BRIEF:
Practice-Based Approach

COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

INTERSECTIONAL CONTENT

PRACTICE-BASED APPROACH

QUALITY FRAMEWORK

EQUITABLE EXPERIENCES

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A Higher Standard

Branch Alliance *for* **Educator Diversity**

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A Higher Standard

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* (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.[1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11] 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.
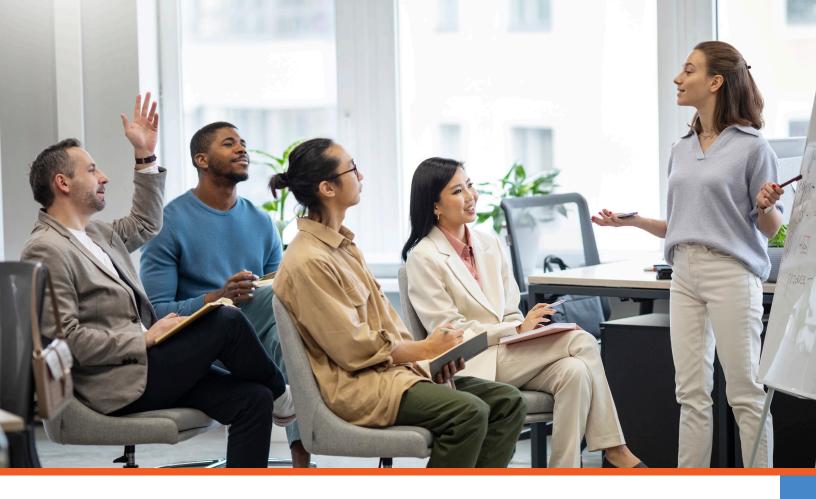
Quality educator preparation fosters **Inclusive Instruction**. Inclusive pedagogy minimizes or removes barriers to learning or assessment and supports the success of all learners, while ensuring that academic standards are not diminished. Such pedagogy includes the integration of culturally and linguistically 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: *Practice-Based Approach*, as defined by BranchED. We believe quality educator preparation purposefully engages candidates in direct experience of teaching (practice) and focused, critical reflection, in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop the capacity to contribute to diverse communities. We begin by providing an overview of what comprises a practice-based approach grounded in the literature followed by a discussion on each of the indicators that are integral to this design principle. Next, is an examination of how each of the indicators that are integral to this design principle followed by a description of how one EPP embeds the constructs of Practice-Based Approach into its practice.

⬤ *Intended Users*

This brief is intended for EPP leaders and 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.

Practice-Based Approach

Practice-based approaches often focused on teaching teacher candidates a set of core practices to guide instruction. Having a repertoire of instructional strategies is essential to teaching but insufficient in isolation. As noted by Ken Zeichner, teacher candidates also must possess "deep knowledge of their students and of the cultural contexts in which their work is situated (p. 379)" as well as "cultural competence and ability to teach in culturally responsive ways (p. 380)."[12] In order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop the capacity to contribute to diverse communities, quality educator preparation must be experiential and incorporate a practice-based approach that purposefully engages candidates in direct experience of teaching (practice) and focused critical reflection.

The Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel for Clinical Preparation and Partnership for Improved Learning[13] commissioned by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) called for preparation programs that are clinically rich. Such programs have a strong content and pedagogical focus with opportunities to apply what is learned in authentic ways throughout the program of study. They also have strong partnerships with PK-12 and community entities, both of whom are actively engaged in shared decision-making and the design and implementation of teacher preparation programs. In 2018, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) Clinical Practice Commission produced its report on clinical practice.[14] The Commission reiterated the centrality of clinical practice in high quality teacher preparation, the necessity of intentional integration of pedagogical preparation, and the importance of partnerships in the preparation of effective equity minded teachers.

Thus, a practice-based approach cultivates teacher candidates' knowledge, skills, and dispositions through high-quality opportunities to practice combined with feedback and support. Teacher candidates engage in deliberate practice with a focus on improving performance through repeated rehearsal and feedback in increasingly complex settings.[15] Practice opportunities are:

- ◆ Focused, emphasizing standards based critical content and pedagogy;
- ◆ Of sufficient duration to allow for mastery of content and pedagogy; and
- ◆ Coherent, sequenced, and scaffolded with shared expectations of practice, which are reinforced and developed throughout the program.

In addition, a quality practice-based program strives to develop teacher candidates as independent research-active teachers. Etta Hollins proposes a framework for holistic practice-based preservice teacher preparation which calls for teacher candidates to engage in focused inquiry examining factors internal and external to the classroom that influence learning through directed observation.[16] Through guided practice teacher candidates plan, enact, interpret, translate, plan, and (re)-enact. Thus, an important goal of practice-based preparation is developing professionals who have an inquiry-oriented stance applicable to rehearsal/practice activities and the classroom.[17]

Indicators of a Practice-Based Approach

High quality educator preparation programs employ a practice-based approach to facilitate the bridging of theory-to-practice. Such programs are clinically rich, coherent, sequenced, and scaffolded, and engage teacher candidates in inquiry-based rehearsal to develop adaptive expertise—the ability to apply knowledge effectively to novel situations, an essential skill in successfully negotiating the complexity of the classroom. The figure below details the indicators associated with a Practice-Based Approach to teacher preparation.

Competency-Based	The EPP offers candidates opportunities to learn, practice, fine-tune, and demonstrate mastery of a defined set of competencies, including core instructional practices, they will enact when teaching to support PK-12 student learning.
Modeling	The EPP offers candidates multiple and varied course-embedded opportunities to engage in demonstrations of accomplished teaching across the curriculum – use of video, case-based instruction, live observation, microteaching, and simulations – thereby making the work of teaching explicit.
Scaffolded Experiences	The EPP scaffolds multiple and varied field/clinical experiences, beginning early in the program and increasing in level of expectation for candidate performance, thereby allowing candidates to develop skill fluency and decision-making abilities prior to entering settings in which mistakes can be costly.
Authentic and Diverse Settings	The EPP requires candidates to perform real-world tasks in authentic settings that demonstrate the meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills and that connect to the candidates' personal experiences and/or professional aspirations.
Coaching and Feedback	The EPP promotes an explicit coaching model that focuses on individual strengths and needs, engages in close observation utilizing performance-based assessment protocols completed by multiple accessors, and yields actionable non-judgmental feedback on performance.
Focused, Critical Reflection	The EPP offers candidates multiple and varied opportunities to deliberately analyze and reflect upon their practice so as to engage in a process of continuous professional learning and improvement.
Partnerships	The EPP purposefully engages internal and external stakeholders in shared decision making and design, implementation, and assessment of preparation programs and applied experiences.

• *Competency-Based*

Quality educator preparation programs are aligned to state, national, and discipline specific standards as well as competencies identified by the EPP as central to the mission and vision of the program. Teacher candidates are expected to demonstrate knowledge of the learner, knowledge of learning, knowledge of subject-matter, knowledge of pedagogy, knowledge of accountability, and the ability to participate in a professional community.[18] Within that is an understanding of core instructional practices that help students learn and address the basic set of tasks needed to enact teaching and address the whole child.[19]

TeachingWorks has identified a set of fundamental capabilities or high-leverage practices, which are consistently used by teachers to help students learn important content.[20] A similar set of high-leverage practices have been developed for students with disabilities.[21] These practices focus on high frequency instructional practices that teacher candidates can master and allow them to learn more about students and teaching. Further, they are evidence-based and may lead to improved student outcomes. Proficiency in implementing core or high-leverage practices coupled with deep knowledge of students and families, the strengths and assets or funds of knowledge they possess, and sociocultural and linguistic contexts in which the work is situated are essential knowledge for equity focused teacher candidates and beginning teachers.[22]

• *Modeling*

Albert Bandura proposed that "most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are preformed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action (p. 22)."[23] Effective modeling requires attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. In a practice-based approach, teacher educators engage in explicit modeling of effective pedagogical practice. They provide teacher candidates an opportunity to reproduce what was modeled through rehearsal and formative feedback. Explicit modeling provides teacher candidates "a meta-cognitive window into the work of teaching (p. 106)."[24] Teacher educators model a variety of behaviors including differentiation of instruction, use of instructional technology, and culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy. They exemplify an inquiry-stance and articulate the rationale for instructional decisions. Further, connecting explicit modeling to the theory undergirding the action assists teacher candidates in bridging theory-to-practice and developing an inquiry-stance to teaching.

• *Scaffolded Experiences*

Scaffolding is based on Lev Vygotsky's concept of zone of proximal development, or "the distance between the actual developmental level as determine by independent problem solving and the level of potential as determine through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers (p. 86)."[25] It is within this zone that quality learning takes place. Effective scaffolding is intentional—there is a purpose to what is to be accomplished, and appropriate in that the task is solvable with some support, which is withdrawn once the learner has internalized the skill to be learned. Further, scaffolding allows for differentiation to meet individual teacher candidate needs.

• *Authentic & Diverse Settings*

We continue to experience a demographic disparity between students and teachers. The teacher population remains predominately White (79%) and female (76%) while the student population is comprised in-

creasingly of Students of Color (53%).[26] Although Teachers of Color are more likely to teach in school with higher percentages of Students of Color, the percentage of White teachers in these schools is disproportionately larger than the student body.[27] There is a high probability that the majority of White teacher candidates live in neighborhoods that reflect their own racial profile; thus, it is essential although insufficient for teacher candidates to participate in field and clinical experiences that afford opportunities to engage with culturally and linguistically diverse children, youth, and families.[28] Teacher candidates also need to develop dispositions that enable them to problematize teaching, disrupt deficit positionalities, and examine the sociocultural context of the setting.[29] This requires infusing critical thinking and critical reflection in field placements whether they are in PK-12 or community settings.

Embedding opportunities throughout the program of study for candidates to engage with diverse PK-12 learners is essential but such experiences do not need to take place only in school settings. A great deal can be learned by teacher candidates when placed in community settings, which afford them an opportunity to see children, youth, and families interact in truly authentic settings. These experiences may include service-learning, place-based learning, and/or participatory action research. Existing research suggest these experiences can be transformative for teacher candidates and help dispel misperceptions about diverse communities and learners and help bridge theory-to-practice.[30, 31, 32]

To ensure clinical experiences do not reify biases and assumptions about diverse learners and communities, programs need to build teacher candidates' cultural awareness, and engage them in investigating systemic and structural injustices that foster educational inequities. This includes incorporating the "voices, experiences, expertise, and perspectives of People of Color throughout their curricula and coursework (p. 14)" and engaging teacher candidates in an exploration of their own worldviews and how these may impact their teaching.[33]

● *Coaching & Feedback*

Coaching and feedback are both instrumental in developing skills, but they serve different purposes. Nagesh Belludi provides a comprehensive overview of their differences.[34]

Coaching is...	Feedback is...
Preparative	Corrective
Focused on possibilities	Focused on adjustment
About future behavior	About past or current behavior
Inquiry-oriented	Scrutiny-oriented
Stems from developmental needs	Stems from judgmental needs

In a practice-based approach, coaching is the process by which teacher candidates are provided an opportunity to rehearse, refine, and retry practice to improve. Research reveals coaching is effective whether done face-to-face or virtually either through an online environment or other technology such as bug-in-ear in which an off-site coach watches instruction through a livestream and communicates via an earpiece.[35, 36]

Feedback is an essential component of coaching but may be provided without a coaching component when part of an evaluative process. Whether done in isolation or coupled with coaching, for feedback to be effective it should be specific, positive, timely, and corrective, if warranted. It should be data based and if possible, delivered either right after the observation or within the same day of the observation.[37]

Multiple individuals play a role in providing feedback to a teacher candidate including their cooperating teacher or site-based mentor and EPP adjuncts or contingent faculty. James Hoffman and colleagues found a close relationship between an individual's classroom practices and their coaching practices. Specifically, they found teachers whose instruction is student centered and who are adaptive in their teaching and take an appreciative stance toward learning can modify these practices in coaching teacher candidates.[38] They also found variability in the professional development provided to cooperating teachers and/or other field/clinical supervisors on effective coaching and feedback strategies. Given the importance of shared expectations of practice, which must be reinforced and developed throughout the program, effective practice-based programs provide mechanisms to calibrate feedback and ensure fidelity in relating program values and expectations.

● *Focused Critical Reflection*

A cornerstone of educator preparation is reflection, which facilitates the development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. It occurs at varying levels of intensity and understanding. Barbara Larrivee provides a conceptual framework detailing various levels of critical reflection.[39]

- ◆ *Pre-reflection* or non-reflection in which teacher candidates respond to situations without consideration to alternative responses, assign blame rather than assume responsibility, and fail to adapt instruction based on student needs.

- ◆ *Surface reflection* in which teacher candidates focus on strategies or the technical aspects of instruction.

- ◆ *Pedagogical reflection* in which teacher candidates apply the knowledge base and current beliefs about quality instruction. At this level teacher candidates can make connections between theory and practice.

- ◆ *Critical reflection* in which teacher candidates reflect on the "moral and ethical implications and consequences of their classroom practices on students (p.343)." Equity minded teacher candidates and teachers who engage in critical reflection address both the self and the context in which their practice is situated.

This framework and similar ones[40] provide guidance to assist with supporting teacher candidates in developing their ability to critically reflect on practice.

Stephen Brookfield describes critical reflection as an inquiry process in which practitioners attempt to "discover, and research, the assumptions that frame how they work (p. 197)".[41] He provides four complementary lenses through which practice can be examined, each of which provides a unique perspective that informs the totality of our practice. These include our autobiographies as a learner, our students' perceptions of our shared learning environment, our colleagues' experiences and perspectives, and the theoretical literature which helps us name our practice and provides varied interpretive frames that can assist us with viewing situations differently.

While reflection in teacher preparation is evident within most if not all EPPs, few programs provide direct instruction on how to do so. Thus, quality practice-based preparation programs not only provide opportunities for teacher candidates to frequently reflect on practice, but they also provide specific instruction on what constitutes critical reflection and how to engage in it.[42]

● *Partnership*

The success of a practice-based preparation program can be attributed to strong, reciprocal university-district partnerships. Effective partnerships include shared understanding of goals and desired attributes and dispositions of teacher candidates and novice teachers, shared decision making and oversight on program design and implementation and candidate progression, and shared accountability in the preparation of high quality, equity minded teachers.[43] Such partnerships also work collaboratively to address the teacher pipeline and diversify the teacher workforce. They co-develop recruitment strategies that address teacher shortage areas. They ensure cooperating teachers and mentors have the necessary skills to provide effective coaching and feedback to teacher candidates and jointly place teacher candidates in clinical settings. Additionally, they have a commitment to sharing and analyzing data to drive continuous improvement efforts. Strong university-district partnerships, facilitate opportunities for teacher candidates to engage in quality inquiry-based and equity focused practice-based experiences to further their development.

What is Looks Like in Practice

CASE STUDY IN THE FIRST PERSON

University of California, Los Angeles Extension

University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Extension was founded in 1917 as the continuing education division of UCLA. It is the region's most respected, oldest, and largest educator preparation provider, serving the needs of existing and aspiring educators. The UCLA Extension Education Program provides classes for new teacher credentialing, staff development programs and authorizations for existing teachers, as well as college counseling certificates and content addressing early education and many specialty needs. Our work is equity focused and emphasizes communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity.

In California, teachers must first complete their preliminary teaching credential, which is a state required certification to teach in the K-12 setting. The preliminary teaching credential is valid for 2 years. During those 2 years, teachers are required to "clear" their preliminary teaching credentials by enrolling in a teacher induction program. During the Teacher Induction program, newly credentialed teachers work full time while receiving individualized, job embedded mentoring by a professional with the same or similar qualifications.

UCLA Extension's Teacher Induction Clear Credential Program is standards based and provides a two-year individualized, job embedded system of mentoring, support, and professional learning for newly credentialed teachers working to clear their preliminary teaching credentials. An important component in our program is a practice-based approach that purposefully engages candidates in direct experience of teaching (practice) and focused critical reflection. The program is structured to support participating teachers as they build on the foundation of knowledge and skills established during their preliminary credential program.

Participating teachers can see effective instruction modeled throughout their coursework. The program uses a plan-teach-reflect-apply approach as participant teachers implement an action plan in which they design and implement a unit of study with mentor teachers providing coaching to address areas for improvement of teaching practices. During year 1, the focus is on Effective Learning Environments and Differentiating Instruction. Participating teachers develop and implement individual professional learning plans in which they design, implement, and assess their application in their own classroom. In the fall semester of year 2, the focus is on Assessing Students' Learning and Growth. Participating teachers again develop an individual professional learning plan and assess their application in their own classroom. During the spring semester of year 2, participating teachers design a capstone project in which they demonstrate their development as a professional educator through the design, delivery, and assessment of a learning module within their classroom. Additionally, they create a learning experience that will contribute to the knowledge base of peers, caregivers, and/or the community in which they serve.

UCLA Extension's Teacher Induction Clear Credential Program exemplifies the principle of practice-based approach and its corresponding indicators. The program is standards based and provides opportunities for participating teachers to see effective instruction modeled throughout their coursework. The program is scaffolded allowing participating teachers to apply what they learned within each focus area and receive support (i.e., coaching and feedback) as they implement their professional learning plan. An integral component of the program is focused, critical reflection on their practice. As our participating teachers are in-service teachers, application of what is learned within their own authentic and diverse setting furthers the bridging of theory to practice.

Most importantly, the program is largely dependent upon the partnership with and support of mentor teachers and site administrations in the public schools. Fundamental to its success is a thorough understanding of the role to be played by each of the participating members that comprise a team: the Mentor Teacher, the Administrator, the Program Coordinator, and the Participating Teachers. Each assumes shared responsibilities, not only to other members, but to the profession, in the preparation of highly-effective teachers.

Conclusion

This brief described the design principle of Practice-Based Approach. It underscored and expanded on each of the original six indicators associated with this principle: Competency-Based, Modeling, Scaffolded Experiences, Authentic and Diverse Settings, Coaching and Feedback, Focused, Critical Reflection, and added a new indicator: Partnerships. Although listed distinctly, all of these indicators are inextricably intertwined and therefore directly impact each other. Strong partnerships ensure programs that can provide quality practice-based experiences in authentic and diverse settings. Focused, critical reflection engages teacher candidates in exploration of self and context in interrogating their instructional practice. A shared understanding of expectations of practice and a defined set of competencies, including core instructional practices, supports the bridging of theory to practice. Modeling and scaffolded experiences along with coaching, feedback, and repeated rehearsal ensure mastery of effective instruction. All are focused on producing graduates who are competent and confident educators able to leverage, not fear or ignore, the differences among their students.

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