

Wednesday, Jan. 26, 2011

Note to the Editor: This Op-Ed is a collaboration among teacher education programs at 13 Ohio public universities and 35 Ohio private institutions, represented by State University Education Deans (SUED) of Ohio and the Ohio Association for Private Colleges of Teacher Education (OAPCTE). It is in regards to the Ohio Educator Preparation Metrics, the first statewide teacher education metrics initiative in the nation.

48 Colleges Standing Together: Ohio's Teacher Education Programs Committed to Collaboration, Achievement and Accountability

Over the last two decades there has been a great deal of criticism over university-based teacher education programs. In a 2006 report titled "Educating School Teachers," Art Levine, the former president of Columbia Teachers College, likened teacher education programs to the Wild West's Dodge City, calling them "unruly and disordered." In a subsequent 2006 Boston Globe editorial, Levine recommended "more stringent quality control."

In Ohio, there are 13 public universities with teacher education programs, led by education deans who comprise the State University Education Deans (SUED) of Ohio. There are also 37 private institutions with educator preparation programs, 35 of which are led by deans or chairs who comprise the Ohio Association for Private Colleges of Teacher Education (OAPCTE). Collectively, we do not agree with all of Levine's assertions, but we absolutely agree that teacher preparation programs in Ohio need to be held to high standards and that we are accountable for meeting those standards. In fact, Ohio SUED and OAPCTE deans were actively engaged in the development of Ohio's new standards.

On December 15, 2010, Chancellor Eric Fingerhut, along with SUED chair Renée A. Middleton and OAPCTE president Miffrando Obach, announced that Ohio would become first state in the nation to establish statewide metrics to monitor the performance of educator preparation programs. The Ohio Educator Preparation Metrics include indicators such as the placement of graduates in hard-to-staff Ohio school districts and a new teacher's ability to demonstrate student growth. The new Teacher Performance Assessment will measure a beginning teacher's ability to manage a classroom, prepare and execute effective lessons, interact with parents, and use knowledge of a student's prior educational background to help each child succeed. It will also provide universities, colleges, and districts with the ability to track students as they graduate and begin teaching careers.

Some of the reaction to the announcement regarding statewide metrics surprised us. The Cleveland Plain Dealer applauded the metrics initiative in an editorial, but also characterized it as "a flashlight-carrying sheriff . . . coming to town to peer into the 50 public and private teacher education programs and report back to lawmakers and the public." This metaphor implies that teacher education has something to hide, that there is an adversarial relationship between our teacher education programs and the state, and that we are not willing participants in the evaluation process.

In reality, SUED and OAPCTE have long been committed to holding our education programs to the highest level of accountability. A decade ago we formed the Teacher Quality Partnership in an attempt to develop a system that would link the actual performance of the teachers we produce to our teacher education programs. This effort was reflected in the language of House Bill 1 of the 128th General Assembly, which called for the creation of annual performance reports on teacher education at our public institutions. The result of this legislative directive was the set of metrics introduced in December.

As Levine asserted, Ohio's teacher education programs must continue to hold themselves to high standards. We see the Board of Regents not as a sheriff coming to town, but as an ally. Contrary to the characterization offered by the Plain Dealer, SUED and OAPCTE are working together with the Regents to offer the best programs possible because Ohio deserves the most highly qualified teachers.

Ohio is becoming a national model for improving the performance of our teacher education programs – and we are committed to being an integral part of that process.

Sincerely,

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