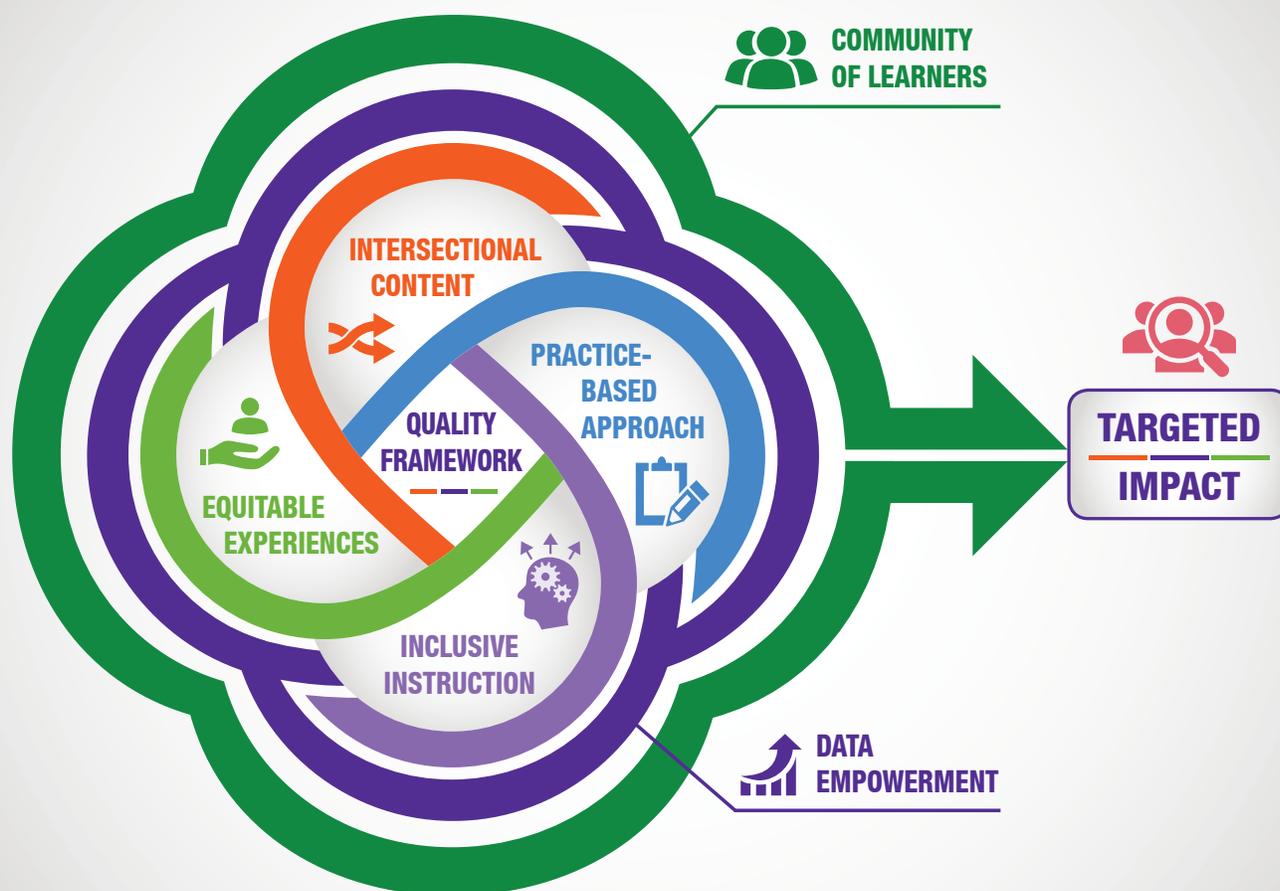
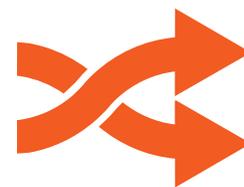


BRIEF: Intersectional Content



A Higher Standard

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Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity (BranchED)

Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity, or BranchED, is the only non-profit organization in the country dedicated to strengthening, growing, and amplifying the impact of educator preparation at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), with the longer-range goals of both diversifying the teaching profession and intentionally addressing critical issues of educational equity for all students. Our vision is for all students to access diverse, highly effective educators.

This goal is accomplished through application of our *Framework for the Quality Preparation of Educators*¹ (the Framework), which outlines a roadmap to create teacher preparation programs that meet the needs of our increasingly diverse student body. The Framework seeks to build equity-oriented educator preparation programs that prepare educators to reflect, respect, and reify the value of the diversity of America's PK12 school children. It offers educator preparation providers (EPPs) a common vision of what high quality, culturally sustaining educator preparation is, and a coherent and sustained approach to implementing evidence-based practices that accomplish vitally important educational equity work.

BranchED Framework for Quality Preparation of Educators

BranchED created the first and only evidence-based framework for the quality preparation of teachers which addresses diversity as a fundamental component of quality. While we assert that each institution has a unique context, we believe that certain key elements are fundamental across all programs, such as: mutually beneficial partnerships with PK-12 and community stakeholders; a coherent, content-rich curricula; culturally and linguistically relevant and sustaining pedagogy; scaffolded and authentic opportunities for practice; genuine community engagement; and equitable opportunities for students to thrive. BranchED's framework is the lens through which we support EPPs' continuous improvement and innovation efforts. It is the bedrock of all organizational activities.

The Framework was developed through a multi-state process that began in the summer of 2016 and proceeded through the end of 2018. This included a review of the literature on existing practice in teacher preparation and an array of one-on-one interviews with over 50 faculty and leaders of EPPs, representatives of advocacy organizations, teacher groups, and state program approval and licensure department personnel. Subsequent focus groups helped to clarify and strengthen the Framework and its principles. A Charette and a Critical Friends Group, both consisting of prominent thought leaders in teacher education reform within and beyond MSIs, were leveraged to garner specific feedback on the Framework and its RoadMap documents.

BranchED's Framework is unique in that it does not focus on candidate competencies nor philosophical orientation. Rather, it focuses on six design principles that high-quality educator preparation programs implement to ensure graduates are competent and confident educators able to leverage, not fear or ignore, the differences among their students. Two of these design principles (**Community of Learners** and **Data Empowerment**) provide the foundation for the remaining design principles: **Practice-Based Approach**, **Inclusive Instruction**, **Equitable Experiences**, and **Intersectional Content**.

Each of the design principles was based on contemporary mixed methods research in the fields of teaching and teacher education. ^{2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12} Each is defined in terms of the critical shift it calls EPPs to make and is operationalized by a set of indicators that help to guide continuous improvement efforts. The Framework is asset-based, formative, and designed for the purposes of continuous improvement, rather than compliance. It is not a one-size-fits-all model; rather, its' design principles serve as critical focus areas in which providers can concentrate their improvement efforts.



Design Principles



Quality educator preparation is catalyzed by a broad-based **Community of Learners**. The Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) establishes a community of learners through leadership, shared responsibility for candidate learning, and professional collaboration.



Quality Educator preparation is **Data Empowered**. The EPP has an active culture of inquiry, utilizing an authentic and ongoing cycle of evidence-based improvement that begins with asking thoughtful questions, moves through organizational learning and action, and ends with an evaluation of the effectiveness of actions taken.



Quality educator preparation is grounded in **Intersectional Content**. Before program completion, candidates demonstrate mastery of content related to learners, learning, subject matter, content knowledge for teaching, pedagogical knowledge, assessment, and engagement with families and communities. Such knowledge is dynamic, constructed and overlapping.



Quality educator preparation is experiential and incorporates a **Practice-Based Approach**. The EPP purposefully engages candidates in direct experience of teaching (practice) and focused reflection, in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop the capacity to contribute to diverse communities.



Quality educator preparation fosters **Inclusive Instruction**. Inclusive pedagogy minimizes or removes barriers to learning or assessment and supports the success of all learners, while ensuring that academic standards are not diminished. Such pedagogy includes the integration of culturally and linguistically sustaining practices, social and emotional learning, cognitive science, and trauma-informed care.



Quality educator preparation ensures **Equitable Experiences** for all candidates. The EPP provides a multi-layered, holistic system of candidate-specific research-based supports, just-in-time interventions, and enrichment experiences that are informed by data and identification of candidate-specific needs. These academic and social supports are regularly provided and actively monitored to determine whether activities are effective in meeting candidates' needs and enabling their achievement.



Quality educator preparation achieves **Targeted Impact**. The EPP demonstrates the overall impact and value of its preparation program on its candidates and graduates such that they are competent and confident in their ability to bring about positive academic gains for PK-12 students, especially students of color and low-income students.



Introduction to the Brief

■ *Overview of the Brief*

This brief is one in a series, in which we revisit each of the design principles to ensure continued relevance to quality educator preparation and provide additional information on each based on the literature. In this brief we highlight the design principle titled: **Intersectional Content**, as defined by BranchED. We believe quality educator preparation is grounded in intersectional content where teacher candidates and graduates demonstrate mastery of content related to learners, learning, subject matter, content knowledge for teaching, pedagogical knowledge, assessment, and engagement with families and communities. We further believe that such knowledge is dynamic, constructed, and overlapping. EPPs must be intentional in how they scaffold learning throughout teacher candidates' educational experience to ensure mastery is achieved and demonstrated upon graduation and entry into the profession. We begin by providing an overview of what comprises intersectional content based on the literature followed by a discussion on each of the indicators that are integral to the design principle.

■ *Intended Users*

This brief is intended for teacher educators, whom we define as individuals who play a role in the preparation of teacher candidates by providing instruction or guidance. Teacher educators may hold roles such as: Teacher Education faculty and Arts and Sciences faculty employed by a university, site coordinators, coaches/clinical instructors, PK-12 school-based teachers (e.g., mentor, coordinating teacher), and PK-12 administrators. PK-12 educators may find this brief applicable to their own practice.



Intersectional Content

John Collins and colleagues¹³ argue that teacher candidates' perspective on teaching is informed by the path they take into teacher education. They define a perspective on teaching as “an inter-related set of beliefs and intentions related to knowledge, learning and the role of a teacher. It is a lens through which we view our work as educators (p. 2).”¹⁴ For example, students entering teacher preparation programs from a fine arts path might see the role of teaching differently than students from the sciences. They assert that more must be done by educator preparation programs to understand how the path that teacher candidates take into teaching has informed their perspective on teaching and the role of a teacher.

Quality EPPs understand the importance of building intentional in- and out-of-class experiences by a thoughtful process of continuously examining the scope and sequence of the program components; ensuring rigorous alignment of competencies with standards; understanding the role of knowledge related to content and teaching; building strong curriculum literacy; and cultivating in candidates an equity lens that fosters a willingness to address and correct the ethical, social, and/or environmental consequences of policies, ideologies, institutional, and systemic structures, or actions on historically marginalized groups to ensure equal opportunities for all.

Indicators of Intersectional Content

A high-quality educator preparation program requires an EPP to establish Intersectional Content for teacher candidates. The following table details the indicators associated with an EPP that provides strong Intersectional Content.

Coherent	The EPP purposefully sequences the components of its educator preparation programs to facilitate learning, ensuring they are aligned across lessons, courses, and experiences; and reflective of the actual demands and expectations of in-service practice.
Standards-Aligned	The EPP's courses and experiences are built around a defined set of competencies for teaching to rigorous grade-level college and career ready standards for learning and are aligned with professional, state, and national content standards.
Pedagogical Content Knowledge	The EPP scaffolds coursework and learning experiences to build candidates' mastery of specialized knowledge for teaching that combines subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, knowledge about learning, learners, families, and communities, and their understanding of the social, political, cultural, and physical environments in which learning is situated to unpack content in ways that make it accessible and learnable by others.
Curriculum Literacy	The EPP ensures that candidates have precise understanding of grade-level standards that they can use to evaluate the intent and features of a standards-aligned curriculum and to navigate and/or adapt curricula without reducing rigor.
Cultivates a Critical Orientation	The EPP cultivates an equity lens in candidates as conscientious consumers of educational research and resources (i.e., scripted curricula, textbooks, and instructional materials) by prioritizing the abilities to critically analyze, add to, or challenge the perspectives articulated.

■ *Coherent*

Teacher preparation programs continue to face challenges in building coherence within and across the different components of their program.¹⁵ In order to ensure cohesion, it is important to engage key stakeholders in determining a shared understanding of a common vision.¹⁶ This shared understanding ensures that the program design and implementation adheres to the values, principles, and expectations determined by the group, which is likely to increase success in progression and completion of the program.¹⁷ It will also yield graduates that possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions as determined through national and state standards as well as those determined essential by stakeholders based on context. Teacher candidates are an essential stakeholder that must be included in these discussions as research has found that teacher candidates often lack an understanding of program cohesion as well as program efforts and expectations for advancing equity.¹⁸

A valuable tool in ensuring program cohesion is curriculum mapping, especially curriculum mapping that goes beyond simply aligning course content to state and national standards. Curriculum mapping is defined as a process for “indexing or diagramming a curriculum to identify and address academic gaps, redundancies, and misalignments for purposes of improving the overall coherence of a course of study and, by extension, its effectiveness (para 1).¹⁹ A coherent curriculum has vertical, horizontal, subject area, and interdisciplinary coherence. With vertical coherence, what students learn in a course or lesson prepares them for subsequent learning. Horizontal coherence pertains to fidelity of content across multiple sections of the same course. Subject area coherence means content is aligned within and across grade levels or semesters. Finally, interdisciplinary coherence also pertains to ensuring skills needed to succeed in any course are embedded throughout the program of study.

■ *Standards-Aligned*

Gary Galluzzo asserts that it is important that standards alignment is important to teacher preparation and essential for transforming teacher preparation at both the pre-service and in-service levels.²⁰ Standards alignment goes beyond knowledge of students and teachers. It also must address student content knowledge, teacher content and professional knowledge, accreditation, and effective teaching. It is important, however, to remember that standards-aligned does not dictate what how students should be taught; rather,

standards indicate what students should know and be able to do in a content area.²¹ It is the curriculum that outlines how students will master the knowledge, skills, and dispositions described in the standards.

The American Federation of Teachers Teacher Preparation Task Force recommended three areas vital to improving teacher preparation that would positively impact PK-12 outcomes.²² These include collaborating with stakeholders to ensure standards, programs, and assessments are grounded in effective teaching; implementing of a universal assessment process for entry that includes clinically rich preparation bridging theory to practice; and engaging professionals in PK-12 and EPP in setting and enforcing standards of the profession.





■ *Pedagogical Content Knowledge*

There is significant research indicating the importance of both subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge in effective teacher preparation programs.^{23, 24} Additionally, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is equally necessary. Thus, we have expanded the original indicator to include pedagogical content knowledge. PCK is unique to teachers and pertains to the ways in which teachers relate what they know about teaching to what they know about what they teach.²⁵ Kathryn Cochran and colleagues' model of PCK encompasses two additional components beyond subject matter/content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge: teachers' knowledge of the learner (i.e., developmental level, attitudes, prior knowledge, etc.) and teachers' understanding of the social, political, cultural, and physical environments in which learning is situated.²⁶ Pedagogical content knowledge is facilitated when there is strong coherence in program components; courses and experiences are aligned with professional, state, and national standards, promote strong curriculum literacy, and cultivate a critical orientation.



■ *Curriculum Literacy*

The Institute for Education Policy at Johns Hopkins describes curriculum literacy as the “capacity to decide whether a given set of instructional materials is strong or weak (para 1)”.²⁷ The ability to critically analyze curriculum and make instructional decisions is an essential skill for all teachers and one that demands greater emphasis in educator preparation programs.²⁸ Research suggests that EPPs have not adequately attended to preparing teacher candidates with the ability to understand the impact of high-quality curriculum on student learning nor the ability to select or design curriculum.²⁹ In addition, teacher candidates need exposure to real-world circumstances they are likely to face in schools, and how to negotiate those situations.

■ *Cultivates a Critical Orientation*

Ping Liu (2022) states,

“ To provide the best support to school children, student teachers must think critically about their practice as an individual and in interaction with others in a learning community, make decisions, accordingly, and develop abilities to resolve issues (p. 80).³⁰

He further outlines the importance of mentor teachers in modeling reflective practices that can serve to support student teachers as they transition from classroom and field experiences into leading their own classrooms as full-time teachers. Critical self-reflection is integral to developing as a culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining teacher with a deep understanding of students.³¹ Intentional clinical and field experiences can serve as a tool to assist teacher candidates in building a deeper understanding of the communities that they will be serving as teachers. A critical orientation is fostered through guided instruction, applied experiences, and opportunities to reflect on personal assumptions and worldviews and how these may influence their interactions with students.

What is Looks Like in Practice

CASE STUDY IN THE FIRST PERSON

Pacific Oaks College

Pacific Oaks College (PO) is working to ground the teacher preparation program with intersectional content. To begin, PO's core values of social justice, diversity, equity, inclusion, and respect fosters teacher candidates' critical orientation towards inequitable educational systems as they approach teaching and learning through an equity lens. These core values are threaded throughout the teacher preparation program to ensure cohesion in candidate learning experiences inclusive of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Engaged Pedagogy, which leverage critical actions as real practice. To further develop a quality preparation program with a lens towards the BranchED design principle of intersectional content, we endeavored to examine the significance of community partnerships to inform relevancy of program components. In collaboration with Pasadena Unified, we are developing an Educator Profile to connect Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs), K-12 district graduate profiles, the Framework for Equitable and Effective Teaching, and the BranchED Framework. The Educator Profile will become a tool to evaluate the program's integration of intersectional content by informing and scaffolding the arc of a POC teacher candidate's learning experiences, ensuring alignment to standards, maintaining focus on inclusive pedagogical knowledge, emphasizing curriculum literacy, and leveraging PO's core values to cultivate a critical orientation. This work has been an essential part of the participation with the BranchED Transformation Center at PO.

By employing autoethnographic accounts, we have engaged in self-reflective practices to explore the impact of the overall teaching and learning that is occurring throughout our program. This work was expanded to distance learning pathways by way of updated dispositions and instructional practices used to pivot practice in conjunction with the development of the Educator Profile. Preliminary findings indicate that critical action taken by PO to evaluate intersectional content as part of the process in developing the Educator Profile and building strong community partnerships was successful. Moreover, the institution, faculty, students, and other constituents, adapted so that students engaged in research, internships, teaching practice and fieldwork projects were able to maintain and meet program expectations.

The development of instructional systems that provide levels of support to all candidates have become increasingly important, however, it is critical during distance learning to support the instructional needs of students and the pedagogical shifts for professors. Thus, we have sought to understand how the intersections of pedagogy, learning, and instructional practices support students, and values their communities and cultural assets to ensure the constructs provide the foundation for the teacher preparation program. The need to evaluate intersectional content is becoming more prevalent in the design and facilitation of teaching and learning. The most responsive teacher preparation programs are the ones that invest in supporting inclusive and equitable learning experiences and are best prepared in the teaching approaches of the future ensuring that pre-service teachers are able to meet the needs of the communities they will serve.



Conclusion

This brief described the design principle of *Intersectional Content*. It underscored and expanded on four of the original six indicators: *Coherent, Standards-Aligned, Curriculum Literacy, and Cultivates a Critical Orientation*. Content Knowledge and Use of Knowledge for Teaching was collapsed into *Pedagogical Content Knowledge*. The literature clearly demonstrates the importance of these five indicators. Without being Standards-Aligned it is difficult for a teacher preparation program to be Coherent. Additionally, curriculum and assessments must be built to ensure that teacher candidates are entering classrooms with strong pedagogical content knowledge and an ability to critique, select, or design curriculum to meet the needs of their students. Finally, a critical orientation positions teacher candidates as equity minded advocates focused on student success. We believe that an EPP that is intentional in attending to Intersectional Content for their teacher candidates and graduates will thrive as it addresses the needs of the communities it serves.



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