Race to the Top and Teacher Preparation Programs in Massachusetts: A qualitative study

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Abstract

This paper discusses the changes that occurred in teacher preparation programs in Massachusetts as a result of the federal Race to the Top (RttT) initiative. This topic was investigated through extensive literature review, as well as original qualitative research. Several semi-structured interviews were conducted during the 2018-2019 school year with individuals representing various voices in policy, including a government official, a non-profit leader, and various members of academia. Major themes of the result include an overall positive reception of RttT as a program, a desire for the continued revision of teacher evaluation (CAP program and MTEL testing), and a fairly cohesive understanding of what it means for a teacher to be “well-qualified” or “highly effective”. While there was a feeling of positivity, interviewees also offered a number of critiques to the current teacher preparation evaluation system, including a demand for a more internally valid measure of teacher candidates. There was also a feeling that teacher preparation programs are not doing enough to help recruit and retain teachers of color in the state. While Massachusetts is generally well-known for its rigorous education system, and their work under the umbrella of RttT has been generally successful, there continues to be room for improvement in their teacher preparation system.

Keywords: Race to the Top, RttT, Teacher Preparation programs, Massachusetts, MTEL
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Chapter One

Introduction

Every day, 951,631 students walk through the doors of public schools in Massachusetts (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2019(a)), where they are greeted by one of 73,878 teachers (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2019(c)). Students spend at least thirty hours a week with these teachers, and are required to spend at least 900 hours in classes per academic year (Hull & Newman, 2011). Assuming that a student completes K-12 education within state lines, and in the standard thirteen years, this means that by the time s/he graduates, the typical Massachusetts student will have spent at least 11,700 hours with a public-school teacher. This raises the question: who are these teachers, and how are they being prepared to shape the next generation of learners and citizens? Who is a “good” teacher?

Today’s students are taught by educators from increasingly diverse communities and life experiences. While there has recently been an increase in post-baccalaureate and other alternative routes to teacher certification, the majority of teacher candidates who go on to employment in the state of Massachusetts go through teacher preparation programs at the undergraduate and graduate level at public and private universities located within the state. These programs are accredited and overseen by the state. For a long time, state regulations surrounding teacher preparation programs remained relatively stable, but this changed in 2010, when Massachusetts was awarded a grant by the U.S. Department of Education as a part of the Race to the Top initiative. This grant supported many different aspects of education, and among these was an effort to reexamine and revitalize teacher preparation programs. This endeavor resulted in drastic changes both to the nature of program evaluation and to the expectations for and
measurements of teacher candidates. Race to the Top funding ended in 2014, and it is high time to evaluate whether or not the goals set forth in the program were met, and whether or not the initiatives created by Race to the Top have, in fact, created positive lasting change to teacher preparation programs.

This concept – that Race to the Top’s reformation of teacher preparation programs needed closer examination – was the inspiration for this project. This inspiration came out of a much bigger original question that I have long grappled with both academically and personally: what is it that makes a teacher “good”? Certainly, it is not something simple, nor something which can be found using a multiple-choice test, nor something that can be easily quantified into a rubric. Nonetheless, this question is in many ways what is being asked when teacher preparation programs are designed, and candidates evaluated. As that question is in no way a plausible subject for a study of this magnitude, it had to be transformed into a manageable size.

Given the highly compartmentalized realities of state-controlled public education in the U.S., looking at only one state was much more feasible than trying to compare across borders, and I chose Massachusetts for the availability of potential interview subjects, as well as for the well-documented and easily accessible records kept by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Through this process of narrowing focus, from a grandiose idea about teacher quality emerged a single, driving question: How did the announcement and subsequent implementation of Race to the Top change the way that Massachusetts state officials measure and deal with teacher preparation programs in secondary schools? I will also examine: Were all programs affected equally? How have the reactions of various stakeholders towards Race to the Top changed over time? What changes remain to be made in teacher preparation programs?
These questions will be investigated in some detail in this paper. While this thesis is by no means intended to be an exhaustive or authoritative reference on the subject, my hope is that it effectively synthesizes the relevant information in such a way that it offers insight into how Race to the Top has affected and was perceived by stakeholders in Massachusetts, and offers the grounds for further study on the subject of changes to teacher preparation programs. This thesis begins with a review of the relevant literature surrounding Race to the Top, then examines research on teacher preparation programs and their evaluation, and then applies these findings to the application that the state of Massachusetts sent to the federal government. After these studies have been laid out, and a brief explanation of the methods I used to collect data and do interviews for this study given, I will analyze and discuss the outcomes and findings of this research, as well as discuss the ways in which my findings do or do not align with current literature on this topic.

To obtain these data, I conducted several interviews over the course of two semesters. These interviews were then transcribed and coded according to their relation to bigger themes. Interviewees included a government official, current and former deans of schools of education at both public and private universities, and a professor who has taught throughout many iterations of government-mandated change to teacher education. I did an additional observation with the administrator of a teacher education program who deals with certification and licensure preparation. Due to the constantly evolving nature of research, the diverse backgrounds of the candidates interviewed, and the semi-structured nature of the interviews themselves, the questions varied slightly from person to person. Finally, I will offer that which I view to be the larger takeaways of this project, as well as my suggestions for areas that merit further study, either because they could be of interest, or because they represent a gap in existing research.
I was drawn to this topic academically because of the unusual nature of state-controlled public education in a country that increasingly views education more as a facet of a capitalistic business model than as a part of government and social programming. We live in a system that is constantly competing to come up with new and innovative ideas to improve education, yet appears to do so with relatively little reflection, accountability, or commendation for programs that are successful. More personally, my time at Brandeis, both as a student in the Education department and as a person listening to the experiences of those around me, led me to realize that educational experiences for students were not defined by the things they learned, but by the people from whom they learned. Students described their interest towards and engagement in a class as being related much more strongly to the teacher than to the material, a sentiment with which I was personally inclined to agree. This meant that while a “good” teacher could make anything engaging and learnable, a “bad” teacher could make enthusiastic learners lose interest and disengage, even from subjects about which they were passionate. While I was fortunate to have the vast majority of my teachers not only be “good,” but oftentimes great, many of my peers were not as fortunate, and this realization was what initially sparked my interest in this topic.
Review of Literature

Background on Federal Education Policy

No Child Left Behind (NCLB), was one of two major federal-level education programs launched in the first decade of the new century. At the turn of the 21st century under the Bush administration, this legislation mandated that states increase teacher accountability and close student achievement gaps. NCLB encouraged measures like high-stakes testing, and promoted the idea that every student should be taught by a quality teacher. There was widespread, bipartisan support for this program, which also instituted mandatory assessment in grades four through eight and again in grade ten, and came in the wake of many states placing a renewed focus on education needs. While the intentions of this act were good, the implementation and lack of sufficient funding and support for states led to less-than-optimal results. Many states failed to meet key goals on their originally prescribed timelines, in part due to how unrealistic the end goal of having all students read at grade level was. This lack of efficiency and success was not entirely surprising, given the long history of tension between federal oversight and state- and local-level autonomy in U.S. public schools, and the unusual rigor and structure of the mandates created in NCLB.

An additional area of frustration with regard to NCLB was the lack of concrete successes that it produced. When it was implemented for the 2002-2003 school year, many states set goals that they wanted to meet further down the road, but by 2006, it became clear that many states were not going to hit the targets for reading proficiency and student achievement that they had initially set. To combat this, some states set new goals, while others revised their definitions of “proficient” or lowered their measure of acceptable test scores in order to meet quotas. This failure, coupled with a new high-risk, high-reward structure of teacher promotion/termination
and school funding created by NCLB, created an environment that was ripe for change, populated by people who were eager to help put it into place. Teachers were one such group that was ready for change, as they were not fans of being hired and fired according to their students’ test scores.

Even with considerable revisions under NCLB – the choice by many states to implement high stakes testing, the emphasis on a need for “high quality teachers” (No Child Let Behind Act of 2001), an enhanced focus on closing the achievement gap – there was a clear need for additional change in education policy about teacher preparation. While student outcomes were beginning to be linked to teacher successes and failures with the advent of the high-stakes testing era, these outcomes were not yet being tied to the teacher preparation programs. There was widespread variation in the quality of evaluation for educators and preparatory programs, and little weight given to their perceived successes or challenges (Harwarth 2015). And while some students were showing moderate improvements on state tests, the United States as a whole continued to lag far behind its international counterparts, and even some countries with much less well-developed systems of education (Shear & Anderson 2009). Additionally, while many changes in staffing and methods were occurring in schools across the country, the sad reality was that there were still many students that were failing school. Or more accurately, students who were being failed by the schools.

In addition, while states generally saw their own teacher preparation programs as successful, with most states seeing at least 80% of graduates passing licensure exams, and some as high as 96-97%, reports written by outside organizations told a different story (Crowe, 2010: 33). Feuer et al. (2012: 50) point out that of over 1,400 institutions examined by states, fewer than 30 were identified by their own state as low-performing, and 27 states had never identified
any low-performing programs whatsoever. Beyond that, there were more than 1,100 different teacher tests in the United States as of 2010, with different exams available depending on the state, with further variance according to subject matter and grade level being taught. Tests were also divided between content knowledge and professional knowledge (Crowe 2010), with a variety in the type and frequency of tests that teachers were required to take. This marked gap was one of several areas of public education still in need of improvement after the passage of NCLB.

_Race to the Top_

When the Obama administration announced Race to the Top (RttT), its first major piece of education policy, it made sense that rather than creating a mandate and forcing states to follow its policy, they instead created a program based on ideals and priorities that they felt strongly about, and then offered states the opportunity to opt in, or out, of this particular set of values (McGuinn 2012). Obama himself discussed the U.S.’s history of strong state and local control over schools when launching the program, and emphasized not wanting to step too far onto states’ beliefs (Shear & Anderson, 2009). RttT was proposed in 2009 as a part of an economic stimulus package, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Howell 2015: 60). As a part of a larger bailout plan, the Obama administration set aside $4.35 billion dollars for funding education initiatives.

This grant program represented a major funding opportunity, and was especially interesting to states because of the new process of application, in which they could design programs under broad components such as state success factors, standards and assessments (for students), data systems to support instruction, great teachers and leaders, turning around the lowest-achieving schools, and then an all-encompassing “general” category (Herlihy et al. 2014).
This flexible framework meant that states could choose to apply for grant funding if they were interested in making the changes that the administration felt were prudent, but that they were not obligated to do so if the suggestions of Washington officials were not in line with the best interest of their own state. During this time, though, the greater political context was tense, as the economy was experiencing its worst crash since the Great Depression (Egan 2014), and states desperately needed money, especially for schools, making the application process all the more competitive, and states more willing to bend their positions towards certain policies.

Some states chose to apply only once, others applied during multiple rounds of grant disbursement, and several did not apply at any time in the process (McGuinn 2012). During the time period in which RttT was announced and throughout the three rounds of application, many states made drastic changes to their education policies. The extreme economic uncertainty of this time made states more desperate for money, which made them willing to change policies that they were previously unwilling to touch, such as laws to allow school administrators to base teacher evaluations on students’ performance (Greenmarch 2010), which was controversial during the NCLB era.

In part, this amount of change can be tied to the three rounds of application. While some state policies may have been changed in response to the announcement of available funding, others may have come about due to the rejection of an application during an earlier round, while a third reason for policy change may have been acceptance of a given state’s application by the RttT committee. However, changes also occurred in states that did not get accepted in any round of application, as well as in states that never applied at all. In all states that had policy changes, some were made in accordance with RttT values, while others were not (Hallgren et al. 2014). Due to the complex nature of these changes, their correlation with the timing of RttT does not
imply causation. In its second application, Massachusetts made a point of highlighting previous initiatives on which they had worked and the ways in which their existing values aligned with those of the Obama education administration (Reville et al. 2010) as a way to try and show that their policies were in keeping with RttT ideals.

The RttT application was divided into six major sections, with states gaining points from various portions of their applications, up to a total of 500 points. Point values were distributed unequally among the portions (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2009). Favor was given to states that were already demonstrating a willingness to make changes in their systems of education and that were generally favorable towards the key ideas being focused on in Department of Education goals (Hursh 2011). The improvement of teacher education was divided into several sub categories:

- D(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals
- D(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance
- D(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals
- D(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs
- D(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals

In total, 138 points of the application were allocated to section D, with the most relevant section, D(4), receiving 14 points (U.S. Department of Education n.d.(a)).

Due to the highly competitive and selective nature of the grants, in conjunction with the relatively short amount of time that states had to prepare initial proposals, only two states were awarded funds during the first round of applications, and Massachusetts, which will be used here as a case study, was not among these two (Weiss & Hess 2015). The state made several revisions to its application in between the first and second deadlines, paying close attention to the feedback
given by the U.S. Department of Education. Massachusetts' application for funding was accepted in the second round, and the state was awarded $250,000,000 (Harwarth 2015). Of the available 138 points for section D, Massachusetts’ tier-one application got 94 points, while their tier-two submission received 112. In both rounds, section 4(D) was granted 11 points out of the available 14. Out of the total 500 possible points for the entirety of the application, the initial application garnered 389 points, while the revised attempt earned 412 (U.S. Department of Education n.d.(a)).

In comparing the two applications, several key differences are noticeable, especially in section D, which is most relevant to the study of teacher preparation programs. For comparative purposes, the two applications will henceforth be referred to as Massachusetts One, for the application to the initial round of funding, and Massachusetts Two, for the revised, successful application attempt. In their guidelines, the federal Department of Education states that successful applications will set “ambitious yet achievable annual targets” for the linking of student growth and achievement to data about teachers and principals, and to the programs at which they studied and trained for their credentials, as well as publicly reporting data about the success of various programs, and finally giving additional effort and resources to programs that are successful (Massachusetts One, 2009: 110).

In its initial application, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (hereafter, “MA DESE”) stated that its goal was to “develop and implement a transparent system of accountability for preparation programs…” that would align with its newly revamped standards for practicing educators. The proposal’s goals included creating stronger partnerships with public schools and practice-based preparation programs. A pilot program linking accreditation programs to actual student outcomes had already been launched, and early
report cards from this program were included as appendices to the RttT application (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2009: 111). Included in the application was a plan for an internet-based data analysis program, Edwin Analytics, that would be open to the public. In their timeline for projected roll-out, MA DESE included the hiring of new staff to create a better system to monitor accreditation/preparation programs, as well as the dates by which they would be ready to shift the state over to new requirements (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2009: 111). In the feedback, the Department of Education praised Massachusetts’ efforts to tie program evaluation to actual success of graduates, as well as their work to get local programs on board with the preparation process. Critiques included the lack of explicit use of RttT definitions of student achievement and growth (U.S. Department of Education n.d.(a)).

In the second application, MA DESE was again commended on plans to assess student growth, as well as the other efforts that they had already made in fields such as identifying areas where there were shortages of teachers. In the review, however, the federal Department of Education suggested that the state tie student outcomes more explicitly to teacher assessment. They also noted that Massachusetts' plan was in large part based on the work of only a few pilot programs (U.S. Department of Education n.d.(a)). In their initial application, MA DESE suggested using a program report card to measure teacher preparation programs, and had in fact already started a pilot program with twelve partner schools, but lost points on their evaluation for lacking a path for program expansion. In their revised application, the state clarified that they would concentrate resources into the more effective programs, and that this focus would allow successful programs to expand, which brought their score up, even though they did not specify any targets (U.S. Department of Education n.d.(a)).
In their second-round application, MA DESE highlighted the existing work that they had begun with teacher reforms, and the investment that they had from key stakeholders such as the Massachusetts Teachers Association (Massachusetts 2, 2010: 92). This support was important because it demonstrated to both the grant reviewers and to the greater public that their program was created with the support of a large teachers’ union and other relevant parties, meaning that it would not be likely to face great resistance should they win the grant. The revised application furthermore demonstrated, thanks to the number of different people working on it, that the state had considered both academic research and community input when creating its plans. MA DESE laid out five different licensure paths, and offered a four-year plan in which all existing programs would be evaluated. They mentioned the passage of a new state law, 603 CMR 7.00, which enumerated the regulations for licensure and preparation program approval, and mentioned one of the cornerstones of their revision process: teacher candidate evaluations were going to be aligned with the standards that newly-minted educators would be held to once in the field (Massachusetts 2010: 132). All programs would now be standards-based, work with public schools for residency programs, and use evidence-based systems for evaluation, and the state would have the ability to shut down ineffective programs (Massachusetts 2010: 132). They laid out a four-year timeline for the implementation of various aspects of their plan (Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval Regulations 2010, 7.03), though programs could request additional informal reviews inside the seven-year window.

Program approval standards included demonstrated continuous improvement using data-based evidence, collaboration with local school districts, evidence that program completers pass both initial and professional licensure exams, and the capacity to deliver their program sustainably (Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval Regulations 2010, 7.03). All
preparation programs were required to submit certain data annually about their program to MA DESE, which would then be combined into a larger annual report published for the public by the state. Section 7.04 outlines rigorous standards for different types of field-based learning experiences, as well as the different licenses available to professionals.

In the next section of the regulations, it is stated that in addition to getting a bachelor’s degree, individuals who go through a traditional teacher preparation program must also pass a Communication and Literacy Skills test as well as a state-sponsored subject matter test (Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval Regulations 2010, 7.05). This is also true for individuals who complete a master’s program. This requirement ensures that regardless of the requirements of individual programs, all newly-licensed teachers will be held to the same standards of certain key pieces of knowledge.

In order to further support these new teachers, all public-school districts are required to have an induction program to help the teachers transition and be successful in their new roles (Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval Regulations 2010, 7.12). By putting these measures into place, MA DESE holds both the preparation programs and the schools into which they place teacher candidates accountable for their success. As a part of this effort and their greater review process, MA DESE created a needs assessment, in which teacher preparation programs were required to demonstrate the necessity of their programs. Of the 393 programs existing during the 2014-2015 school year, 107 were closed outright, and another 27 were phased out more gradually (Harwarth 2015: 36), evidence of the long-overdue need for changes to the field of teacher preparation.

Throughout the disbursement and use of RttT funds, MA DESE created annual reports updating the public about the progress that they had made. Given that these reports were written

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by MA DESE employees, it is unsurprising that they are generally positive, and report on successful initiatives and outcomes of the year’s RttT efforts. While never a primary focus, the subject of teacher preparation programs comes up in these reports. In 2012, the second year of RttT funding, the need for updated reports about educator preparation programs is highlighted as a priority for the upcoming year, as is the need to continue allocating student outcomes to their respective teachers’ evaluations (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2013(a)). The Department also recognized a need to both build up and increase the use of its data analysis tools. By the next year, thirty-four school districts and many teacher preparation programs had begun to make use of the data system, Edwin Analytics. The Department created greater alignment between educator evaluation and curriculum as well (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2013 (b)). Looking towards the final year of the program, MA DESE’s proposal focused on the problems around sustaining the initiatives that had begun under RttT when there would no longer be federal funding to support them.

Reactions to Race to the Top

As Race to the Top was announced, and throughout the various application rounds, strong opinions and inflammatory debates surrounded many of the issues in the policy. At both the state and federal level, many different actors and stakeholders made their positions clear, with some supporting the initiative, others opposing it, and a third camp that believed in either the mission or the funding structure, but not both. Debates raged around many issues, including the necessity and validity of many existing teacher training programs. Given the mass media and some politicians’ perception of widespread failure of K-12 education around the country, there was a movement for significant revisions to all aspects of teacher preparation. The critiques of
traditional preparation programs fell into four main categories. The first was a concern over the lack of rigor and time spent on content knowledge. The second was frustration about the lack of empirical research on topics within teacher education and preparation, and a third was a questioning of whether or not teaching is a real profession. A fourth point of contention was the idea that education as a whole is creating a sort of “Orwellian” mind control for the government (Wilson 2014: 185-186).

This disparagement of the profession was fueled in no small part by a 2002 US Department of Education report on the failures of teacher preparation programs, which said that a large problem was a lack of content knowledge (Boe et al. 2007). Other studies, however, were not in line with this finding, and argued that pedagogy and practical experiences like student teaching were more important for teacher preparation, and served as better indicators of teacher success after completion of a teaching preparation program. In their 2007 study, a direct response to the national report, Boe et al. found that both general and special education teachers who had pedagogical theory and practical experience as part of their preparation programs earned certification at much higher rates than their counterparts who did not receive this training.

While both the US Department of Education and many state-level agencies were doing research into effective methods of teacher preparation, there were also many private groups with different goals, methods, and motivations publishing work around this subject. As Wiseman (2012) points out, policy changes are not done in a vacuum, and there were differing political motivations behind the different stances and strategies of various actors. According to a 2011 survey of education writers, of the eighteen most influential organizations in the education debate, four were government agencies or programs, while two others were unions, and the majority of the remaining organizations were private think tanks or research groups across the
political spectrum, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute (Bulkley 2017: 13). Similarly, of the thirteen most mentioned individuals, five were government officials, while the remainder were largely affiliated with previously mentioned groups, although well-known educator and media personality Diane Ravitch also made this list.

As policy was being constructed, and various groups of advocates formed coalitions on both sides of the issues, several different constructed images of teachers were presented in the media, which in turn affected the policies being created. The first of these was that teachers are professionals, struggling against difficult circumstances. The second was that individual teachers may be able to overcome barriers, or the “great teachers” trope. Finally, there was the narrative of teachers fighting against insurmountable systemic dysfunction, and not at fault for the failings of public schools (Bulkley 2017: 16). While most actors stayed mainly in line with one of these three narratives when constructing their policy recommendations and public statements, some varied the image that they presented depending on the situation. Both the first and second archetypal teacher is bolstered by having high-quality training and well-supported teacher preparation programs, and these are the sort of narratives commonly used by organizations such as the National Education Association, a national union of teachers.

*Research on Teacher Quality*

With all of the debate around teacher quality, one of the most important questions to ask is: how much does it matter? Will smart students excel regardless of their environment, while competent teachers may have students who fail on their own merits? Is the training that teachers receive in their preparation programs more important than the support and resources that they have once they’re in the classroom? During the launch of RttT, President Obama himself talked about the need for “evidence-based policymaking” and how that related to the need for
improving teacher quality (Shear & Anderson 2009). While there is wide variance in teacher
preparation programs around the country, and a recent increase in both the creation of and
attention to alternative routes to certification, the majority of U.S. public school teachers are still
being prepared by traditional, four- or five-year programs at colleges and universities around the
country. The wide variation in these programs’ requirements and standards is unsurprising. The
majority of states use a licensing exam program called Praxis. Praxis I is a measure of math,
reading, and writing, while Praxis II is more in-depth and subject-specific for teaching area
specialization. Massachusetts itself does not use Praxis and instead requires MTELs, as well as a
cumulative evaluation programs of teacher candidates known as CAP (Candidate Assessment of
Performance) (Grover, 2018).

The fact of the matter remains though, that no exams or evaluation processes make sense
without data to back them up. One of the major changes of Obama-era policy was new
accountability at both the state and federal levels of education policy, requiring unprecedented
accountability for teacher preparations programs for the effectiveness of their candidates after
graduation, once they are teaching in the classroom (Henry et al. 2012). This new system
represented a shift from precedent, as programs had historically been rated based on the
components of the program, rather than the outcomes (Henry et al. 2012: 336). While different
states have approached this evaluation in different ways, the majority now measure teacher
effectiveness using student test scores. Massachusetts was considered a national leader in this
field, as they specifically mentioned using student growth percentiles, which is a manner of
comparing students to their own test scores, rather than against the whole (Henry et al. 2012:
337).

In their application to RttT, Massachusetts said that its goal was to create great teachers
continu[ing] its partnership with DHE, institutions of higher education, and other partners to develop and embed measures of educator effectiveness into every component of the system; improv[ing] the content, quality, and structure of teacher preparation programs; and increas[ing] the diversity of the educator workforce. (Henry et al. 2012: 341).

This idea is expanded on in section D(2), which is the discussion of the state’s accountability plan and the deliberate decision to link student growth, rather than student outcomes, to measure teacher effectiveness. The proposal additionally states that this information about programs’ effectiveness and teacher outcomes will be freely available to the public.

The measurement of the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs is an important part of the discussion of program reform as well as a vital piece in creating a culture of accountability. However, it is also a complicated process, and there are many important decisions which must be considered when creating systems of evaluation and looking at the results of these studies. Key factors in the design of evaluation programs include things such as accuracy, fairness, transparency, and inclusiveness (Henry et al. 2012). Various programs choose to look at different teachers and different ages of classrooms. While including the largest amount of data will yield the most accurate results, it will not always paint the most flattering picture of schools/programs, and that is why some analysts will choose to be more selective or only use parts of the data available to them. This evaluation formulation includes thinking about the grade in which a teacher teaches, the ways in which the students are evaluated, which students are excluded from the group by which a teacher’s success is measured, and how long a subject has been in the field/how far removed they are from their training (Henry et al. 2012: 342).

States have not been alone in their pursuit of more effectively measuring teacher preparation programs. Private groups, such as non-profits and think tanks, have developed their own rubrics by which to measure these programs. One such group, the National Council on
Teacher Quality (NCTQ), publishes an annual review on all programs for which they can find data. The 2014 report ranked over 1,200 programs from across the country. The NCTQ assessment looked at both public and private universities at the undergraduate, but not graduate, level, and differentiated into elementary, secondary, and special education. Programs were ranked on a scale of 0-4 stars, with four being the highest possible rating (Greenberg 2013). When both a BA and a BS were offered, only the BA program was considered.

While NCTQ’s data was not a representation of every program, nor was their motivation without bias, this report still provides a larger sample than many previous studies. Of the twenty-two Massachusetts programs evaluated, only two, one public and one private, received three or more stars, and only three received fewer than half of a star. Though it was by no means perfect – there was no peer review used in the creation of their standards or previous studies (Cochran-Smith et al. 2013: 19) - the report received a number of endorsements, including those of former Massachusetts Commissioner of Education Mitchell Chester and the previous superintendents of both the Springfield and the Boston Public Schools, Alan Ingram and Carol Johnson, respectively (Greenberg 2013:95-97). Though Massachusetts as a whole did fairly well, when compared to other states, this outside analysis showed that the state still had considerable room for improvement. While it is always worthwhile to consider outside review, it is important to consider the agenda of the reviewers, and their political bent, and thus the results of the study by NCTQ must be taken with a grain of salt. After all; they did not have complete data, and their actions were motivated by a desire to have a specific outcome.

Just as initial discussions of RttT required an explanation of their political environment, so too does the more specific topic of teacher and teacher preparation program assessment. As with any other major issue, there are several sides to the story, and any government decision
must be considered in its wider context. Major contributors to the discussion of teacher preparation program assessment and teacher review include unions, administrators of both public K-12 schools and schools of higher education, as well as the testing industry, education non-profits and of course, teachers themselves. While there are many voices in this discussion, there is one point on which almost everyone seems to agree: “Teacher education is broken and needs to be fixed” (Cochran-Smith et al. 2013: 7). This sentiment is one which can be found among many different groups, and while there may not be agreement on what the solution is, there is widespread agreement that this is a problem. Much of this discourse is based on the assumption that improving teacher preparation, and therefore teacher quality, is the key to seeing better outcomes for students in public schools.

According to Cochran-Smith et al. (2012: 11), the strongest discursive influence in the debate on teacher preparation program accountability is human capital theory, a belief which crosses party lines. Human capital theory is based on two assumptions: one, that the education system exists to create workers to meet the competitive global demand, and two, that the U.S.’s success in a knowledge economy will be defined by its school system. This theory posits that strengthening the teacher workforce will lead to better long-term outcomes for the education system, and therefore the nation as a whole (Cochran-Smith et al. 2012: 11). In policies created after RttT, Obama-era officials placed significance on the use of value-added models (Lincove et al. 2013.). These are statistical models that measure teacher preparation program effectiveness, and can include (or exclude) many factors, which greatly impacts their validity, and also makes them difficult for a layperson to understand (Lincove et al. 2013.). While the theory – wanting to have teachers who create better outcome for students – may be correct, the outcomes of this particular strategy are mixed at best, due in no small part to flaws in their analytical design and
failure to consider enough factors in their creation of a model. One of the key problems was that
the people creating the models most often used sample sections of data, rather than all data
representing a population, and the often-low sample sizes caused people to question both the
accuracy and the validity of the results (Cochran-Smith et al. 2013). These are among the reason
that Massachusetts rejected the use of value-added models (Barrett et al. 2011).

The state also rejected another plan for that same time period, the Teacher Performance
Assessment (TPA). This model advocated for performance-based assessment using a portfolio
system that included not only a teacher’s educational background, but also student work, video
lessons, and other materials. This model was created by researchers at Stanford, who contracted
portfolio assessment out to the Pearson Education group. While the intention of the design was to
make a more well-rounded portrait of the teaching candidate, concerns were raised over the costs
of the program, the barriers created by the material requirements, and the perceived alienation of
sending portfolios away to a private corporation (Cochran-Smith et al. 2013). As Massachusetts
officials pointed out, the use of a private group also takes away “the autonomy of schools of
education and…contributes to the deprofessionalization of teacher educators” (Cochran-Smith et.
Al. 2013.: 17). On both sides of the debate over this model were respected government officials,
educators, and members of various education groups. Regardless of the intentions or the designs
of policy, the creation of any plan to change education in this day and age is inherently political,
and when looking at governments statements, etc. it is important to consider the political
leanings of the speaker.

With this politicization in mind, it is additionally important to consider the degree with
which correlations between school outcomes and student outcomes can be seen to be statistically
relevant. After all, there are a limited number of in-state preparation programs from which
schools may draw new teacher candidates, and conversely, a limited number of jobs within state lines for recent graduates. While not all teacher candidates choose to stay in Massachusetts after graduation, nor are Massachusetts schools required to hire solely from within state boundaries, the majority of teachers come from preparation programs within the state. Furthermore, several state programs, including that at Westfield State University, explicitly partner with neighboring districts to ensure that their candidates are prepared to teach and fill the specific needs of that area. With that in mind, the question must then be asked: to what degree is teacher concentration defined according to hiring convenience, and how does this relate to the proximity of schools to preparation programs as a potential confounding variable in attempts to analyze the effectiveness of preparation programs? That is to say, given an established correlation between socio-economic class and student outcomes, and also knowing that teacher preparation program candidates are likely to look for jobs that are close to the program from which they graduated, how much of student outcome can be attributed to the classroom teacher, and therefore the preparation program, and how much of it is due to this or another variable?

Mihaly et al. studied this exact question, and their results were published in 2013. While their study was done in Florida, rather than in the case study state of Massachusetts, their study was done in a similar set of circumstances: a number of both public and private universities of various sizes sponsored preparation programs, and many teacher candidates were hired into schools near their programs, creating clusters of graduates from single preparation programs at schools that had, or that lacked, certain socio-economic barriers, linguistic diversity, and other factors which may influence student outcomes, especially in test scores. (There are, however, also candidates who go on to teach further away, thus, there is a level of mixing of teachers from different preparation programs in the schools, meaning that there is value in studying the effects...
in Florida.) The results from this are crucial to the understanding of the linkage of teacher preparation programs to student and school outcomes upon the matriculation of teacher candidates into the workforce. In order to try and create a more well-rounded and accurate model, Mihaly et al. (2013) used multiple years of data to avoid looking at teachers only when they were new or relatively inexperienced.

Mihaly et al.’s conclusion was that in order for an analysis of data to have any degree of accuracy whatsoever it must contain data over multiple years of study. Furthermore, although the effects were not overwhelmingly negative, there was an undeniably negative correlation between student outcomes and socio-economic status, and also teacher preparation program evaluation, even when using the most exhaustive levels of data. They go on to point out the potentially negative ramifications that the current system may have for future policy-making, as it could unfairly advantage/disadvantage certain programs, not based on their actual merit, but rather on their student composition and geographical location. No matter which sample they used in the analysis, when school demographics (socio-economic status, etc.) were taken into account, at least one teacher preparation program moved to the bottom quarter of results from the top quarter (Mihaly et al. 2013: 489). In essence, this means that teachers who teach in areas of poverty, regardless of their preparation or quality, are likely to have poorer results than they would if teaching in more affluent areas. This is an especially important influence to consider in Massachusetts, where both a RttT initiative as well as an unrelated plan in state universities have created programs that are specifically designed to attract a more diverse body of candidates and train them to serve students in high-need schools. Clusters of these candidates would most certainly affect data about the potential effectiveness of the preparation program.
In order to understand what these changes mean specifically in the case study of Massachusetts, it is important to consider the historical context in which they occurred. Massachusetts had long been seen as a model for public education, dating back to the time of Horace Mann, an early reformer who was key in advocating for the idea that education should be “universal, non-sectarian, free” (Cubberley 1919). In 1993, Massachusetts passed a major piece of legislative reformation about public schools. It was one of the first states to move to standards-based reforms with the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (McDermott 2004). This act, which launched drastic changes in state funding and resource distribution, represented a commitment by the state to ensuring access to quality education for every child, and was lauded by advocates of standards-based reform as a model for the rest of the nation. Perhaps as a result of this history, the state has continued to focus on the most important aspect of education, the students, even as it struggled to meet the high expectations set by NCLB.

Throughout the 1990s and into the new century, Massachusetts became well known for its public education, with more rigorous standards and higher graduation rates for their students than many other states (U.S. Department of Education 2010). Though the state was often seen as ahead of the curve, MA DESE has not just maintained, but has expanded on their work. They often exceed federal mandates, such as those set by No Child Left Behind, RttT, and the later Elementary and Secondary Schools Act (ESSA), which was passed by the Obama administration in 2015 as a replacement to NCLB. Today, 88.3% of Massachusetts high school students graduate within four years, putting them squarely in the top quartile, up 5.3% since 2010-11, when RttT funding was awarded (Baker 2019). Additionally, the MCAS, which is used by Massachusetts to measure student progress, and is also a requirement for students wishing to graduate high school (Cohen 2008), is considered one of the more rigorous comprehension
exams used by states. In light of this track record of innovation, it is unsurprising that Massachusetts was not just willing but eager to apply for RttT funds. Moreover, this state’s approach to assessing teacher preparation programs would be expected to be rigorous given what the state had already reformed in education.

Speaking more generally, additional complaints about teacher preparation programs in this period were rampant. These complaints included the previously noted narrative struggle that positioned teachers as being to blame for education’s failings. Building off of this was the narrative of poorly chosen or unremarkable teacher preparation candidates. Though it is not truthful, the adage, “those who can, do, and those who cannot, teach” is often seen as a way in which people come to this profession – by flunking out of something else. Coming from a different side of the debate was a complaint that state universities and colleges, and especially teacher programs at larger institutions, were less concerned with the Commonwealth as a whole and more concerned with generating revenue – their lower entrance requirements making them an attractive option for students who have lower grades (and may be able to pay more).

Having established the political and social contexts in which policies are created, we will now move on to discuss the degree to which this matters. By looking at studies of schools both in and out of Massachusetts, it will become clear that the methods by which teacher preparation programs are evaluated, as well as the actual quality of the programs, is in fact critical. Goldhaber et al. (2013) examined the effect of teacher preparation programs on student outcomes in Washington state, using a value-added model, and looked at data over a period of several years from five different state-managed databases to evaluate the outcomes from fourteen different universities within its borders. Their sample included 8,718 teachers. Their study showed that using an ANOVA model, variation in teacher effectiveness based on training
program indicators is visible at a correlation similar to that of teacher degree and experience level (Goldhaber et al. 2013: 36).

While the Goldhaber et al. study concedes that teacher preparation programs are not the end-all and be-all of predicting teacher success or their effect on student outcomes, their models do estimate that the half-life of the effect of a training program on a literacy/reading educator is between 11.3-15.5 years, and on a math educator is between 12.9-13.7 years (depending on model specifications) (Goldhaber et al. 2013: 38). This means that the statistical difference between teachers who went through different programs will decrease 50% during these time spans. What’s more, the difference in this study between the most and least effective teacher training programs, as reflected in student test scores, is 9.2-22% of a standard deviation for reading and 3.9-13.4% of a standard deviation for math. This means that there is a much greater range predicted for the effect of a teacher preparation program on a math teacher (12.8%) than there is on a reading teacher (9.5% range). At it simplest, what they are saying is that while teacher preparation initially has a statistically significant effect on teachers, this effect will dwindle over time as candidates gain classroom experience. Having said that, it is of course crucial to acknowledge that student test scores may not be the most accurate way to define a teacher’s success, nor are they an especially effective method of measuring student achievement. Rather, a combination of surveys, classroom observations, and student achievement gains are the most effective known method for measuring teachers once the move into the field (Reinhorn et al. 2017). Overwhelmingly, when surveyed, teachers said that a summative evaluation, similar to that of the CAP program now in place at teacher preparation programs across Massachusetts, feels fairer and more accurate. This seems likely to be objectively true as well, given the wide variance in outcome predicted by Goldhaber et al.’s work.
Chapter Two

Methodology

Research Design

For this study, interviews were conducted over the course of five months. These interviews were qualitative and semi-structured. While each interview protocol contained a specific set of questions asked of every subject, conversations were allowed to take natural turns, with each interviewee offering his or her own perspective and discussing slightly different things. Additionally, while all of these interviews concerned RttT, the earliest interview, done with an official at MA DESE, was initially for a project in another course, and is therefore styled in a slightly different manner, in addition to having its initial protocol focused more on No Child Left Behind than on RttT. While it was still a discussion of education policy in general and more specifically of RttT, this interview was done in Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot’s “portraiture” style, and because of that, included greater detail about things not specifically relating to a particular policy decision, and focused more on who this individual was as a person than on her function as a source of data than would be the case in a typical interview (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997).

While these interviews are in no way an exhaustive study of all of the perceptions towards RttT in Massachusetts higher education, they serve to represent a wide variety of the voices in higher education, including professors, government employees, and administrators at both public and private universities. Unfortunately, no representative of the Massachusetts Teachers’ Association, the largest teachers’ union in the state, was available for comment. Given how crucial their voice is, their opinion will be gleaned as best as possible by a close reading of
various articles and publications that they issued during the period during and after RttT’s development, debate, and implementation, so that they can still be a part of the conversation.

Prior to beginning any conversation, all participants were asked whether or not they were comfortable with having the conversation recorded, and all gave consent for a recording to take place. Participants were additionally asked whether or not they would prefer to remain anonymous, and the answers to this question were more mixed. As a result, some people will be referred to by name in the forthcoming analysis, while others will be referred to only by their positions. Additionally, the names of the individuals who wished to remain anonymous have been removed from all published copies of interview protocols and transcripts.

All interviews were done by phone, and recorded by placing a cellular telephone into speakerphone mode, and then recording the conversation via QuickTime Player on a laptop. Due to the nature of cellular reception, this set-up meant that there is some variance in the quality of recordings, as is evidenced by the occasional marks on the transcripts. Additionally, while the first interview was transcribed manually, all subsequent interviews were transcribed with the aid of an online tool, Temi, which provides free transcription services. The interviews which were transcribed in this way were then read over for accuracy, as the software was imperfect and was occasionally confused by certain field-specific terms (e.g., “MTEL” and “DESE”). Because of this fault, while the words in the transcripts are all correct, certain punctuation and capitalization may not make sense or follow traditional grammatical rules, even though the transcription of the conversation itself is accurate.

After transcription was completed, each transcript was read and then reread, and marked for codes and themes pertaining to the topic of RttT and the opinions of the interviewees. These relevant quotes were then sorted and organized into coherent groups according to the topics they
discussed. This sorting included grouping by questions, in instances when participants answered the same question, as well as by other responses given, when the interview went along the lines of a more naturally flowing conversation. The major codes of the interviews included specific judgments on RttT as a whole, as well as feelings towards changes more specifically about teacher preparation programs and current testing standards, as well as a discussion of data-analysis-based programs in the state. These same codes were also used when analyzing the articles written by union representatives.

After the completion and compilation of the interviews, the transcripts were printed and coded according to major recurring themes and codes, again using the style advocated by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis Hoffman for the portraiture technique. In this method, interview transcripts were read multiple times and marked manually in a variety of colors. In this case, seventeen distinctive markings were used to denote different codes. These codes were applied at first in the separate interviews, and after interviews had been coded, they were then analyzed as a whole group and put into conversation and comparison with one another so that major themes could be deduced. The major themes, which will be discussed in detail in chapters below, are: 1) Changes in Perception of Race to the Top over time, 2) Teacher Candidate Evaluation, and 3) What is a “well-qualified, highly effective teacher?”

While my initial goal was to interview a representative of a union as part of my research, they did not return my calls. I still believe that their voice is an important part of the conversation, and in the place of an actual interview, I read and analyzed a series of articles that were published by unions during this time, using the same method. “Unions” here refers to either the National Education Association (NEA), or the Massachusetts’ Teacher Association (MTA), which is the largest teachers’ union in the state. These organizations frequently work together, as
MTA is a subsidiary of the NEA. The articles reviewed were written by multiple authors, and are cited as such, but are all maintained on official union pages and have union endorsement, and will thus be cited as a representative expression of union beliefs.

In addition to this reading, I conducted six interviews. While these were by no means an exhaustive study of all of the voices in the field of higher education, this was an attempt to provide a somewhat representative sample of the different voices that contribute to the conversation on teacher preparation. I will give brief descriptions of the individuals interviewed, and then move into analysis of the significance of my findings.

Description of Subjects

My first interview was of a government official, who requested to remain anonymous, and will be referred to with female pronouns, or the pseudonym “Ms. Education” throughout this research. This individual has worked in MA DESE for over a decade, and was a part of the process of drafting Massachusetts’ RttT grant proposals. The second person interviewed was Dr. Marcia Bromfield, who has recently retired after over three decades working at Lesley University’s teacher education program, including an extended period as their Director of Field Placement and Professional Partnerships. I was put into contact with both of these individuals by my advisor, Dr. Levenson. The rest of the people that I interviewed I chose in part because of their role in MACTE (the Massachusetts Association of Colleges for Teacher Education). The first of these was Dr. Bruno Hicks, the sitting Dean of Education at Fitchburg State University. When RttT was initially announced, he was working for a university in Maine, a state that was not awarded RttT funds, and moved to Massachusetts after the end of the RttT rollout.

I then interviewed another dean of a publicly funded university who wished to remain anonymous, and who has been working as a professor or administrator in higher education for

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over two decades, and will be referred to with she/her/hers, or the pseudonym “Dr. Administrator” in analysis. Next I spoke with Dr. Sandra Berkowitz, a long-time professor at Westfield State University, who teaches the fundamental of reading as well as a preparation class for MTELs, to try and gain insight into how RttT changes affected people who most directly had to deal with their outcomes. My final interview was with Lisa Guisbond. Although I initially reached out to her because she is the head of Citizens for Public Schools (CPS), a Boston-based non-profit that focuses on advocacy in public education, over the course of our conversation I learned that she is also a member of an organization called “Fair test” as well as the president of a coalition called the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance. While neither of these initiatives specifically focus on RttT initiatives or teacher preparation, they still informed her responses in the interview, and she has been working as an activist in the education field since the 1990s.

Rather than go through each individual’s interview and discuss it point by point, the analysis will be done by major themes, with quotes and information from the various interviews grouped together to create a more vibrant and accurate portrayal of how that specific issue was viewed by the greater community.
Chapter Three

Analysis

What is a “well-qualified, highly effective” teacher?

Sun Tzu once stated that in order to solve conflict efficiently, it is important first to define the terms under which the conflict is being debated. In this case, the terms are simple, but their meanings vast. What does it mean to be a “well-qualified” or “highly effective” teacher? And, how can such teachers be prepared and assessed? Everyone interviewed gave a passionate response when asked this question, but no two definitions were identical. By looking at the ways in which they did and did not overlap, a common set of goals and qualities can be ascertained. After all, as Dr. Hicks pointed out, education is not just about sharing knowledge, but about “the empowerment of the person in front of you to want to engage in learning” (interview by the author, February 7, 2019).

There were several points on which almost everyone interviewed touched. The first of these is that would-be teachers need to receive higher education. Secondly, no one believed that content knowledge or pedagogical understanding alone would be sufficient training, but rather that a combination of the two were required. Almost everyone felt that there should be some sort of licensure exam that candidates needed to pass, or some way to demonstrate that they had the necessary skills to be successful in the field. Finally, all interviewees felt that there was an additional piece, a more human component, that was required for teachers to truly be well-qualified. As one dean put it, the content, the know-how, and the disposition to teach are equal when it comes to the creation of a quality teacher (Anonymous, interview by the author, February 27, 2019). By breaking things down further within these general ideas, a clearer definition of a quality teacher will emerge.
First, we examine what teachers need to know. As one dean pointed out, they “need to be literate,” but literacy alone is far too low an expectation to be the standard for school teachers. Consensus among interviewees was that teachers needed to have what Dr. Bromfield described as “deep knowledge” of the subject that they teach – not just a basic comprehension of math, for example, but a fundamental understanding of mathematics as a whole, as well as the specific content as it breaks down by level. Even though teachers are certified to teach in an “elementary” or “secondary” capacity, there is huge variation in the knowledge needed to be successful within these levels. A kindergarten class and a fifth-grade class need two very different kinds of instruction, much in the same way that a middle-school pre-algebra course requires a different set of knowledge for its instructor than does a high school calculus or personal finance course. Teacher candidates therefore need to take courses and be able to demonstrate subject knowledge that is both wide and deep within their content areas.

Simply knowing the material being taught, however, is not enough. To be truly effective, teachers must also understand how to teach their material. According to one dean, this means that they need to learn not only from books, but also from practice, about pedagogy. As Dr. Administrator pointed out, there is a need for teacher candidates to have a clear understanding of “best practices” for classroom management and how to engage students. This skill set also includes being able to differentiate lessons to work for the needs of many types of learners sharing a classroom, rather than creating a single lesson plan and hoping that all student will be able to fit within this framework. Teachers also need to be able to have a larger vision of where a classroom is heading, and be able to create cohesive structures that work over a sustained period of learning. Additionally, as the government official pointed out, the content that new educators choose to teach in their classroom needs to fit within the frameworks handed down by state
officials. While this outlook may seem like a biased opinion, given her professional position, it is nevertheless true that teachers in Massachusetts are evaluated in large part on the relation of their lessons to state standards, and that their students, for the most part, are evaluated using MCAS, a state-designed test. In order for their students to demonstrate success within these metrics, teacher candidates should have a clear understanding of these expectations and the skills to interpret state frameworks.

An additional component, which does not quite fit into this second category, but nonetheless was brought up by nearly everyone interviewed, is the necessity of understanding child development. This information includes understanding not only what students are working on as intellectuals, but also their needs socially and emotionally. The idea not just of development, but of the key needs of socio-emotional learning, was specifically mentioned by the government official, as well as Dr. Bromfield and Dr. Hicks. They all felt that this subject was crucial to the discussion of what teacher candidates need to know in order to be as effective as possible so that they can “meet kids where they are and take them where they need to be” (Anonymous, interview of government official by author, November 09, 2018). The understanding of developmental needs is crucial to allowing teachers to play to their students’ strengths, as well as to discover ways that will most effectively address weaknesses. These sentiments were echoed by the union in their disquisition on what a quality teacher is (National Educator Association, n.d.(a)). Additionally, this comprehension helps teachers to gain a fuller view of who their students are as people and to find ways to connect with them, and personal connections are a positive motivation for students.

While all of these things are necessary, they alone are not sufficient. Though everything mentioned above – content knowledge, pedagogical training, and an understanding of children’s
socio-emotional development – were common themes among interviewees, all interviewees went on to mention other traits that they felt were crucial to being a “well-qualified, highly effective teacher”. These qualities can be more broadly seen as being centered around interpersonal skills, personality traits, and an openness to continuing education. Interpersonal skills include the ability to work within collaborative settings and communicate with colleagues (Anonymous university administrator. Interview with author, February 27, 2019), as well as to be able to collaborate with specialists (Dr. Bromfield, interview with author, November 15, 2018). Dr. Bromfield additionally stressed the need for teachers to be able to “understand diversity and welcome children of all backgrounds” (interview with the author, November 15, 2018), while Professor Berkowitz emphasized “critical engagement with diversity” and “respect for all” to her students (interview with author, February 28, 2019). These skills encompass both the more obvious ability to connect to a wide range of children as well as the less-discussed but still crucial ability to be able to work with other adults in the sphere of education.

This is tied to an idea which is currently a popular topic of discussion across many fields, including education: cultural competency. The NEA defines cultural competence as:

Cultural competence is having an awareness of one’s own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families. It is the ability to understand the within-group differences that make each student unique, while celebrating the between-group variations that make our country a tapestry. This understanding informs and expands teaching practices in the culturally competent educator’s classroom.

(National Education Association. n.d.(b)).

In simpler terms, this means that teacher candidates need to have the awareness and the skills to create lessons that are inclusive of their students’ backgrounds and sensitive to different traditions and values.
When it comes to personality traits that interviewees valued in teachers, responses covered a wide range of topics. These matters included more specific skills, like empathy, as well as concepts that were more nebulous, like the right “disposition”. Many mentioned the need for a genuine passion for teaching in the classroom. One cannot fake a love for teaching, nor is it likely that a teacher who does not genuinely enjoy their profession would be particularly effective. Within this concept of character traits ran another theme: teacher learning. Dr. Bromfield described this as a “willingness to be lifelong learners”, while Dr. Berkowitz characterized this as viewing a diploma as a starting point for learning, rather than an ending, encouraging her students to learn something every day (interview with the author, February 28, 2019). This openness to learning also came up for the unions as well as for Ms. Guisbond, the CPS director, but to them this openness is seen as willingness to be mentored and to have the opportunity to continue to learn in the field from more experienced peers (Buffenbarger 2012; interview with author, March 15, 2019). These less tangible qualities were traits that interviewees felt were important to the formulation of a well-qualified and highly effective teacher.

After this examination of the question of what it is that makes a high-quality teacher, it is clear that there are certain things that are necessary as a base, but that these alone are not sufficient. In order to have even a chance of fulfilling the role, teacher candidates must be armed with the qualities of deep content knowledge, pedagogical training, and an understanding of students’ socio-emotional development, so that they can unite all of these in the classroom in a way that makes students want to engage in the material. While the semantics of this sentiment may have varied from person to person, the essential meaning of this message remained constant among everyone from the union to the government official, and from deans of schools to

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professors and private advocates. These qualities are not going to be enough to make a teacher truly successful though, as the very personality and character of a successful teacher candidate are also important, according to interview data. Ultimately, there may never be singular definition of what it means to be a “well-qualified, highly effective” teacher, but it is evident that there is close to a consensus about this term in the field presently, which is important when debating how best to prepare teacher candidates to become educators.

These standards, which interviewees felt were important, were in many ways reflections of the standards that are currently held by the MA DESE (603 CMR 7.08). The state divides their Professional Standards for Teachers (PSTs) into four basic categories: curriculum, planning, and assessment; teaching all students; family and community engagement; and professional culture (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2015). These expectations are like those which were discussed by interviewees. The first Massachusetts standard is equivalent to the expectation of pedagogical knowledge, while the third and fourth are akin to the ideas that all interviewees shared about interpersonal skills, within and without the classroom community. The second standard is similar to the appreciation for and embrace of diversity which was discussed at length by Drs. Bromfield and Berkowitz. These were also similar to the standards outlined for teacher candidates in the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework.

Moving beyond the borders of Massachusetts and considering more widely the definition for high-quality teachers at a national scale, a comparison can be made between the expectations of MA DESE as outlined in their literature, the thoughts of interviewees, and a national governing body, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). In 2013, CCSSO published a model of what they felt states could be doing for teacher and teacher candidate assessment through their Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC).
While their manuscript on these standards goes in to considerable detail, its overarching themes are similar to those previously mentioned: a “deep and flexible understanding of their content”, the understanding to create effective instructional practice, and a collaborative mindset that works with both other education professionals and families to ensure the best outcomes for learners (InTASC 2013: 8-9). These parallel the MA DESE standards, as well as echoing the thoughts shared by interviewees. The InTASC guidelines further align with those of MA DESE in their explanation of teacher assessment, and the belief that teacher evaluation in progression is a continuous, cyclical process, rather than a once-a-year data point. They also point out, like the interviewees, that circumstances play a role in teacher success, and that year-to-year changes, such as grade level or school, may influence a teacher’s effectiveness.

This is one of several reasons that teacher and teacher-candidate evaluation is a complex issue. While MA DESE publishes guidelines with indicators for how best to evaluate the standards put forth in 603 CMR 7.08, these guidelines are not perfect (603 CMR 7.08(3)). Certain aspects of teacher quality, like content knowledge, are fairly straightforward to assess, and can be evaluated using something like a standardized test. To some degree, a theoretical understanding of pedagogical concepts can be assessed in much the same way. When it comes to implementing new strategies for learning in the classroom, InTASC recommends an approach that involves using data, personal reflection, and when possible, getting feedback from a mentor or another educator to inform adjustments to their technique (InTASC 2013: 11). Above all else, they emphasize the continuous nature of teacher evaluation and improvement, and frame candidate assessment as a constant progression, rather than a set of discreet steps.

While this is helpful in many situations, certain things are more difficult to evaluate. This may be because they are more nebulous concepts, like “caring”, or things that may be more
difficult to evaluate because they are subjective, like parental engagement or classroom environment. What one teacher may call colorful and vibrant, another may find hectic and overwhelming. In opposition to that, what one may find calming and orderly, another may call rigid or confining. Similarly, differing views on independence versus interdependence, and self-sufficiency vs. learning to lean on others may mean that teachers react to students’ emotions in different ways, even if they are share an end goal of trying to help the student. Because of this, attempts to evaluate teachers and teacher candidates are never going to become simple.-As suggested by InTASC, the NEA paper, and many of the interviewees, there will continue to be a need for mentorship programs and comprehensive evaluation programs, like that done in Massachusetts with the CAP program.

Reactions to Race to the Top

While initial reactions to Race to the Top were mixed, as debates settled and programs were rolled out many people’s opinions changed. With the historical distance that now exists from both the initial announcement and the end of RttT-funded initiatives, sentiments towards RttT on the whole have settled on the positive side.

Early reactions to RttT included a good deal of trepidation, due in no small part to the lasting effects of NCLB. Given the top-down nature of this federal policy, it was seen by the union as “the most drastic and far-reaching” change to schools in decades (Walker 2015), and an “overwhelming burden” to teachers (Robertson 2012). The NEA even went so far as to file a lawsuit against NCLB in 2005 due to the lack of adequate financial support for the changes NCLB had mandated (Clowes 2005). These sentiments were true both in Massachusetts and in the country as a whole. Massachusetts went so far as to apply for a waiver from the federal government excusing them from the requirements of NCLB. Diane Ravitch stated that NCLB
“created a rhetoric of failure” (Jehlen 2010). With reactions such as these, it is unsurprising that many early reactions to RttT, another federal education initiative, were mixed.

Dr. Bromfield, Director of Field Placement at Leslie University, for one, described a feeling not of anxiety, but of trepidation or uncertainty, a “sense of, ‘what is this going to be for us?’,” and a sense of added accountability (interview with the author, November 15, 2018). Dr. Berkowitz, Chair of the Education Department and Professor of Reading at Westfield State University, was initially skeptical of the new program as well, while Ms. Guisbond, head of Citizens for Public Schools, was overtly negative. Both of their reactions stemmed from feelings that government policies did not often take into account the actual needs or opinions of states.

Ms. Guisbond specifically mentioned the dangers of the competitive nature of the funding application process during a time of economic duress, stating that the government had states “over a barrel” (interview with author, March 15, 2019). This created a competitive environment, as Hursh argued, which forced states to make concessions in their policies that they may not otherwise have chosen to make.

On the other hand, some individuals were more open, as they felt that change was long overdue. Ms. Education, for one, was enthusiastic about RttT both when it was first announced and throughout its implementation. This positive attitude, in part, may have been because RttT differed from NCLB. She noted that RttT was not a top-down list of demands, but rather a collaborative effort, as states could pick and choose which aspects of federal goals they focused on in their applications. Thus states were invested and empowered from the very beginning. This sense of control stemmed from the funding set-up and the wide variety of goals that RttT addressed, which the government official felt enabled grant proposal writers to be “...creative in thinking about potential things that [they] were going to do as a result of Race to the Top”
(interview with author, November 9, 2018). One of the reasons that her reaction may be different from that of people who were working directly in the education sector is that she knew from the first day that the state was going to have greater control over the ways in which funds were allocated, while other participants may not have understood this initially.

While correlation does not imply causation, it is nonetheless interesting to note that as collaboration and conversation across parties increased, so did the buy-in of people across the education system. In her description of the creation of Massachusetts’ revised standards for teacher preparation programs, Ms. Education talked at length about how important it was that they actively sought out the voices of the people who would be affected by these changes, explaining that they were

...working really closely with our preparation program providers along the way so that they made sure that the course work and things that they were doing in their programs were well-aligned with expectations that we had for the assessment (anonymous government official, interview with the author, November 11, 2018). In discussing their creation of an assessment tool for principals, she explained that they worked not only with experts across multiple disciplines, but also the teachers and practitioners currently in the field and members of the higher education program community in building their assessment. This commitment to reaching out during the building process and creating a dialogue, rather than simply handing out orders and requirements after the discussion was done, is one reason that MA DESE was able to gain buy-in and endorsement for their programs. Ms. Guisbond, who works entirely in the private sector, talked about the importance of building coalitions with teachers’ unions, other labor organizations, non-profits, and community members in order to advance her groups’ interests in education equity more effectively. They also work alongside government
agencies, testify, and bring attention to education matters in the state house, as additional forms of advocacy.

One of the aspects of RttT that people support is the shift to data-driven analysis, which is seen mainly through the creation of the Edwin Analytics tool. This tool is a suite of data collected by the state, that have been analyzed and formulated into reports about a wide range of subjects, including student outcomes and considerable data on teacher preparation programs. These data are collected using a combination of state assessments (MTEL for teacher candidates, MCAS for students), as well as information from other sources, such as annual surveys given to schools and teacher candidates to assess their opinions of programs. The government agency responsible for program assessment also instituted focus groups and created tools so that individual programs could continuously self-assess, rather than only face review once every few years. Furthermore, they created a separate set of surveys given to preparation programs about the assessment process, so that they could help make that assessment process more accessible and productive for both program providers and government officials overseeing the evaluations.

Edwin reports are available to K-12 teachers, as well as to preparation programs and government offices. Data are collected and archived over time, so that organizations can look longitudinally at their outcomes and identify trends in data and potential weaknesses to address. While all data are reported in the aggregate, so that no single candidate can be identified, it is nonetheless available broken down by class year, and comparisons can be made of teachers in different schools. MA DESE uses this data to create public profiles of schools and preparation programs, as well as to facilitate their annual Title II report, which is a federally-mandated report about teacher preparation programs. Individual universities also use this tool to help collect data.
about their programs for themselves and also for reports that they submit to the state annually or.as part of their accreditation filings.

One potential problem that could be addressed in the future is a perceived lack of equality among the use of Edwin in program assessment, as some individuals employed at public universities mentioned frustrations with the fact that their programs are tracked more rigorously than private institutions (anonymous, interview with the author, February 27, 2019). This belief contrasts with statements from Dr. Bromfield, who worked at Lesley University, and described Edwin as something that “definitely helped [the] certification office” (interview with the author, November 15, 2019). The dissemination of information about the degree to which private universities are/are not assessed in ways that are (dis)similar to those of state universities is one area in which the state could work to improve going forward. Additionally, as the government official and one dean pointed out, data about teacher candidates is only tracked for program completers.

One major change that occurred for the measurement of teacher preparation programs, beyond the implementation of Edwin, was a shift to a more holistic, outcome-based assessment of programs. This choice meant moving from an input-driven approach that looked at syllabi, the academic achievements of professors, etc. to a more output-focused model that looked at the actual success of teacher candidates once they began teaching (anonymous government official, interviewed by author, November 11, 2018). This overhaul of assessment also led to the creation of a rubrics-based assessment for the preparation programs, and these rubrics are part of the suite of tools made available to programs by the state so that they can independently strive for programmatic improvement, outside of the period in which they are facing formal assessment.
This new approach has been adopted by many university programs as well as by the state. In her interview, Dr. Bromfield mentioned how important the rubrics were. She also discussed the ways in which this change affected the way that Lesley University changed its own assessment, and worked to get input from K-12 schools in which they were placing teachers to ensure that their candidates would be adequately prepared with the specific knowledge and skills needed in the classrooms that they would be entering (interview with author, November 15, 2018). This new way of approaching work with community schools was also true at one of the state universities, whose employee emphasized their goal that students see their program as “holistic, and not just a list of courses that they check off...” (Dr. Berkowitz, interview with author, February 28, 2019). This approach not only helps to create teacher candidates who will be more successful earlier, but also helps to foster positive relationships between universities and the public-school communities that they serve.

Another positive outcome of Massachusetts’ reception of RttT funds was an explicit focus on trying to create a more diverse workforce. While Massachusetts’ student body is increasingly diverse, changes in the teaching staff have not kept pace. According to the most recently available statistics, as of the 2018—2019 school year, 41.1% of students were minorities, but as of the 2015-2016 school year, only 7.1% of teachers and teaching staff represented minorities (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2019(b); Rocheleau 2017). One of the major tenets of RttT was a focus on increasing diversity in the classroom, and Massachusetts did just that, with programs like EPIC grants. These grants are designed to help institutions of higher learning create partnerships with local public schools and foster greater interest in becoming a teacher among students. This effort was described by interviewees from public universities as a “strong initiative,” and as having a “positive effect.”
One university used the funds they got from RttT to create a media campaign and an initiative to go into public schools to specifically target students of color to attend their university to become teachers. This funding also allowed them to bring more attention to and raise money towards scholarship funds for students in their teaching program (anonymous state official, interview by author, February 27, 2019).

This program also served as a point of criticism for some people. While one state school administrator was pleased by the outcome of the EPIC-grant program, they also felt that the amount of money allocated toward this goal was not sufficient, to the point that the low amount may have deterred some institutions from even applying for funds at all. To that point, MA DESE has continued to fund diversity initiatives after their RttT funds were exhausted, and is launching a fellowship specifically targeting minority students in high schools and community colleges to recruit them to be teachers (anonymous government official, interviewed by author, November 11, 2018). Another area targeted by criticism was that, although it is an increasingly common topic of discussion, no part of RttT funding or focus was given to socio-emotional learning, or to additional training in that specific area to teacher candidates (Dr. Hicks, interview by author, February 7, 2019). The idea of using student test results as a way to assess teachers was also seen as a negative outcome, and this idea saw no support among interviewees.

While there was considerable initial skepticism towards RttT by individuals operating at the state level, this was in large part based on the history of frustration surrounding federal education initiatives, and specifically the aforementioned frustration with NCLB. As the Massachusetts RttT programs developed and more actors and institutions such as unions bought into the goals of the program, people became more open to the program, and on the whole it is viewed positively today. There is undoubtedly still work to be done around the goals stated in
Massachusetts’ RttT proposal, and many of these have to do with teacher candidate assessment, which will be the subject of the next chapter.

Teacher Candidate Evaluation

The evaluation of teacher candidates, like many parts of public education, is left up to the states, and there are many different approaches. Massachusetts is recognized nationally as a state that is strong in teacher preparation. The evaluation of teacher candidates in Massachusetts can be divided into two major components: the CAP program and the MTEL. All teacher candidates are required to pass the CAP (Candidate Assessment of Performance) program in order to finish their degree-based program. CAP, which is similar to a performance portfolio, looks at a teacher candidate over time, and includes multiple formal and informal classroom observations by program supervisors and mentor teachers, in addition to self-evaluation throughout the year. The metrics by which teacher candidates are measured are in alignment with the standards used to evaluate actual teachers, which means that when teacher candidates go into the field with their first job, they are already familiar with the system. This rubric is divided into four sections, with the themes of curriculum, planning, and assessment; teaching all students; family and community engagement; and professional culture, each with smaller sub-themes. Preparation programs also report data about their candidates and the CAP process to MA DESE annually.

The MTEL (Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure) is the second major component of the teacher accreditation process that teacher candidates must complete. There are several different components to this suite of tests, and the actual exams taken will vary by teacher candidate, depending on the type of classroom in which they hope to become certified. In total there are 40 different MTEL exams. All educators must take a Communication and Literacy
skills test as well as their relevant academic subject examination. For elementary education, candidates are required to take a “Foundations of Reading” exam, in addition to a two-part general knowledge test that covers material from literature, history, geography, economics, child development, science, and math. Secondary teachers, ESL, and teachers of students with disabilities and auditory/visual impairments must pass a subject-specific test. Because Massachusetts does not use PRAXIS, a common teacher exam in other states, they only offer reciprocity for sufficiently high scores on exams from six other states. The MTEL is administered and designed by a private company, Pearson Education, Inc. and not by the state itself.

As it is the more controversial of the two, we will begin by looking at the MTEL exam, and discussing the ways in which it is presently viewed. Even though this research has a relatively small selection of interviews from which to draw information, there are nonetheless common themes that have emerged, and every person with whom I spoke had something to say. Although no one felt that the MTEL was irrelevant, or that it should cease to exist, everyone felt that it needed to be changed. Specifically, they felt that the test lacked internal validity, which is to say that it is not an accurate or precise tool for measuring what it is supposed to measure, namely the readiness of teacher candidates to join the field of education. Beyond this, some felt that it was unfair for teachers, and that it specifically presented a greater barrier to minorities, the exact population that people are trying to entice to enter the teaching profession.

Of all of the individuals interviewed, Dr. Berkowitz felt the most strongly about MTELs. As a part of her job, she teaches a course to prepare students to take the “Foundations of Reading” exam at Westfield State University, and has been with the university since before MTELs were instituted in 1998. One major detraction that she pointed out was that professors like herself are
forced to spend time teaching to the test in a decontextualized manner, rather than focusing on having students do things like classroom observation or practicing the actual skills that they will need to teach reading effectively. She felt that as a professor, she was “paying more attention to the MTEL objective than we are to actually teaching them how to teach reading” (Dr. Sandra Berkowitz, interview with the author, February 28, 2019). She went on to elaborate her feelings on the rest of the MTEL, describing the questions as “impossible,” “ridiculous,” and “an exercise in trivial pursuit.” She pointed out that the exams are deeply anxiety-provoking, and most worryingly, that students who test well are not necessarily going to be the best teachers, and that the candidates who professors and administrators feel will be the best in the classroom are not always the ones who will do well – or even pass – this exam. While she did feel that the MTEL “serve[d] a purpose” and should not be removed entirely, she also felt that it needed serious revision in order to become a test that would more accurately and fairly measure the readiness of teacher candidates.

Ms. Guisbond also felt that the MTEL was more “unfair” than anything else, and mentioned that it was an issue that her organization was preparing to turn more attention towards in the coming months. Specifically, she was concerned about the “high failure rate [and its] disproportionate effect on prospective teachers of color” (Lisa Guisbond, interview with author, March 15, 2019). Dr. Administrator referred to MTELs as the “gatekeeper,” specifically for the goal of diversifying the pipeline of STEM teachers, and stated that she felt that it was necessary to revamp the MTEL so that it would be “assessing what it’s supposed to assess” (anonymous school official, interview with author, March 27, 2019). Dr. Bromfield also felt that the MTEL tests were a “huge barrier” and that they “weed people out who were very good teachers” (interview with author, November 15, 2018). As part of her work at Lesley University, she sat on
a committee for fifteen years that worked on issues surrounding MTELs, and wrote letters, worked with preparation programs, and advocated for positive change surrounding testing issues.

MACTE, the organization for members of the teacher preparation program community, also has a panel currently looking at the MTEL and whether or not it creates a barrier for students of color, in addition to alternatives that could be used to document the proficiency and efficacy of a teacher (Dr. Bruno Hicks, interview by author, February 7, 2019). Dr. Hicks also discussed the idea of not only trying to revise the MTEL, but potentially to devise an alternative, and he was not alone in this thought. Dr. Bromfield had a concern about the amount of control held by Pearson, the private corporation that administers the MTEL, and expressed hesitation about their probable conflict of interest (interview with the author, November 15, 2019). This is not to say that the test, or the corporation, are entirely unchangeable. Ms. Education, the government official, was actually in the midst of negotiations for MTEL revision with Pearson, in order to bring the exams on content knowledge into closer alignment with newly redone student curriculum frameworks (anonymous government official, interview with author, November 11, 2019). As a part of this process, she stressed that they were working to actively search out the opinions of different people and to have greater engagement in the conversation around MTEL updates.

The CAP program, on the other hand, is administered by the state in conjunction with teacher preparation programs, and is required for prospective teachers to graduate from all accredited programs in Massachusetts. While it was not created directly through RttT funding, it is still important to discuss when looking at teacher evaluation in Massachusetts. Unlike reactions to MTELs, which were mixed at best, reactions to the CAP program were almost universally positive. While it did create more work and necessitate additional training for teacher preparation
program staff, it has led to more comprehensive review of teacher candidates, as well as the new system of candidate evaluation that aligns with the expectations for teachers. This ameliorated concerns expressed by groups like the unions and Ms. Guisbond, who feared the dangers of one-dimensional evaluations of teachers and teacher candidates (Lisa Guisbond, interview with author, March 15, 2019). Dr. Administration described it as a “great transition”, and additionally pointed out that it was “easy for supervising practitioners to understand,” as it followed a rubric that they were used to using when considering themselves, which meant that they are able to be more perceptive in their evaluation of the teacher candidates that they supervise (anonymous university dean, interview with author, February 27, 2019).

Ms. Education described the creation and implementation of CAP as one of the biggest changes that had been made to teacher preparation in her memory (interview with the author, November 11, 2018), while Dr. Bromfield recalled it as the biggest change that she had seen in her time at Lesley University (interview with author, November 15, 2018). One aspect of CAP that was especially important to her, as the director of field placements, was that she felt that it made teachers themselves feel more respected and that it gave them a greater role in the teacher preparation process and created an overall more collaborative environment. This sense of collaboration is important because, by bringing their voices into the conversation about teacher preparation, teachers are able to provide valuable insights into what they feel is actually important in the classroom, which in turn helps to create criteria for teacher candidates that measure what is actually effective. This new set of aligned expectations for teacher candidates also makes the transition from college to classroom go more smoothly for new teachers (anonymous government official, interview by author, November 11, 2019).
MTEL and CAP work in tandem to ensure that every teaching candidate enters the classroom as prepared as possible to tackle the challenges that they will face. They both have the goal of ensuring that candidates have adequate knowledge of content and pedagogy at the rigorous level set by Massachusetts officials. However, they approach this objective in very different manners, and Massachusetts is acting prudently in their decision to declare that both of these evaluations are necessary. The MTEL provides one very specific point of data on teacher candidates, while CAP strives to provide a fuller and more comprehensive review of the candidate’s skills as an educator. While neither system is perfect, both are augmented by being used in conjunction with the other, and ultimately contribute to the high caliber of new teachers in Massachusetts.
Chapter Four

Conclusion

Although Massachusetts has made enormous strides in the field of teacher education and preparation program improvement over the last decade, through RttT and other initiatives, there is still work to be done. In addition to the obvious need for revisions of MTEL exams, interviewees mentioned various other areas in which they feel improvements could be made. The most common of these was in the area of teacher candidates and new teacher mentoring. While there are mentoring programs in existence, and their numbers grow annually, the reality is that these programs are small, and supported by individual schools. There is a lack of cohesive standards for what this looks like across the board, even though both interviewees and literature agree that having a mentor teacher – not just someone who will evaluate them, but someone with whom new teachers can speak to learn and to work through problems without judgment – greatly improves the new teacher’s experience in the classroom, and also helps to make them better educators. Additionally, although there are programs that match new teachers to veteran educators, there are relatively few incentives for experienced teachers to agree to take on this extra workload. Many people suggested that it would be prudent to offer some sort of bonus compensation for teachers who accept this extra responsibility. Currently, all negotiations about this are done at the local level, through individual union contracts.

One potential way to implement a program like this would be to have control handed to the state. If they were to control funding of a mentorship program, it would mean that all mentors would receive equal compensation, regardless of the district in which they teach. An additional issue that the state may wish to tackle in the future is the inequality of change that their policy decisions bring to institutions of higher education. When interviewing people who worked at
universities, I asked whether they thought that policy changes affected large schools and small schools equally, in terms of the additional work that they created, and everyone said that they felt the workload was unequal. More interestingly however, everyone felt that they were getting the unfair burden. People who worked at smaller institutions felt that smaller institutions had a more difficult time than larger schools, while people who worked at larger institutions felt that they faced more challenges than their smaller counterparts. Regardless of who actually has more work to do when new policy changes are unveiled, the state should try to figure out ways to roll out policies in a manner such that preparation programs feel that they are able to make the transition to the new standard smoothly and easily. Additionally, as new policies are being created, government officials should continue to do everything possible to hear the voices of their constituents in the planning and design processes.

An additional goal towards which government officials are currently working is the idea of closing the gap between the outcomes of first- and third-year teachers. While the government official felt that closing this gap was a realistic goal, no one actually working in teacher preparation programs thought that this was likely to happen. This is not to say that the gap could not be lessened, just that it won’t be closed entirely, as there is a limit to what can be taught in a preparation program. Some of what one needs to know in order to be a good teacher can only be learned through classroom experience, which is why the gap between new and veteran teachers exists in the first place. Finally, interviewees cited lower reliance on testing, an added focus on socio-emotional learning for educators, and an increase in project-based learning and differentiated curriculum in the classroom as areas to which more attention should be given going forward.
Overall, this research project has three main takeaways. The first of these is that RttT was on the whole a beneficial program for the state of Massachusetts, even if it did not accomplish all of its goals on a nationwide scale, as was the goal of the federal government. Secondly, one of the major outcomes of RttT in Massachusetts was a revitalization of teacher preparation programs. This has led to more rigorous standards and greater accountability for these programs, which continues to be an exciting and changing field. One of the major changes in this process was a movement to greater use of data in program analysis, which led to the creation of Edwin Analytics. This system helps programs to look at the long-term outcomes of their participants, and can help programs to self-evaluate. With regard to evaluation, the creation of the CAP program and a revised rubric for the measurement of teacher candidates has contributed to a more holistic and engaging process of evaluation. This comes at a time when MTELs are under renewed scrutiny and their further revision will no doubt continue to be a popular topic in education policy. Finally, it is clear that no one working in or around teacher preparation believes that an education based solely on content knowledge or pedagogical understanding is sufficient, but rather that these two must be taught in tandem with one another, and in conjunction with additional skills for success in the classroom.

With this as a basis, there are several ways in which research on this subject could be improved and built on in future studies. Perhaps the largest shortcoming of this study was its relatively small sample size. If researchers wish to gain a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of feelings towards the teacher preparation programs across the entire state, it would be wise to greatly expand the number of respondents, possibly by streamlining research questions into a survey that could be sent out to a greater number of administrators. With time, it will also be possible to look more closely at program outcomes and analyze trends using Edwin Analytics.
Analytics, or other data-analysis programs, because each new school year brings a new set of data that can be considered, and adds more information to trends that are being analyzed longitudinally.

In the interest of extrapolating the most useful parts of Massachusetts’ changes so that they maybe implemented elsewhere in the country, further study should also be done comparing policies and their outcomes to those in other states who were awarded RttT grants for similar goals, but used different methods to try and achieve these ends. A study of MTEL should also be done specifically by consulting with groups for whom this represents a disproportionate barrier to entry into the field of education. In this same vein, it would be prudent to begin collecting data on people who start, but do not finish, teacher preparation programs, to investigate what they do instead of teach, and the causes that made them decide to leave their programs.

Remaining questions include: how can teaching be made more attractive to prospective candidates as a rewarding and sustainable career? Were other aspects of Massachusetts’ RttT initiatives equally successful, and why or why not was that the case? Should the federal government continue to use grant-based programs to incentivize states to make policy changes, or should they take a less money-fueled approach, as this power structure inherently places states in a subordinate position? As Dr. Hicks pointed out, education is, at its core, an asset to society, and we should treat it this way, rather than as a line item burden. To continue producing students who are ready to tackle the jobs and democratic challenges of tomorrow, we need to ensure that their teachers are being prepared at the highest level today.
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Appendix A – Interview Protocols
(identifying information about individuals who wished to remain anonymous has been removed/altered from original protocols)

Interview one: State official
Background Questions
Name:
Place of work:
Duration of employment:
Position a/o 2002 (NCLB enacted):
Position a/o 2009 (RTTT):
Position a/o 2015 (ESSA):
Role – title and responsibilities:

Other Questions
What that means on a day-to-day basis:
- what do you do?
- with whom do you interact?
What first made you interested in working for DESE?
Why do you like the position you currently hold?
What do you find most interesting about working in public education/ed policy?
Could you give an overview of the changes brought on by this legislation, and how they have occurred in MA?
How would you describe NCLB in re: teacher preparation/training/accreditation?
And RTTT/ESSA?
How did the state of MA (govt/DESE) respond to this?
How did MA higher schools independently respond?
Do MA standards go beyond those of the federal government?
What sort of changes did DESE make in response to NCLB? RTTT/ESSA?
What were your initial feelings toward NCLB?
Do you feel that these changes were well received in the ED community as a whole?
Were they initially effective?
Are they presently/did they in the long term allow the goals of NCLB to be met?
What do you believe that the goals of this part of NCLB were? RTTT/ESSA?
How do these align/depart from those of MA DESE?
Do you think that this has led to a better teacher prep programs?
Do you think that this has led to a better/more rigorous teacher accreditation program?
Do you think that MA teachers as a whole are now better/more effective because of the changes brought on by NCLB?
Has this, in your opinion, improved student outcomes?
What is one thing you think was done right/is going well?
What is one thing that you think should be changed in order to improve teacher/student outcomes and/or get closer to these ____ goals?
How has the change in requirements caused changes to percentage of teachers granted certification?
How would you personally define “well qualified” teacher? “Highly effective”? 

Monahan 65
How do certification requirements affect teacher retention?
Which UMass school do you believe has the largest undergraduate teaching college?
What are some documents that you would recommend reading to further my understanding on this subject?

Interview two – Administrator at a private university

Background Questions
Name:
Place of work:
Duration of employment:
Different roles played:
Role as of 2002/3 school year:

RTTT-focused Questions
What was your initial reaction to the announcement of RTTT funding in MA and its changes to teacher requirements?
Could you give an overview of the changes brought on by this program, and how they have occurred in MA?
How did this affect your role at Lesley University, and the way that you ran your dept?
Could you talk a little more about what you did as a part of Massachusetts Association for Colleges of Teacher Education?
Do you think that the requirements have led to better-prepared teachers?
How has the change in requirements caused changes to percentage of teachers granted certification?
How would you describe public reaction to the changes brought about by RTTT?
Do you think that the requirements for teachers help to create better outcomes for their students?
How would you personally define “well qualified” teacher? “Highly effective”?
How do certification requirements affect teacher retention?
What was one thing that you think was successful that came out of RTTT?
What was one thing that went poorly, or with which you had a problem?
What are some documents that you would recommend reading to further my understanding on this subject?
What first made you interested in working for Lesley?
Why did you like the position you held?
What do you find most interesting about working in public education/ed policy?
3yr gap
What kind of changes did you see hapening at Lesley over the last two decades as a result of RTTT and state standard changes?
Under essa its up to states to think about accountability if she were to be advising mass, what would rec state do or change for accred. for teach ed progs.
Small and large teacher prep programs. How does size matter on relation to teacher prep programs? huge impact on small groups who have to do a lot?
Interview three: Dean of Public university – Bruno Hicks (Fitchburg State)

**Background Questions**
Name:
Place of work:
Duration of employment:
Different roles played:
Role as of 2010/14 school year:

**Other Questions**
Choice to move from ME to FSU?
What was your initial reaction to the announcement of RTTT Creation and its aims towards changes to teacher requirements?
ME did not apply – can you recall the feelings in the higher ed community during the time that RTTT was stirring?
Could you give an overview of your understanding of the changes brought on by this program, and how they have occurred in MA?
Could you talk a little more about what you do as a part of Massachusetts Association for Colleges of Teacher Education?
What attracted you to this role?
Do you think that the requirements for teachers help to create better outcomes for their students?
How would you personally define “well qualified” teacher? “Highly effective”?
Do you think that the requirements have led to better-prepared teachers?
What was one thing that you think was successful that came out of RTTT?
What was one thing that went poorly, or with which you had a problem?
Why did you like the position you held?
What do you find most interesting about working in public education/ed policy?
Under essa its up to states to think about accountability if she were to be advising mass, what would rec state do or change for accred for teach ed progs.
Small and large teacher prep programs. How does size matter on relation to teacher prep programs? Huge impact on small groups who have to do a lot? (~7% of 4,117)

Interview Four: Dean – Public university

**Background Questions**
Name:
Place of work:
Duration of employment:
Different roles played:
Role as of 2010/14 school year:

**Other Questions**
What was your initial reaction to the announcement of RTTT Creation and its aims towards changes to teacher requirements?
Could you talk a little more about what you do as a part of Massachusetts Association for Colleges of Teacher Education?
What attracted you to this role?
Do you think that the requirements for teachers help to create better outcomes for their students?
How would you personally define “well qualified” teacher? “Highly effective”?
Do you think that the requirements have led to better-prepared teachers?
What was one thing that you think was successful that came out of RTTT?
What was one thing that went poorly, or with which you had a problem?
Why did you like the position you held?
What do you find most interesting about working in public education/ed policy?
Small and large teacher prep programs. How does size matter on relation to teacher prep programs? Huge impact on small groups who have to do a lot?
Could you give an overview of the changes brought on by this program, and how they have occurred in MA/at your university?
How did this affect your role at your university, and the way that you ran your dept?
What first made you interested in working for your university?
Why did you like the position you held?
What do you find most interesting about working in public education/ed policy?
If you could make one change in MA ed policy vis-a-vis TPPS, what would you do?

Interview Five: Professor at a public university – Sandra Berkowitz

Background Questions
Name:
Place of work:
Duration of employment:
Different roles played:

Other Questions
What was your initial reaction to the announcement of RTTT funding in MA and its changes to teacher requirements?
Could you give an overview of the changes brought on by this program, and how they have occurred in MA/at WSU?
How did this affect your role at Westfield State University, and the way that you ran your dept?
Do you think that the requirements have led to better-prepared teachers?
How would you describe public reaction to the changes brought about by RTTT?
(How) has this affected MTEL prep?
Do you think that the requirements for teacher candidates help to create better outcomes for their students?
How would you personally define “well qualified” teacher? “Highly effective”?
What was one thing that you think was successful that came out of RTTT?
What was one thing that went poorly, or with which you had a problem?
What are some documents that you would recommend reading to further my understanding on this subject?

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Dr. Berkowitz serves on the executive board and is past-president of the Massachusetts Association of College and University Reading Educators.

Size differentiation
If you could make one change in MA ed policy vis-a-vis TPPS, what would you do?

Interview Six: Head of nonprofit “Citizens for Public Schools” – Lisa Guisbond

Background Questions
Name:
Place of work:
Duration of employment:
Different roles played:

Other Questions
What was your initial reaction to the announcement of RTTT funding in MA and its changes to teacher requirements?
How has RTT affected the way that teachers are prepared? And the way they approach their material?
How have you worked with other organizations? The government? Nonprofits?
How would you define a “well-qualified” or “Highly effective” teacher?