

WPRI REPORT:

How to Correct Our Schools of Ed



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and Michael Richard Ford, Ph.D.

Wisconsin Policy Research Institute

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Through original research and analysis and through public opinion polling, the institute's work will focus on such issue arenas as state and local government tax policy and spending and related program accountability, consequences and effectiveness. It will also focus on health care policy and service delivery; education; transportation and economic development; welfare and social services; and other issues currently or likely to significantly impact the quality of life and future of the state.

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President's Notes

I stopped by a big public education rally in Milwaukee the other day to hear Wisconsin teachers and union leaders expound on all the things that they say they need to make kids smarter: better books, more money, smaller classes, more support for public schools and less for private ones, repeal of Act 10 right now, and did I mention more money?

One teacher even carried a sign proclaiming, “My students deserve better bathroom access.”

What I didn't hear about were things that — along with accessible restrooms — are basic and definite necessities for Wisconsin's children: better teacher preparation from our taxpayer-supported public schools of education and more accountability from the people who currently run them.

Many of Wisconsin's teacher preparation programs are weak, according to the National Council on Teacher Quality. They accept students who don't perform as well as their peers headed to other careers. They graduate teachers who, it appears, don't always perform as well as their fellow educators in other places once they get to the classroom.

Not that there's a definitive way to tell. Yet.

In this report, two of the smartest people we know on education matters — Professors Mark Schug and Mike Ford — point out the reasons these all-important schools can no longer be allowed to operate willy-nilly without accountability to taxpayers, students and teachers themselves.

Schug and Ford recommend specific ways for legislators to hold schools of education accountable and make sure teachers are getting the training they need in order to succeed in the classroom.

The MPS middle school teacher advocating for better bathrooms at the big rally at Forest Home Avenue Elementary School told me that our schools of ed are doing a fine job. She clearly had other concerns. But there is ample evidence that she is losing the forest for the latrines.

Quality education is not about more money or more regulation or more power for the unions fixated on a myopic and false struggle between public and private. Teachers, no matter where they teach, are the difference-makers. There's nobody more important, nobody with a harder job. Our youngest teachers deserve the best training we can possibly give them, just as our children deserve a shot at the opportunities more fortunate children in other parts of the world now have.



Mike Nichols

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Introduction	4
The Importance of Classroom Teachers.....	5
Criticisms of Schools of Education	6
The NCTQ Rates Schools of Education	9
Admission Standards for Wisconsin Schools of Education.....	11
Comparing Admission Standards Across Schools of Education	14
The Case of Finland	15
The Right Time to Re-evaluate Our Approach to Teacher Education.....	16
Recommendations and Conclusions	18
Appendix 1 Standards for NCTQ Teacher Prep Review	20
Endnotes.....	22

Executive Summary

Good teachers and quality schools change lives, but only if the teachers themselves have had the benefit of the same. In Wisconsin and much of the rest of America, that is too rarely the case.

Wisconsin should lead the nation in getting the best and brightest into teaching and making sure they are as effective as possible, something we are not now doing.

New teachers often feel poorly prepared, and school principals often have little confidence in their classroom readiness, according to national studies.

Wisconsin schools of education¹ generally receive poor reviews from the National Council of Teacher Quality. According to NCTQ's recent *Teacher Prep Review*, which evaluated programs in elementary, secondary and, in some cases, special education at 1,130 colleges and universities:

- No Wisconsin institution earned a top rating of four stars.
- The only Wisconsin institution to be highly ranked was the University of Wisconsin-Stout, which earned three stars.
- Most Wisconsin programs earned fewer than two stars.
- Both UW-Milwaukee's undergraduate secondary program and UW-Stevens Point's undergraduate secondary program received no stars and a consumer warning.

The poor reviews are largely the result of the widespread use of input measures to determine quality rather than outcome measures. For example, we know that schools of education have lower admission standards than many other Wisconsin professional schools. But there are no formal measures that link training in Wisconsin schools of education to the performance of their graduates once they enter the classroom.

Fortunately, the time is ripe for change. Roughly one-third of Wisconsin's aging teaching force will turn over in the next 10 years. The aging of Wisconsin's teacher corps, combined with the wave of retirements, presents a staffing challenge for some school districts but also an opportunity to reinvigorate Wisconsin's teaching profession.

At the same time, new and veteran teachers will soon be facing a new Wisconsin teacher evaluation system. For the first time, our teachers will be evaluated, in part, on their students' performance — a development that also provides an opportunity to measure the success of schools of education.

The same law creating the new teacher evaluation system, Act 166, included a provision directing the Department of Public Instruction to spearhead development of an evaluation system for schools of education by 2013-'14. DPI reports that its first education preparatory program report card is on track to be released in the spring.

Under the law, DPI must include the passage rate on the teacher licensure exam (Praxis) by the college or university in this report card. While this marks a step in the right direction, it is not enough. Passing the Praxis exam does not necessarily mean a teacher will succeed in the classroom.

For reasons set forth in this paper, we recommend that Wisconsin go further.

Legislators should direct the DPI to determine where successful teachers who are new to the profession — as defined by the new evaluation system — attended school, and the state should make that information public. The DPI should publicize which schools of education do a better job of preparing teachers as evidenced by their students' performance on standardized tests.

Such information could serve as a basis for extending the concept of accountability in public education to schools of education. Schools turning out high-performing graduates should be rewarded. Schools with underperforming graduates should face consequences. The Board of Regents should shift resources from less successful programs to more successful ones.

A new linkage between teacher effectiveness and schools of education would enable the market to reward or penalize schools of education as well. These recommendations will allow prospective teachers to know which schools will best prepare them for successful careers and where to apply and invest their tuition dollars. Principals will know where to look for the best teaching candidates.

¹In this report, the terms "schools of education" and "teacher preparation programs" are used interchangeably.

Other recommendations for Wisconsin include:

- Raise the minimum GPA requirements for entry into a state school of education to 3.0. Minimum GPAs for Wisconsin schools of education hover in the 2.5 to 2.75 range — below those of most other professional schools. However, if a school of education is demonstrating measurable success in training successful teachers as evidenced by student achievement, it should be given discretion to set its entry requirements.

- Place more emphasis on classroom management.

- Establish an admission system that ensures that those who are admitted to teacher preparation programs are selected from the top half of their college class.

- The National Council on Teacher Quality recommends, and we agree, that Wisconsin require candidates to pass subject-matter tests as a condition of admission into teacher programs as opposed to at the point of program completion.

Can teacher preparation be improved in Wisconsin and updated for the challenges teachers now face? Yes. Consider Finland. It ranks well above the United States (and most other developed countries) in reading, math and science performance. Admission requirements for teacher preparation programs are high. Academic requirements are rigorous. Finnish teachers are trained with an emphasis on specific subject matter over general education. Teachers are highly autonomous after they enter the profession. Finland shows it can be done.

It can be done in Wisconsin as well.

Introduction

During the past decade, the concept of accountability has dominated attempts at education reform in the United States. In Wisconsin, accountability measures resulting from the No Child Left Behind legislation placed sanctions on chronically low-performing schools. The passage of Act 166 in 2011 extended the concept of accountability to teachers.

Act 166 created the Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness System, which for the first time in the state's history made student performance as measured by standardized tests a major factor (counting for 50 percent) in a uniform teacher evaluation system. The creation of WEES has received substantial attention from media and pundits. However, another set of provisions included in Act 166 — one potentially equally important for K-12 education — has received very little attention.

Under Act 166, the Department of Public Instruction, in consultation with the governor's office, various Senate and Assembly committee chairs, and officials involved with higher education in Wisconsin, is required to develop a system for evaluating the performance of Wisconsin schools of education. According to DPI, the first round of these evaluations will be published in spring 2014.

Act 166 requires, in part, that the schools publish passage rates of their alumni on teacher licensure exams. It also requires that DPI make public information on where teachers received their training. But it does not currently require the DPI to link the success of newer teachers — as measured by the new WEES — to the college or university they attended.

We recommend that legislators require DPI to assemble available data establishing which schools of education produce the highest-performing teachers based on the new WEES. Wisconsin legislators, policymakers, teachers, potential teachers and others would then know, for example, which University of Wisconsin schools train the best math or reading teachers as measured by students' standardized test performance. Schools graduating students who are ill-prepared could remedy that.

There is ample evidence that such accountability is needed. In the following pages we will:

- Explain why teacher training is important and how Wisconsin teachers are trained.
- Compare how Wisconsin teacher preparation programs rank with others across the nation.
- Provide a brief case study of how things are in Finland.
- Explain how the context of education is changing.
- Offer suggestions on how to improve Wisconsin's approach to teacher training, including providing incentives for schools to produce high-performing teachers.

The Importance of Classroom Teachers

Teacher quality has a powerful effect on students' academic achievement. One frequently referenced study, for example, has shown that for children fortunate enough to have good teachers throughout their years in school, the effects of good teaching can substantially offset or even eliminate the disadvantage ordinarily associated with growing up in a poor socio-economic environment.¹

William L. Sanders is a senior research fellow with the University of North Carolina System and for more than 34 years was a professor and director of the University of Tennessee's Value-Added Research and Assessment Center. Professor Sanders developed the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System as a method of measuring the effectiveness of school systems, schools and teachers.² He and his colleagues have concluded that classroom teachers are the single most important influence on student progress: "Differences in teacher effectiveness [are] the dominant factor affecting student academic gains. The importance of... certain classroom contextual variables (e.g., class size, classroom heterogeneity) appears to be rather minor." In a separate 1997 study, Sanders et al. concluded: "The two most important factors impacting student gain are the differences in classroom teacher effectiveness and the prior achievement level of the students. The teacher effect is highly significant in every analysis and has a larger effect size than any other factor in 20 of the 30 analyses."³

More recently, discussions of teacher quality have been rocked by a new study published by Stanford University economist Eric A. Hanushek. He reiterates that teachers are important: "No other measured aspect of schools is nearly as important in determining student achievement."⁴ He then goes on to calculate the economic impact of above-average teachers on student earnings. He combines an average student's improvement in test scores with a conservative estimate of the impact on future earnings. He finds that effective teachers can add a present value of \$10,600 over a lifetime of work for the average student. Any teacher who stays at this above-average level of performance adds such an amount to the student's earnings every year.

Two other points are worth noting. First, Hanushek goes on to say that above-average teachers can annually generate gains of more than \$400,000 in present value of students' future earnings in a class of 20 students. Second, and equally compelling, below-average teachers lead to a decrease in student lifetime earnings. Hanushek adds that "having an effective teacher followed by an equally ineffective teacher will cancel out the gains."

The potential implications of such findings are large. Imagine, for example, the personal and societal benefits if Wisconsin parents could be confident that nearly all of the state's teachers could produce large academic gains year after year.

The definition of what makes a teacher effective is much debated. The value-added methodology literature suggests that effective teachers are those who consistently produce academic gains as measured by standardized assessments. But what are the qualities of these teachers? How would we know who they are in advance? These are much tougher questions. However, there is a body of research that examines the relationship between a teacher's qualities and student achievement. A report by the Abell Foundation provides one review of the literature on this topic.⁵ It identified 150 high-quality studies going back several decades that explore the relationship between teacher preparation and student achievement. This review concluded that the single teacher attribute that is measurable and relates consistently to student achievement is *verbal ability*. Most researchers regard verbal ability to be a measure of an individual's general cognitive ability. It is most often measured by vocabulary tests. Other conclusions of the report include:

- Experienced teachers are more effective than new teachers.
- Teachers who have attended more selective colleges produce higher student achievement.
- At the secondary level, teachers who know more about their subject matter are generally more effective, at least in science and mathematics.
- At the elementary level, there is no research indicating the amount or type of college course that is necessary or optimal for teachers to have taken in various academic disciplines.

Criticisms of Schools of Education

Researchers and other observers have faulted schools of education — the courses they offer and the academic ability of the teacher candidates that they attract — for offering weak courses and programs. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has called scores of education school programs “mediocre.” Duncan notes that he has met hundreds of teachers who complained that they did not get enough practical training to manage classrooms behaviors, particularly with students from poor families. He has asked universities to significantly change the way they prepare teachers to run classrooms and has observed that too often a university sees its school of education as a “cash cow” because it is relatively inexpensive to run and has high enrollment.⁶

And criticisms of schools of education do not emanate exclusively from outside the profession.

Within higher education in the United States, the American Educational Research Association is the dominant organization for education research. A 2005 report commissioned by the AERA’s Panel on Research and Teacher Education concluded that there is very little empirical evidence supporting the value of formal teacher education.⁷ Reflecting on the report, one of the report’s authors said this in an editorial:

The panel’s report makes it clear that we do not have the empirical evidence demonstrating the positive impact of many of the policies that currently govern teacher education (e.g., teacher testing and accreditation) or of the curriculum and instructional practices that are common in teacher education programs across institutions (e.g., requiring courses in education foundations or using journaling as a way for teacher candidates to track and reflect on their developing practices). Likewise, the report reveals that there is not a clear empirical mandate for many of the reforms that are being advocated and/or implemented in state and national initiatives (e.g., moving teacher preparation outside of colleges and universities through the development of alternative routes and pathways into teaching or, along entirely different lines, improving collegiate teacher preparation through closer collaboration between education and arts and sciences faculty.) Although there are extensive and, in some cases, persuasive rationales for these practices and reform policies, which are based on politics or “common sense,” or on professional consensus, they are not supported by empirical evidence about their efficacy.⁸

Arthur Levine, former president of Teachers College at Columbia University, has also issued a report based on visits he and his team of researchers made to 28 colleges with

teacher education programs. The research team obtained information from deans, faculty members, alumni and school principals.⁹ They identified some schools with exemplary training programs — among them Alverno College in Milwaukee, the University of Virginia, Stanford University and Emporia State University. Overall, however, Levine’s findings were sharply critical:

- Most teachers believe they were poorly prepared by their teacher education programs.
- School principals give low grades to the training new teachers receive regarding the realities of diverse classrooms.
- Schools of education enroll too many students and have low admission standards.
- There is no qualitative difference between teachers trained in schools of education accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education — the major national body for accreditation of teacher education programs — and teachers prepared in non-NCATE accredited programs.

A recent report by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute provides the results of a national study of school of education professors themselves. The study is based on survey findings from a nationwide, randomly selected sample of 716 teacher educators in four-year colleges and universities. The results show that education professors hold somewhat divided views, are willing to criticize their own teacher preparation programs, and hold views that often conflict with the policies of school districts and state departments of education. Specifically, the study reports:

- Progressive educational philosophies dominate the ideas that education professors wish to teach to prospective teachers.
- Education professors show little concern for the practical management of real world classrooms such as managing student discipline, addressing individual learning needs of students, and working with state standards — even though K-12 teachers often say these are among the most difficult elements of teaching.
- Asked to choose between two competing philosophies of the role of teacher educator, 68 percent believe preparing students “to be change agents who will reshape education by bringing new ideas and approaches to the public schools” is most important; just 26 percent advocate preparing students “to work effectively within the realities of today’s public schools.”

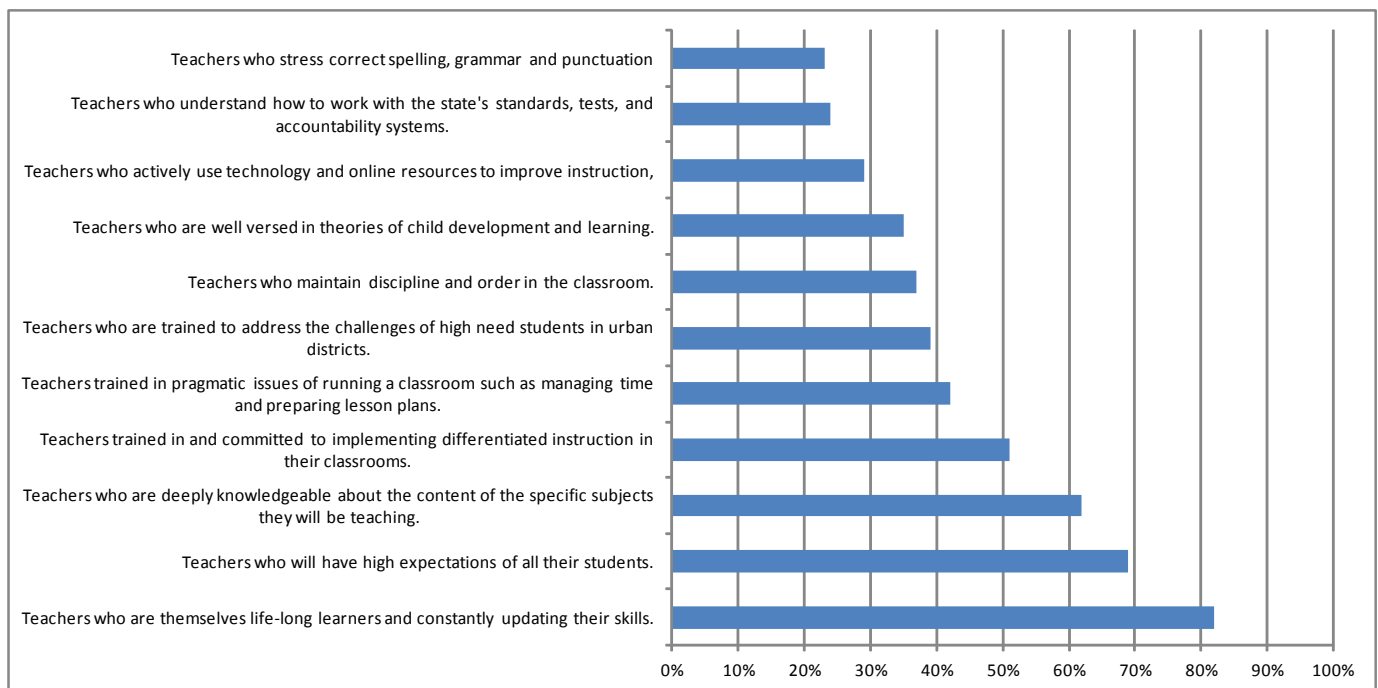
- Only 24 percent believe it is absolutely essential to produce “teachers who understand how to work with the state’s standards, tests and accountability systems.”
- Just 37 percent say it is absolutely essential to focus on developing “teachers who maintain discipline and order in the classroom.”

- Half agree that “teacher education programs often fail to prepare teachers for the challenges of teaching in the real world.”

Figure 1 illustrates key results from the Fordham report.

Figure 1: The Views of Education Professors

Question posed in the Fordham study: “Teacher education programs can impart different qualities to their students. Which of the following do you think are most essential and least essential?”
(Figure 1 shows the percentage responding “most essential.”)



While a separate survey of Wisconsin education professors is beyond the scope of this report, we have no reason to think that the views of Wisconsin’s professoriate would be much different from the national results.

Cash Cows

Finally, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan is not the first to suggest that schools of education function as cash cows for their colleges and universities. Arthur Levine elaborates on this conclusion based on his four-year study of American schools of education:

“Most universities, after a barrage of reports over the past two decades on the need to strengthen teacher education, did little or nothing. In some cases, they actually have worsened the situation by using teacher education as a cash cow — forcing their programs to enroll more students

than was desirable, lowering admissions standards, and employing too many adjunct professors because they are cheaper than full-time professors. This enables universities to generate additional revenues for academic units with higher status than education.”¹⁰

How is it possible that Wisconsin schools of education serve as cash cows for their colleges or universities? They follow many of the policies reported by Arthur Levine. For example, Wisconsin elementary education teacher training programs are often among the largest on campus, and in Wisconsin can account for up to 15 percent of student enrollment. The costs of financing a school of education, meanwhile, are often less than other programs. Education schools rarely have the expensive labs and equipment required in other fields. But they still generate a lot of student credit hours.

For example, students are often required to perform — and pay for — a full semester of student teaching. However, the supervision of student teachers is usually low-cost. Supervision is turned over to graduate students or to ad hoc instructors who cost considerably less than full-time professors. Most cooperating teachers — those who provide a class for student teachers to practice teach — usually receive little or no compensation. While student teaching is rightly regarded as the most important part of a new teacher’s program, it is often a cash cow for the university.

National Council on Teacher Quality Analysis of Wisconsin Schools of Education

The University of Wisconsin System has 13 four-year universities and a total enrollment of 181,000 students. Each one of the UW campuses has a program for training teachers. Most often that entity is a school of education. The two largest campuses in the University of Wisconsin system, Madison and Milwaukee, produced 392 and 270 undergraduates from their schools of education in the 2011-’12 school year. Many of these graduates are now among the 7,000 or so Wisconsin public teachers with one year or less of teaching experience.

How do Wisconsin admission standards to schools of education rank nationally? For years, the National Council on Teacher Quality has criticized Wisconsin in its annual *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*.¹¹ In a 2012 report, NCQT again concluded that Wisconsin does not ensure that teacher preparation programs admit candidates with strong academic records. It states:

“At present, Wisconsin requires that approved undergraduate teacher preparation programs only accept teacher candidates who have passed a basic skills test (Praxis I). Although the state sets the minimum score for passing the basic skills test, it is normed just to the prospective teacher population. To encourage diversity, programs are permitted to accept 10 percent of an entering class that has not passed a basic skills test. In addition, the state’s current 2.5 GPA requirement (for which the 10 percent exception also applies) is too low to be considered a rigorous bar for program admission.”

The NCTQ Rates Schools of Education

In June 2013, the NCTQ released its report titled *Teacher Prep Review*.¹² This report reviewed more than 2,400 elementary, secondary, and a limited number of special education programs at 1,130 colleges and universities. This was a large, first-of-its-kind effort. An important goal of the review was to highlight teacher preparation programs across the nation that, based on the NCTQ standards, are most likely to produce effective, classroom-ready teachers.

The NCTQ began with a national survey of schools of education. It collected data from several sources, including admissions standards, syllabi, course descriptions, textbooks, student teaching manuals and graduate surveys. These data were evaluated based on 18 NCTQ standards, which are presented in Appendix 1.

Overall Rankings

The NCTQ used a star rating to rank teacher preparation programs. Four-star programs are regarded as the best programs. The weakest programs earned no stars along with a consumer alert warning symbol.

The authors stress that the ratings are meant to evaluate what a teacher preparation program adds in the way of training. They note that low-performing programs can, and often do, graduate teachers who end up being effective in the classroom. They note, however, that many in public education believe that schools of education produce new teachers who lack the skills they are looking for, including the ability to effectively manage classrooms and analyze the increasingly rich data now available from classroom testing. Thus the burden often falls on school districts to provide, through professional development, the knowledge and skills that should have been provided through the normal course of teacher training.

How Wisconsin Fared

Twenty-seven Wisconsin teacher preparation programs were included in the NCTQ ratings. However, many of the smaller private colleges and universities had insufficient data and could not be rated. Of the over 1,200 elementary and secondary programs for which the NCTQ could provide an overall program ranking, only 105 programs earned three or four stars. The only Wisconsin institution to be so ranked was UW-Stout, which earned three stars. This appears to be due to its alignment with Common Core Standards for its secondary teacher preparation program.

Most programs earned fewer than two stars. Exceptions were UW-Eau Claire's undergraduate elementary program (two stars), UW-La Crosse's undergraduate secondary program (two stars), UW-Madison's undergraduate elementary program (two and one-half stars), and UW Platteville's undergraduate elementary program (two stars). UW-Parkside's program was being redesigned at the time of the study and was not included.

NCTQ used a warning sign to alert consumers and school districts to programs that the NCTQ regarded as the weakest. They earned no stars.

UW-Milwaukee's undergraduate secondary program and UW-Stevens Point's undergraduate secondary program received no stars and the consumer warning. Why? While UW-Milwaukee was rated high for its secondary teaching methods courses, it performed poorly in aligning with Common Core content, in student teaching, and in training teacher candidates on how best to assess instruction. UW-Stevens Point's rating was almost identical to UW-Milwaukee's.

Figure 2: NCTQ Wisconsin Program Ratings

Institution	State	Program	Number of Stars
University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire	WI	ug/el	★★★★
University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire	WI	ug/sec	★★★★
University of Wisconsin – Green Bay	WI	ug/el	★★★★
University of Wisconsin – Green Bay	WI	ug/sec	★★★★
University of Wisconsin – La Crosse	WI	ug/el	★★★★
University of Wisconsin – La Crosse	WI	ug/sec	★★★★
University of Wisconsin – Madison	WI	ug/el	★★★☆☆
University of Wisconsin – Madison	WI	ug/sec	★★★☆☆
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee	WI	ug/el	★★★☆☆
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee	WI	ug/sec	⚠
University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh	WI	ug/el	★★★☆☆
University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh	WI	ug/sec	★★★★
University of Wisconsin – Platteville	WI	ug/el	★★★★
University of Wisconsin – Platteville	WI	ug/sec	★★★★
University of Wisconsin – River Falls	WI	ug/el	★★★★
University of Wisconsin – River Falls	WI	ug/sec	★★★☆☆
University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point	WI	ug/el	★★★☆☆
University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point	WI	ug/sec	⚠
University of Wisconsin – Stout	WI	ug/el	★★★☆☆
University of Wisconsin – Stout	WI	ug/sec	★★★★
University of Wisconsin – Superior	WI	ug/el	★★★☆☆
University of Wisconsin – Superior	WI	ug/sec	★★★★
University of Wisconsin – Whitewater	WI	ug/el	★★★★
University of Wisconsin – Whitewater	WI	ug/sec	★★★☆☆

Program Guide: ug = undergraduate program; g = graduate program; el = elementary program, sec = secondary program

Many more details regarding the NCTQ ranking can be found by visiting <http://www.nctq.org/siteHome.do>.

Admission Standards for Wisconsin Schools of Education

Who is currently admitted to Wisconsin schools of education? Are they academically capable? Who determines who gets in?

Schools of education are not entirely autonomous. The Board of Regents could choose to be involved if it wished. However, as a practical matter, it is DPI policy that has the most influence. The Wisconsin DPI has its own set of rules for teacher preparation, known as PI34, that help establish the framework for admission to schools of education and subsequent teacher training. Schools of education are free, of course, to set standards above the DPI minimums. Most, however, choose to stay close to the DPI minimums. They do, after all, face competition with each other for enrollments, and enrollments in schools of education are an important source of tuition revenue. Thus, there are incentives to stay close to the DPI rules. Here are some examples of the DPI rules:

- According to DPI rules as well as state statutes, all teacher candidates need to complete a criminal background check.
- Teacher candidates are to pass a test showing basic competency in communication skills.
- A student cumulative grade point average should not be less than 2.5.
- The minimum GPA of 2.5 may be waived at the discretion of the local campus. The DPI permits exceptions to be granted for up to 10 percent of the total number of students completing a teacher education program.

We visited the websites of all 13 education programs in the University of Wisconsin System and followed up with telephone calls to obtain clarifications when necessary. UW-Parkside is reforming its teacher education program and was not accepting applications at the time this research was conducted. Table 1 provides a summary of the admission requirements for Wisconsin's 13 four-year campuses. Some points stand out:

- Ten of the programs set a GPA above the 2.5 minimum required by the DPI, with most at 2.75 or above. The exceptions are UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee, which have kept the 2.5 minimum.
- Several of the UW campuses include additional requirements, such as specific course work, interviews, portfolios and so forth. UW-Milwaukee calls for additional requirements in mathematics and English. UW-Madison calls for submitting a 1,000-word essay.
- Two campuses — UW-Green Bay and UW-La Crosse — had no stated additional requirements.
- UW-La Crosse and UW-Superior stand out in stipulating a 3.0 GPA.

²In Wisconsin, students usually apply for admission to a school of education after they have accumulated a specified number of college credits, often around 45. The credits establish the GPA that is used for admission purposes.

Table 1: School of Education Admission Requirements

UW Campus	Minimum GPA	Minimum Credits	Minimum passing score on the Praxis I Pre-Professional Skills Tests *	Other Admission Requirements
UW-Eau Claire ₁	2.75	Not specified	√	*C or better in ENG110 *C or better in ES203: Exploring Schools in Grades 1-8
UW-Green Bay	2.75	28	√	
UW-La Crosse	3.0	Can apply with 24, not formally enrolled until reach 40	√	
UW-Madison ₂	2.5	40	√	*1,000-word essay
UW-Milwaukee	2.5	45	√	*4 or higher on the English Placement Test or complete ENG102 with C or better *30 or higher on Math Placement Test or complete MATH 105, 103, or 175 with C or better *C or better in CURRINS 300: Intro to Teaching *C or better in ED POL375L Cultural Foundations of Ed.
UW-Oshkosh	2.75	Apply with 27 but not formally enrolled until reach 40	√	*C or better in Fundamentals of Speech
UW-Parkside ₃	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA
UW-Platteville ₄	2.65	40	√	*Portfolio *Interview *Tutoring requirement for birth to age 11 program *C or better in ENG1130 & 1230, SPEECH2010 or 1010, 1230 Intro to Ed or 2320 Intro to Phy Ed, & 2010 Computer Apps in Ed.

UW Campus	Minimum GPA	Minimum Credits	Minimum passing score on the Praxis I Pre-Professional Skills Tests *	Other Admission Requirements
UW-River Falls	2.75	40	√	*ENG100 & 200 with minimum of B- in one and C in the other *B- or better in COMM101 *C or better in Teacher Education 211 or 212 *Faculty recommendation *Completed degree plan signed by advisor
UW-Stevens Point ₅	2.75	24; admitted conditionally until reach 40	√	*B or better in Writing Emphasis courses
UW-Stout ₆	2.75	40	TBA	*e-portfolio
UW-Superior ₇	3.00	40	√	*Interview *Portfolio *Evidence of working 20+ hours with children *B- or higher in TED200 *C or higher in WRIT101, WRIT102, COMM110, HHP102, & MATH/CSCI as required for major
UW-Whitewater ₈	2.75 *For guaranteed admission to Elem Ed or Middle Childhood-Early Adolescence a 3.0 is needed **For guaranteed admission to Secondary Ed Social Sciences a 3.25 is needed	40	√ *For guaranteed admission to Elem Ed or Middle Childhood- Early Adolescence Program must pass Praxis II 0146 (5146 CBT) **For guaranteed admission to Secondary Ed Social Sciences must pass Praxis II 0081 exam	*C or better in Pre-Professional Foundations Courses *Portfolio *C or better in COMM110 *C or better in MUSED111

*State minimum on Praxis I is 175 Reading (322 CB), 174 Writing (320 CB), and 173 Math (318 CB).

1. UW-Eau Claire does not specify a minimum number of credits obtained before applying for admission to its school of education. Rather, it indicates to apply in third semester after completing other requirements.
2. UW-Madison will allow applicants to apply with either meeting the GPA requirement or meeting the minimum on Praxis I. It also appears that cultural diversity is considered in the admissions process, possibly fairly heavily (i.e., compensating for lower academic performance).
3. Program specifics for UW-Parkside were not available at the time the research was conducted.
4. UW-Platteville has 2010-'11 Praxis I results posted that illustrate that its school of education students on average score lower than students statewide and nationally.
5. UW-Stevens Point allows for the application of a waiver if the minimum GPA or minimum Praxis I scores are not met.
6. UW-Stout offers bachelor of science in art education, early childhood education, family and consumer sciences education, science education, technology education and special education.
7. TED200 (intro to education) course required prior to applying to school of education.
8. For guaranteed admission to elementary education or middle childhood-early adolescence, a 3.0 GPA and passing score on Praxis II 0146 (5146 CBT) are required. For guaranteed admission to secondary education social sciences, a 3.25 and passing score on Praxis II 0081 exam are required.

Comparing Admission Standards Across Wisconsin's Professional Schools

Another way of reviewing the admission standards for Wisconsin's schools of education is to compare their requirements to other university professional programs such as nursing and engineering.

A detailed table summarizing the admission standards for professional schools on UW campuses is available at <http://www.wpri.org/>.

Our research of admission standards for Wisconsin's professional schools reveals many disparities. Some caution is necessary in examining the results. It should be noted, for example, that not all campuses have the same set of professional schools. Large enrollment universities, such as UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee, offer a rich set of professional programs, while smaller enrollment universities, such as UW-River Falls and UW-Superior, offer far fewer. In addition, the differences in program requirements may be the result of the requirements of the profession itself and/or a reflection of national accreditation standards.

Some, differences, however, stand out. First, engineering programs on campuses such as UW-Madison, UW-Milwaukee and UW-Stout have higher expectations than other professional schools. Second, business schools, with the exception of UW-Madison and the College of Management at UW-Stout, have weak GPA entrance requirements. The business school GPA requirement at UW-Milwaukee, UW-Oshkosh and UW-Superior is 2.25. It is 2.3 at UW-Superior. At UW-Green Bay, UW-La Crosse and UW-Oshkosh, the minimum GPA is 2.5.

Third, admission requirements to schools of education often rank below those of other professional schools. Let's use schools of nursing to provide a comparison. Teaching and nursing have some points in common. First, they have historically been dominated by females, although that is changing. Second, they are large professions of similar size. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are a little more than 2.7 million registered nurses (this includes registered nurses with bachelor's degrees in nursing, associate's degrees in nursing, and diplomas from an approved nursing program). There are slightly fewer than 2.7 million early childhood, elementary and high school teachers. Both teachers and nurses must become licensed. Finally, both professions require four-year degrees. Yet the school of nursing at UW-Madison has a higher

GPA requirement and specifies several science courses for admission, including chemistry, biology and physiology. UW-Milwaukee's school of nursing has fewer academic requirements but a higher GPA than the school of education. Admission requirements for schools of nursing as well as several other professional schools are higher than those for schools of education.

It is, of course, impossible to say whether increasing admissions standards at schools of education will increase the quality of K-12 education in Wisconsin. For one, a student's GPA is just one factor in determining his or her ability to succeed in college and beyond. Second, and most important, a light modification to student GPA requirements does not change the many other components of teacher training, and the reality of actually teaching in Wisconsin. However, there are good reasons to think that strengthening admissions requirements could be part of a comprehensive approach to improving teacher training. Such a comprehensive approach occurs in Finland, an oft-cited case of how public education might be improved through the strengthening of human capital.

The Case of Finland

Followers of education news have likely heard reference to the “Finnish Miracle.”¹³ According to the Program for International Student Assessment test, an international assessment given to developed nations, Finland ranks well above the United States (and most other developed countries) in reading, math and science performance.¹⁴ Critics like education researcher Rick Hess have voiced skepticism over the ability to compare the education systems in Finland and the United States, citing, among other things, cultural differences in areas such as familial stability and cultural homogeneity.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Finland’s education system is considered among the best in the world and has improved in recent decades.¹⁶

Pasi Sahlberg, director general of the Centre for International Mobility and Cooperation, housed in the Finland Ministry of Education and Culture, reports on the high levels of academic rigor required to become a teacher. He notes that becoming a primary school teacher in Finland is very competitive, attracting the best and brightest. Thousands of high school graduates submit their applications to the departments of teacher education at eight universities. However, only the candidates with the highest scores and excellent interpersonal skills are selected. Annually only one in 10 candidates is admitted to become a primary grade teacher. Among all categories of teacher education, including high school, about 5,000 teachers are selected from about 20,000 applications. Other hurdles include written examinations on assigned books, observed clinical experiences and interviews. Each potential teacher completes a master’s thesis.¹⁷

In addition to its academic rigor, perhaps the most striking factor in Finland’s educational success, is the nature of the teaching profession. Like their American counterparts, Finnish teachers are unionized. Also as in the United States, Finnish teachers receive middle-class salaries.¹⁸ In Finland, however, the teaching profession appears to be held in higher esteem than in the United States.

Sahlberg posits that high-performing students are attracted to the teaching profession in Finland because of its autonomy.¹⁹ Sahlberg argues that in Finnish culture, teaching is “akin to medicine, law or economics” in terms of its prestige.²⁰

Finnish teachers do indeed enjoy a high degree of autonomy. For example, they often develop their own curricula. Many use this autonomy to pursue professional development in the form of study toward a doctorate

rather than through the type of professional development programs offered in the United States. (Such programs are not well-developed in Finland.)²¹

Perhaps the most glaring differences are how students are evaluated and what that method of evaluation says about the teacher. Unlike the United States, Finland does not use widespread standardized testing. Instead, the ability of teachers to grade their students’ performance is trusted as an indicator of student achievement. The situation is exactly the opposite of the trend toward using standardized test scores to judge teacher performance in the United States.

The main lesson from Finland is that teaching can and should be like any other respected profession where high admission standards and academic rigor can be used to improve professional performance. Overall, there are several clear characteristics of the teaching profession in Finland that may be worth emulating in the United States, including:

- An emphasis on specific subject areas over general education for students seeking to become teachers;
- More autonomy for teachers once they enter the profession;
- A granting of greater professional judgment to teachers.

The Right Time to Re-evaluate Our Approach to Teacher Education

The dramatic changes in Wisconsin's teaching profession over the past few years make now an ideal time for Wisconsin to evaluate and perhaps reconsider its approach to teacher training. The teaching profession is changing, and it is only natural that policymakers work to align our approach to teacher training with the state's new reality. Let's explore how the profession is changing.

The Impact of Act 10

The most obvious change is the end of collective bargaining after the implementation of the controversial Act 10. The potential for autonomy for teachers in both the classroom and in their career trajectories is greater today than it was just two years ago. On the surface, the change signals a massive shift in power away from teachers unions and toward school boards. However, it does not have to be seen as shifting power away from teachers. Teachers continue to be the most important employees within schools, and they can exercise substantial power given their pre-eminent place. High levels of potential autonomy imply that teacher preparation programs should be highly selective, attracting only the best candidates.

A New Teacher Evaluation System

A recent evolution of the teaching profession in Wisconsin is the development and introduction of a new teacher evaluation system called the Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness System. The system, the result of collaboration between Department of Public Instruction Superintendent Tony Evers and Gov. Scott Walker, is currently being piloted.²²

WEES, when fully implemented, will evaluate Wisconsin teachers, for the first time, in part on their students' performance. Under the system, 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation will be a combination of the value-added test scores of his or her students and school and district performance data. While there is strong research showing that teachers are indeed motivated by their students' performance, only after the implementation of WEES will teachers be explicitly evaluated on it.²³

The other 50 percent of the WEES teacher evaluation system is based on a measurement of teacher practice developed by Charlotte Danielson, an education consultant based in Princeton, N.J.²⁴ Under the system, teachers are evaluated on:

- The quality of their planning and preparation;
- The atmosphere of their classroom;
- The quality of their instruction;
- Their commitment and contributions outside the classroom.

Of course, the larger question surrounding the new teacher evaluation system is: How will it be used? Notably, it is not designed to compare teachers; evaluations will not be made public.²⁵ The evaluations can, however, under state statute 118.225, be used by school boards to evaluate employees if they establish their rationale for doing so.

Though the utility of Wisconsin's new teacher evaluation will not be known until the system is fully implemented, it is clear that Wisconsin teachers can expect to be subjected to regular evaluation, that these evaluations will include indicators of their students' performance, and that these evaluations may be used by school boards to make staffing and compensation decisions. Given this new environment, it is logical to examine and perhaps change the way in which teachers are trained in Wisconsin — and establish a sound, empirical method for doing that.

Turnover and New Competition

There has been high turnover among teachers in recent years. Much of this turnover has been tied to the upheaval surrounding Act 10, but part of it is also from the demographic reality of aging baby boomers. According to 2012 data from DPI, the average Wisconsin teacher is 44 years old. In addition, almost 30 percent of Wisconsin teachers, or 22,627, are over the age of 50. Teachers in Wisconsin with 30 years of experience may begin to retire with benefits at age 57, making it reasonable to estimate that roughly one-third of Wisconsin's teaching force will turn over in the next 10 years.

There was a time in the not so distant past that most Wisconsin teachers were employed in a traditional public school after going through a traditional teacher training program. Slowly this reality is changing. Today, a sizable number of teachers in Milwaukee are trained by Teach for America. Further, the expansion of vouchers statewide as part of Wisconsin's publicly funded K-12 education infrastructure could mean more teachers in front of

publicly funded students with college degrees but no formal teaching license. If and when more alternative pathways to teaching in Wisconsin emerge, traditional schools for education will be under increased pressure to demonstrate their unique value.

More Data

As discussed in the introduction to this report, in 2011, Act 166 mandated that DPI develop a system for evaluating schools of education and required that the educational background of teachers be included in the statewide student information system database. The new availability of data and the clear legislative demand for enhanced tracking of schools of education performance suggest that the time is right to explore the creation of a teacher-performance-based accountability system for schools of education.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Wisconsin's future will be much brighter if it can increase the quality of the education provided in grades K-12. High quality teachers can not only increase student achievement, they can positively influence the future earnings of those students fortunate enough to be in their classrooms.

The time is ideal for Wisconsin to assess and improve its system of teacher preparation. The quality of teacher preparation is now taking center stage, in part due to the new context in which teachers are operating. New and veteran teachers are going to be participating in a new evaluation system — the Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness System — that will depend on a combination of valued-added test scores of their students as well as other factors having to do with planning, quality of instruction, and so forth.

Such challenges aren't completely new or unique to Wisconsin. Wisconsin can benefit from creative approaches elsewhere. Some teacher preparation programs, such as in Finland, decided that attracting top-quality recruits and providing first-rate training was a winning combination. The result is that teachers achieved the kind of autonomy that is more typical of other professions.

Closer to home, the 2013 NCTQ *Teacher Prep Review* provides the latest evidence that Wisconsin teacher preparation institutions have a great deal of room for improvement. Wisconsin has no four-star rated institutions and just one three-star rated institution. Most institutions earned one or two stars, and two institutions received no stars along with a consumer alert.

The following are our recommendations for Wisconsin:

- Legislators should direct the DPI to determine where successful teachers who are new to the profession — as defined by the new evaluation system — attended school, and the state should make that information public.

- Data linking the performance of Wisconsin teachers to the institutions where they received their teacher certification and the still-evolving DPI approach to measuring the performance of schools of education should provide the basis for a system of incentives and consequences for schools of education. Schools producing teachers having a positive impact on K-12 outcomes should receive increased autonomy as well as additional funds for additional staff and/or salary increases. Schools chronically producing under-performing teachers should face increased scrutiny and appropriate interventions in the form of outside help and eventual reduction in resources if performance does not improve.

Knowing which schools are training teachers effectively, and even digging deeper to understand the particular teaching environments for which individual schools are best preparing teachers, can enable schools of education to focus on their strengths and give prospective teachers better information when choosing a school of education. The combined effects of better information and an accountability system can encourage the growth of successful programs both from within and outside schools of education.

- The NCQT has provided a blueprint to help Wisconsin move up in the national rankings. We recommend that Wisconsin establish an admission system that ensures that those who are admitted to teacher preparation programs are selected from the top half of their college class. The NCTQ suggests that Wisconsin should require that teacher preparation programs use a common admissions test normed to the general college-bound population. Wisconsin should consider programs to use an assessment that demonstrates that candidates are academically competitive with all peers, regardless of their intended profession.

- The DPI should raise the minimum GPA requirements for entry into a state school of education to 3.0. Minimum GPAs hover in the 2.5 to 2.75 range, below those of most other professional schools. Raising the minimum GPA to 3.0 would also replace the current method by which schools of education may admit students with lower-than-required GPAs. However, data should trump arbitrary rules. If a school of education is demonstrating measurable success in training successful teachers as evidenced by student achievement scores, it should be given discretion to set minimal entry requirements.

- The NCTQ recommends and we agree that Wisconsin should require that candidates pass subject-matter tests as a condition of admission into schools of education, as opposed to at the point of program completion. Program candidates are likely to have completed coursework in classes required for program admission. Thus, it would be sensible to have candidates take content tests while this knowledge is fresh rather than wait two years to fulfill the requirement, and candidates lacking sufficient expertise would be able to remedy deficits prior to entering formal preparation.

- In addition, Wisconsin education schools should place more emphasis on classroom management. A survey of education professors reported here suggests that such practical content is of little interest to them. A recent WPRI report demonstrated that disruptive students have

a negative impact on district test scores, suggesting that efforts to improve the classroom climate can improve the academic performance of districts.²⁶ Though in an ideal environment teachers would be free to simply practice their craft, reality dictates that strong classroom management is a necessary prerequisite to effective teaching.

Conclusions

A strong economy and high quality of life for Wisconsin are dependent on the strength of its public education system. If Wisconsin is to succeed, its students must succeed. If Wisconsin students are to succeed, Wisconsin's teachers must be effective from the time they enter the classroom.

The teaching profession is changing through the increased use of data and emphasis on accountability. Extending this focus on accountability to schools of education using a system of linking teacher performance to schools of education is logical.

The steps recommended in this report need not be painful or controversial. They can and should be taken in a way that respects — and benefits from — the experiences and goals of current and future public school teachers.

Standards for the NCTQ Teacher Prep Review

Selection

Standard 1: Selection Criteria

The program screens for academic caliber in selecting teacher candidates.
Standard applies to elementary, secondary and special education programs.

Content Preparation

Standard 2: Early Reading

The program trains teacher candidates to teach reading as prescribed by the Common Core State Standards.
Standard applies to elementary and special education programs.

Standard 3: English Language Learners

The program prepares teacher candidates to teach reading to English-language learners.
Standard applies to elementary programs.

Standard 4: Struggling Readers

The program prepares teacher candidates to teach reading skills to students at risk of reading failure.
Standard applies to elementary programs.

Standard 5: Common Core Elementary Mathematics

The program prepares teacher candidates to successfully teach to the Common Core State Standards for math.
Standard applies to elementary and special education programs.

Standard 6: Common Core Elementary Content

The program ensures that teacher candidates have the broad content preparation necessary to successfully teach to the Common Core State Standards. Standard applies to elementary programs.

Standard 7: Common Core Middle School Content

The program ensures that teacher candidates have the content preparation necessary to successfully teach to the Common Core State Standards. Standard applies to secondary programs.

Standard 8: Common Core High School Content

The program ensures that teacher candidates have the content preparation necessary to successfully teach to the Common Core State Standards. Standard applies to secondary programs.

Standard 9: Common Core Content for Special Education

The program ensures that teacher candidates' content preparation aligns with the Common Core State Standards in the grades they are certified to teach. Standard applies to special education programs.

Professional Skills

Standard 10: Classroom Management

The program trains teacher candidates to successfully manage classrooms.
Standard applies to elementary and secondary programs.

Standard 11: Lesson Planning

The program trains teacher candidates in how to plan lessons. Standard applies to elementary and secondary programs.

Standard 12: Assessment and Data

The program trains teacher candidates in how to assess learning and use student performance data to inform instruction.
Standard applies to elementary and secondary programs.

Standard 13: Equity

The program ensures that teacher candidates experience schools that are successful at serving students who have been traditionally underserved. Standard applies to elementary, secondary and special education programs.

Standard 14: Student Teaching

The program ensures that teacher candidates have a strong student teaching experience. Standard applies to elementary, secondary and special education programs.

Standard 15: Secondary Methods

The program requires teacher candidates to practice instructional techniques specific to their content area. Standard applies to secondary programs.

Standard 16: Instructional Design for Special Education

The program trains candidates to design instruction for students with special needs. Standard applies to special education programs.

Outcomes**Standard 17: Outcomes**

The program and institution collect and monitor data on their graduates. Standard applies to elementary, secondary and special education programs.

Standard 18: Evidence of Effectiveness

The program's graduates have a positive impact on student learning. Standard applies to elementary and secondary programs.

Endnotes

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