Governance Meetings, that's the opportunity where they share data and also they want the teacher candidates to know you have to look at student data, so that you can determine where the child is and then, see the levels of growth based on that baseline data. (Site 4 district partner)

Enabling Conditions and Recommendations for Initial Implementation Activities

Clustering residency experiences where possible.

Participants from several sites expressed frustration with the geographic limitations of school placements. Site 3 candidates and faculty, for instance, discussed teacher candidates having to travel up to 90 minutes one way to get to their placements while still completing homework and attending courses. While effective, well-prepared teachers are needed in distal and rural areas, faculty and K-12 districts found it difficult to recruit candidates to travel so much. Likewise, some K-12 school sites were too small to host a cluster of teacher candidates.

We found out about the grant a little later than normal as far as placement goes, and so the students that came, it was a small group and the students that came were not necessarily students that probably, if they had their choice, they wouldn't say, 'Hey, I want to drive an hour and a half to go student teach.' That's really what was happening. We had students that wanted to be a part of a year-long internship, but they were driving too far. I wouldn't wish that on any first-year teacher. We didn't have a great retention rate... (Site 2 district partner)

Site Coordinators from several sites also commented that having so many candidates spread across placements, especially different districts, made scheduling and preparing for Governance Meetings more difficult. These concerns were heightened when stakeholders discussed challenges with scaling the transformed model, particularly for recruiting more students and engaging with other K-12 districts.

We know if we say you can't go teach in the school district that you want, that creates transportation issues for students. That's a legitimate concern because now we're saying instead of driving ten minutes, I need you to drive 40 minutes and that's a big deal...Then, there were conversations of, if we don't do this, then now the Site Coordinator is having

to make that same transportation drive because they're going to have to go see the student at the school and they're not going to be able to develop the same relationship with that school. (Site 2 faculty)

We have our current student teachers from [DISTRICT] to [DISTRICT] to [DISTRICT] to [DISTRICT] to [DISTRICT], so we are not just in this area, we are everywhere and we have made previous programs, made it fit for student teachers. That they can go back home to [DISTRICT], live with their parents and have their laundry done and do their student teaching at the school that they grew up in. We've got some of those programs, but to have the year-long residency we need to be closer. We can't just have two down there. We have to have the group in an area and that brings us more centralized when one of our benefits has been we've got this large area and the diverse options. (Site 3 faculty)

Given these challenges, US PREP could assist TPPs to partner with K-12 districts that have a large enough capacity to house clusters of teacher candidates. Likewise, when that is not possible, helping programs find creative ways to offer travel assistance or compensation, such as carpooling, virtual classes, or mileage. For instance, to better understand and accommodate challenges, Site 2 administers surveys to teacher candidates prior to assigning them placements and creates carpooling arrangements or tries to keep openings in the closest schools for students with transportation issues. EPIC acknowledges the tension between clustering placements within districts to enable deeper partnerships and meeting the placement needs of teacher candidates and more remote districts. To mitigate this challenge, sites may opt to offer remote options or other varied clinical practices across locales.

Identify mentor teacher criteria early in the partnership to ensure enough capacity.

Selecting, training, and collaborating with mentor teachers looked different across the four Cohort 1 sites. Participants from all sites described the role Site Coordinators play in training mentor teachers, however, the ownership of the selection of mentor teachers differed across sites. Site 4 participants

noted that they first recruited mentor teachers through an application process but that collaborating with principals was more beneficial. Site 1 relied mostly on principal recommendations of mentor teachers with little collaboration with the program, or as one participant said, *"We don't get to hand-pick the mentor teachers."* As such, teacher candidates were concerned about the quality of the mentors, given that some had alternative licensure or did not choose to participate in the program.

...We're getting placed with teachers who have alternative certifications, so they didn't go to school for education, so they don't understand what we're doing. They don't understand why we have to student teach for a year, they don't understand why we have to do all these things and why we need to know. (Site 1 candidate)

Sites also experienced high turnover rates of mentor teachers during the school placement years, causing disruption for teacher candidates. Others found that some of their participating mentor teachers actively resisted culturally responsive pedagogies, conflicting with the TPPs' values and instruction. All of these discordant elements often resulted in mixed messages for teacher candidates. *"That was the hardest part for me because [the Site Coordinator's and the mentor teacher's] feedback was so different because they were assessing me on two different things,"* said a Site 2 graduate.

To combat these issues, Sites 3 and 4 used the teacher candidate evaluation rubrics and the Site Coordinator's coaching and co-teaching as a way to collaborate and build a common language and understanding. Although this came later in the implementation process, such practices helped maintain consistency across teacher candidate experiences during their residencies. US PREP has also made changes to their processes and systems with regards to mentor teacher selection and training based on program data.

How we used data—it was in the moment, we were adjusting...we ended up creating real clear mentor selection structures, real clear and supportive training structures for mentor teachers, very much moving towards objective evidence for collection around performance of candidates, instead of subjective, which was still happening in the traditional model, it was just rapid changes and growth. (US PREP staff)

To further ensure consistent messages, objectives, and experiences within and across stakeholders, US PREP can help TPPs and K-12 districts work together to define mentor teacher criteria, including certification types, performance, dispositions, and interest, prior to beginning the formal partnership. This step would be best incorporated in the Installation Stage to help Site Coordinators refine their training and coaching of mentor teachers early on and to create a common vision and framework for clinical experiences.

Assisting programs with identifying sustainable funding models

Participants across the sites acknowledged that the task of transitioning to a yearlong residency model was complex but crucial to the transformation. Specifically, stakeholders mentioned that funding for the Site Coordinators, teacher candidates, and other faculty stipends would be important to scale and sustain this valuable aspect of their programs. As such, EPIC recommends that US PREP continues to provide specific training and guidance to local implementation teams for identifying and securing sustainable funding sources and systems.

One strategy could include US PREP leveraging their political knowledge and experiences to connect coalition members to local and national philanthropic organizations early on in their implementation efforts. This work could include US PREP inviting funders to coalition retreats and convenings, offering workshops on grant seeking activities, and continuing to increase their reach by sharing resources, stories, and research with potential funders. Networking with external funders during the early stages of implementation builds a temporary financial bridge as providers build more self-sustaining internal funding streams.

A subsequent strategy would foster more institutionalized and systemic avenues for funding that would inherently be a part of the internal program structure. This work could require that coalition applicants include a high-ranking institutional administrator, such as a Provost, in their local implementation team. Ensuring the support of leaders who can advocate for and allocate more funding for programs helps to internalize and streamline the funding process. For instance, Site 4 stakeholders included the Provost in sustainability planning resulting in financial support.

That shows the level of value when you have a Provost that puts their money behind them... when they support you financially, you know you have buy-in. That was monumental. That also helps sustainability because now, we don't have to worry about a Dean change... (Site 4 leadership)

Other activities include creative collaboration with district partners, such as providing candidates with substitute teacher pay during their residencies, collaborating with thought-partners like Public Impact to enact strategic staffing solutions, or redistributing course credits thereby reallocating more money to residencies and essential staff. US PREP can aid the sustainability of program transformation by guiding local implementation teams to develop their own funding strategies.

Full Implementation

This section describes the transition from Initial Implementation to Full Implementation and the current challenges post-transformation institutions face. Our findings suggest that as each institution transitioned from the first stages of implementation to scaling up and sustaining the transformed model, US PREP scaffolded and phased out their technical assistance. While US PREP strives to help program participants feel that their transformation process and model belongs to the stakeholders throughout implementation, we found that Full Implementation was marked by a release of US PREP's technical assistance and complete ownership of the transformation by the program stakeholders. According to participants, the RTSs were most integral in leading the transformed program from the pilot to its full implementation, scale-up, and sustainability. This included making accommodations to model components to ensure best-fit and fostering exploration of other, less defined aspects of the program, such as supporting course refinements.

During this final stage of implementation and into post-transformation, stakeholders from all four Cohort 1 sites (1) continued to systematically collect, analyze, and use data for program improvement; (2) relied on the Site Coordinators for scale-up and sustainability; and (3) expressed concerns and challenges with scaling up and sustaining their membership in the US PREP coalition.

Transformed programs continued to systematize and institutionalize data use for collaborative progress monitoring and program improvement

Collaborative and structured data collection, equitable access to data across stakeholders, and the application of lessons learned from data were the most mentioned aspects of Full Implementation across all sites. At the time of the site visits, all four institutions had initiated systematic and purposeful structures to collect, share, co-analyze, and apply program, candidate, and K-12 district data for continuous improvement. All sites have expanded the type, number, and focus of their data collection efforts. For instance, Site 2 now implements teacher candidate, mentor teacher, and Governance Meeting surveys and activities, which stakeholders find useful in their practices.

“Prior to US PREP, there was not a focus on the data-driven work. Since then, it has caused a culture shift, making necessary adjustments, and reflecting on changes, leadership acknowledged faculty abilities and with that, they improved. Reviewing score data to determine which areas need to be improved has encouraged lesson plan revisions. (Site 1 faculty)”

Programs have also been more intentional in how they store, access, and share data within the institution and with external stakeholders, such as US PREP, K-12 district leaders, and the teacher candidates and mentor teachers. Participants across the sites continued to find Data Days and Governance Meetings beneficial to strengthening teacher candidate preparation and partnerships within and across program areas and K-12 districts. Site 4 now requires their teacher candidates to examine and reflect on their own data to help them learn how to analyze educational data and refine their teaching. Teacher candidates from Site 3 also analyze their Student Perceptions Survey data as a way to build their data literacy. To help facilitate this sharing and co-analysis, data is housed in more accessible platforms, such as Google Docs and data dashboards. According to Site 3 participants, their data dashboard is the only connection to US PREP that some program faculty have. Participants also noted that sharing data in this way relieved some of the burden placed on data managers or assessment coordinators.

This model has forced everybody, it’s not just on my back anymore. It has forced me to be willing to work with people who may have some reluctance of looking at data. For me, I could just take it and say I got this. Now everybody is engaged. It takes an awesome burden off me. Data is not just my role. Data collection and analysis is everybody’s role. That’s a plus. (Site 4 staff)”

Full Implementation was also marked by new applications of data for continuous program improvement. Examples include using new data for accreditation, helping mentor teachers reflect and improve their coaching and classroom teaching practices, creating data-driven field experiences based on stakeholder perceptions, and continuing to support teacher candidates in the field and in their complementary student teaching seminars. Coinciding with the application of data was the deepening of the relationships between the TPPs and their K-12 district partners. For example, Site 3 administrators noted that the faculty and staff initially felt that the Student Perceptions Survey was a burden and not useful. However, once they began sharing and co-analyzing the data with their K-12 district partners, program faculty found it to be immensely helpful in building a working relationship based on mutual accountability.

Everybody’s nice and friendly and gets along and it’s all great, but with these cohorts, when you actually sit down and have those Governance Meetings and you’re really looking at district data, campus-level data, and saying here are specific things that we see that have an impact one way or the other. I think that is just a whole different type of relationship. (Site 3 leader)”

Programs relied on Site Coordinators for scaling and sustainability

Participants from all four institutions acknowledged the essential role Site Coordinators play in maintaining partnerships, supporting mentor teachers and teacher candidates, and taking on more leadership roles spanning the faculty and K-12 district. These responsibilities foster the shift from pilot program to a more sustainable and scaled program, building autonomy within the TPP once US PREP is no longer offering technical assistance. *“The resources were great, the funding was*

great, but it was the human capital and having that voice and language and the narrative resources we needed to go to our school partners,” said one Site 2 faculty member.

Initial Site Coordinators also coach and oversee new Site Coordinators, a mechanism to support sustainability. According to the K-12 partners for Site 1, this work requires Site Coordinators to develop and effectively communicate calibrated and common expectations and objectives across the Site Coordinators, TPPs, and K-12 districts and to make sure the work continues in a cohesive manner. In doing so, Site Coordinators contribute to scale-up efforts.

Given the importance of the Site Coordinator’s role in implementation, scaling, and sustainability, some sites have found it challenging to continue to adequately fund additional positions that will continue the intensive work. Specifically, Sites 1, 2, and 4 shared their concerns for scaling up, given financial constraints. For instance, Site 1 fears that using retired teachers or asking faculty to take on additional responsibilities for additional compensation is not sustainable.

Challenges? Funding. This is a success and a challenge, I think. Our Provost is pushing for enrollment increases across the board. We’re already beyond capacity in our teacher ed program. We need more Site Coordinators and I don’t have any funding for more Site Coordinators and I keep going to the Dean and saying, ‘If you want this to be sustainable, you have to put your money where your mouth is...’ It’s a success that we need more Site Coordinators and that model is working so well for us, but it’s a challenge because of the funding. (Site 1 faculty)

Programs are concerned with scale-up and sustainability post-transformation

In addition to finding funding for additional Site Coordinators, program stakeholders discussed concerns they had about expanding their reach, increasing enrollment, and having the ability, post-transformation, to continue to benefit from the US PREP coalition. One natural consequence of scaling up the transformed program is to increase the number of K-12 districts with whom programs would partner.

Several of the interviewed stakeholders expressed the desire to expand their relationships, but worried that they would not be able to replicate the deep and purposeful partnership they had with their pilot districts. Further, the size, distance, and demographics of the K-12 districts and schools may limit the extent to which TPPs can engage with district partners. For instance, Site 3 interviewees discussed the tension between building relationships with small rural schools and the need for placements for larger cohorts of teacher candidates, as well as for candidates with specific placement requirements.

Our rural districts are where they need teachers that have been well-prepared, and our candidates are well-prepared here. We want to make sure that they also have opportunities to help support children all through [the state] and that would be in rural settings, in suburban settings, and urban settings. Then you have to say, we can’t eliminate [school district] who has one elementary, one high school, but couldn’t necessarily take a whole cohort if we move to that. I do think that’s probably one of our biggest challenges in that. (Site 3 leader)

Site 2 participants also expressed concern around balancing state requirements for clinical placements, diversifying teacher candidate experiences, and still being able to commit to additional intensive K-12 district partnerships. Site 3 had similar concerns, with one faculty member stating, “You can’t learn about diversity if you don’t do it. You can read every diversity textbook you want, but until you are able to see difference, then you’re not.”

While some sites are experiencing challenges with accommodations for increased enrollment, others struggled with initial recruitment and retention within their program. Stakeholders from these sites found that enrollment concerns could ultimately impact sustainability. Program cost relative to future salary, requiring year-long commitments, and less expensive and faster alternative programs were among some of the reasons for the challenges. Faculty and district partners from Site 4 expressed tension between candidate quality gate checks, part of the US PREP model, and their retention in the program and meeting K-12 district needs.

I just wish we can find a way to get more students to pass that Praxis I and II, so we can get

more candidates. That's my only concern because not every university puts students out of their program, but we're one university that if they don't pass it, they're going to be out of the program. That is sad because we can still hire them even after they get kicked out of the program, but it's not benefiting the university or us when the university does that. We have other institutions that allow them to stay in the program... (Site 4 principal)

Finally, leaders across the sites held positive perceptions of the US PREP supports they received across the coalition. Site 2 leaders and faculty were concerned with losing those supports, including the convenings and coalition-wide networking, due to the cost of post-transformation membership. Losing those supports could potentially impact sustainability.



Conclusion

Through the perspectives of university and K-12 stakeholders, this report chronicles the implementation, challenges, and outcomes of program transformation at four Cohort 1 universities in the US PREP coalition. As this is a retrospective report, EPIC acknowledges the many refinements and changes US PREP has already made as a result of their work with Cohort 1 coalition members. Therefore, we grounded this report in implementation science, including the implementation phases, the role of US PREP as the primary implementation team, and a formula for implementation success. This framing provides a new lens through which US PREP—and their coalition members—can view their model and technical assistance.

As the primary Implementation Team, US PREP is guided by a common set of goals, objectives, and activities as defined through their Developmental Framework. With these cohesive guides and common language, US PREP helps local implementation teams develop their own language and “North stars” through revisions to teacher candidate evaluation rubrics and data-driven culture shifts. A common vision and goals are the basis for the development of local and cascading systems of support at the program faculty and K-12 district levels. Collectively shared and analyzed data provide momentum towards a common goal, garner buy-in from faculty, and give all stakeholders the opportunity to make suggestions or changes.

Much of the success of US PREP’s technical assistance and teacher preparation model is based on human capital. Specifically, interview participants all found their US PREP RTS to be responsive, passionate, professional, and goal-oriented and identified their RTS as one of the most impactful components of their transformation work. US PREP’s leadership team, particularly the Executive Director, was influential in supporting TPP and K-12 district leadership and in reframing the work of US PREP as a program-owned transformation. The success of the high-quality teacher preparation model largely depends on the effectiveness

of the Site Coordinators. The Site Coordinator is the linchpin of the model that ties all of the systems together—the TPP faculty, K-12 district leaders, mentor teachers, and teacher candidates. Their role is essential to communicating and focusing on the common goals and objectives of the transformation. As such, the qualifications, characteristics, infrastructure, and funding for the position are critical to the successful scaling and sustainability of the transformation. It is through these essential personnel that other supports, such as trainings, convenings, coaching, and materials are delivered.

As a result of the transformation, stakeholders saw shifts toward a more data-driven culture, changes to curriculum to better align courses and clinical experiences, mutually beneficial K-12 partnerships, and candidates and graduates who felt well-prepared and confident to enter the classroom.

While most participants from each site considered engagement with US PREP as beneficial to program quality, there are continuing challenges and enabling conditions that US PREP should consider in subsequent cohorts. Consistent across the sites were issues related to communication, faculty buy-in, culturally responsive teaching, and year-long residency placements and logistics. The Formula for Success illustrates the importance of not only successfully implementing the high-quality TPP model through purposeful technical assistance but also the critical role enabling conditions play in supporting implementation. US PREP orchestrates both the model and their technical assistance, refining and adapting, as necessary. However, US PREP cannot necessarily manipulate all of the contexts and settings that foster this work. As such, it is essential for US PREP to continuously research, monitor, select on, or, if able, shape these enabling conditions. Such conditions include aligned motivations and initiatives, adaptive leadership, representative stakeholder buy-in, and complimentary local and state policies.

Much of this work can be addressed during the Exploration and Installation phases. As discussed throughout the report, we recommend that US PREP deepens the Exploration and Installation Stages of the implementation process to:

- More comprehensively research (e.g., interviews, case studies, artifact reviews, accreditation data, etc.) the context in which each potential institution is situated, including program history, goals, TPP strengths, concurrent initiatives, leadership characteristics, demographics, financial standing, geographic location, data infrastructure, and political landscape as part of the application period;
- Require all potential institutions to build a representative application team that includes at least one member from TPP leadership, impacted program chairs or faculty, graduates or candidates, and a K-12 district leader;
- Proactively create the criteria and selection process for the Site Coordinator early in the Installation stage to ensure full inclusion in the implementation process;
- Help sites define their roles and decision-making procedures early on;
- Collaboratively design a communication and roll-out strategy and train all relevant members of the local implementation teams so that they communicate consistent and coherent messages to all stakeholders, ensuring clear expectations and objectives.

During Initial Implementation and beyond, we recommend US PREP include the following in their technical assistance:

- Help programs cluster their clinical placements sites, either by proximity or within specific types of districts and schools, to diminish logistical burdens for Site Coordinators and teacher candidates.
- Clarify mentor teacher criteria early in the partnership to ensure proper selection and training for quality clinical experiences.
- Assist sites with identifying potential external funding sources for scaling and sustainability

and help them build relationships with local and national funders as a bridge toward developing more internal, self-sustaining financial models.

As previously referenced, the stages of implementation are dynamic and do not necessarily follow a linear trajectory. That is, implementation teams can and should revisit early stages when they face challenges. Therefore, US PREP should encourage local implementation teams and support systems to continuously monitor, examine, and refine their implementation practices throughout their transformation.

Further, EPIC recommends that US PREP continue to build their capacity for understanding and reflecting on their role in supporting culturally responsive education for themselves, teacher educators, and teacher candidates. Part of this work could be to purposefully research and identify explicit theories and practices or pedagogies to incorporate into technical assistance. Continuing to seek external professional development, creating an internal position strictly dedicated to equity in teacher education, and assessing the knowledge and practices of the US PREP staff and coalition members are potential strategies for bolstering culturally responsive pedagogy and DEI throughout the organization.

Finally, the findings from this qualitative report tell only portions of the Cohort 1 transformation story. This report will be used to provide more context for quantitative analyses of stakeholder surveys and candidate/graduate outcomes. Further, this report will help inform subsequent analyses of data on the initial stages of program transformation at Cohort 2 institutions. Changes across Cohort 1 and 2 may mark growth in US PREP's learning and technical assistance practices.

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