

By Jill Cullis

The Importance of Revised Teacher Preparation Programs

I was raised hearing the phrase, “Those that can, do. Those that can’t, teach. Those that can’t teach, teach teachers.” Although this is a damning statement that greatly offends me as a classroom teacher of twenty-nine years, I have wondered if there is any truth to it, at least the last part of that phrase.

I question the truth of that statement because during the fall of 2015, I was engaged as a National Teacher Fellow with Hope Street Group conducting focus groups and surveying teachers regarding the quality, or lack thereof, of teacher preparation. As a group we surveyed nearly 2000 teachers throughout the entire nation. As an AAE member, I worked with AAE members from across the country to gather data. We heard from teachers in suburban, rural, and urban districts, ranging from one to thirty-one years of experience and across all grade levels. We surveyed teachers from every kind of teacher preparation program, and **a majority felt they were not prepared for the realities of the classroom regarding specific student populations.**



“This nation is facing a serious teacher shortage, and better preparation would without a doubt help districts deal with this double-edged challenge of recruitment and retention.”

While I completed my teacher preparation program three decades ago, I still reflect on its value and where I am as a teacher today. Times are very different than when I first began as a teacher. Society has changed, and so has educational policy as “the powers that be” try to finally get it right. No longer are the days when I can shut my door and teach as an island. In thirty years, training has changed from creating master teachers to developing master learners. However, I have to ask, have teacher-training programs sufficiently evolved to truly meet the needs of various types of schools, classrooms, and learners? Based upon the results of our surveys and focus groups, I would respond with a resounding no.

Our surveys revealed that **teachers receive more training on college- and career-ready standards on the job than during their preparation programs.** While conducting my focus groups I heard a great number of teachers, especially those who are recent graduates, express frustration with major gaps in their understanding of their responsibility in the classroom of teaching to these standards. In our focus groups teachers became dismayed when they realized that so many of them had spent tens of thousands of dollars preparing for a career, only to find that their new employer truly prepared them via mentoring or professional learning communities. After listening to teacher after teacher reflect on a lack of preparation, one of the participants chimed in asking, “Wow, are teacher preparation programs just cash cows with no accountability after we graduate?”

Additionally, school districts are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on induction programs for new teachers. These programs are more than just mentoring programs but seen by recent graduates as “fill in the gap” courses for what districts deem lacking from teacher preparation courses. That amount of money could most certainly be put to better use if teacher training met the challenges of what teachers face daily.

I am not of the opinion that inadequate teacher preparation programs are necessarily the smoking gun of what many in society deem a failed educational system, but they certainly bear a strong responsibility for why teachers feel they were overwhelmingly unprepared. Recent teacher graduates enter the classroom excited, passionate, and ready to change the world one student at a time, only to find the cerebral textbook learning does not match the reality of the classroom, administration, and profession.

On Deck: Preparing the Next Generation of Teachers, Hope Street Group’s report on our teacher-led and teacher-sourced research, includes data and policy suggestions to close the gap for the next generation of teachers. Teachers like myself in the trenches have spoken, our combined voices are powerful, and teacher preparation programs and policymakers should take note. Suggestions, such as create teacher retention and job placement accountability systems, align curriculum with realities of the profession, and promote funding of clinical teaching programs are just a beginning for significant training programs to meet the demands of today’s classroom and society.

As an athlete I can still hear the voice of my coaches yelling, “A difficult practice makes the game come easy.” Or, “Prepared practice leads to success.” If teacher preparation programs mirrored these ideas, then teachers would more likely graduate as teachers ready to hit the ground running and not have the overwhelming feeling of



being unprepared. Revising teacher preparation programs is critical for training, recruitment, and retention of outstanding teachers. This nation is facing a serious teacher shortage, and better preparation would without a doubt help districts deal with this double-edged challenge of recruitment and retention.

While the “educational crisis” is splashed across many headlines daily, I believe starting with a revision of teacher preparation programs based upon the feedback of teachers is a more than a cocktail party conversation for those in academia and policy but a serious topic that must be met head on, and with teacher help.

On Deck is a solid foundation of teacher voices from all over the U.S., and a way to jump start the conversation for improving teacher preparation in my home state of Colorado and across this nation. When teachers are better prepared, kids win, schools win, districts win, and society wins. ■



Jill Cullis teaches social studies at Gateway High School, in Colorado. In her 29-year career she’s served as an instructional leader in various capacities,

conducted training in four different countries, and has been an educational professor in Bogota, Colombia. Jill authored part of the introduction for *Minding the Achievement Gap*. She has worked with the Center for Teaching Quality, the Professional Association of Colorado Educators (AAE’s Colorado state chapter), and other like-minded organizations to improve education through public policy. Jill was her school’s Teacher of the Year in 2007 and has a BA degree in history from the University of Northern Colorado and a master’s degree in curriculum and instruction from Colorado Christian University.

On Deck: Preparing the Next Generation of Teachers



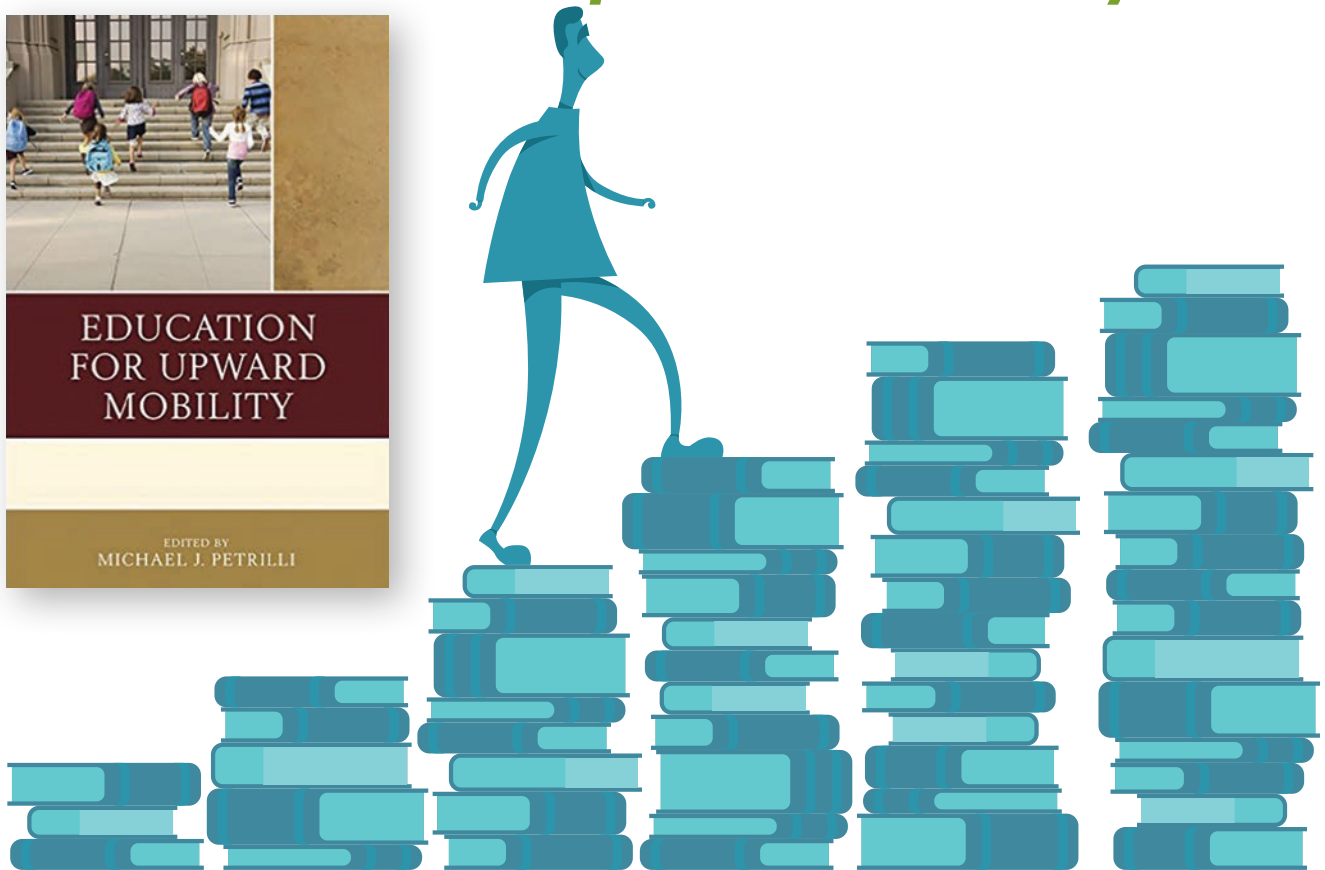
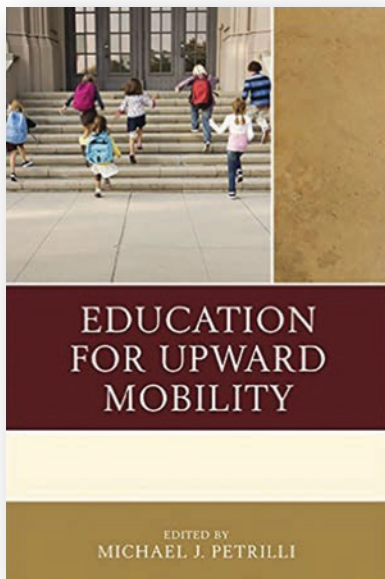
Hope Street Group teacher fellows (including AAE Member Jill Cullis) collaborated with the U.S. Department of Education and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education to formulate questions on a crucial topic affecting experienced and aspiring teachers alike: TEACHER PREPARATION. This teacher-led, teacher-sourced research project spanned six weeks, consisting of virtual and in-person engagement, and included the perspectives of nearly 2,000 current classroom teachers regarding their pathways to certification. We’re thrilled that AAE members were included in this important work!

The research findings in *On Deck: Preparing the Next Generation of Teachers* reveal data collected from educators spanning 49 states and a variety of experience levels, especially pertaining to:

- Curriculum addressing college- and career-ready standards
- Preparation for serving high-need/persistently low-achieving populations
- Beneficial experiences for preservice teachers
- Accountability measures for teacher preparation programs

Download the full 11-page report: hopestreetgroup.com/teacherprep.

Book Spotlight: *Education for Upward Mobility*



There's little doubt that education and opportunity are tightly joined in the twenty-first century America. Almost every week brings a new study demonstrating that highly skilled workers are being rewarded with stronger pay and excellent working conditions, while Americans with few skills are struggling mightily.

Expanding educational achievement, then, appears to be a clear route to expanding economic opportunity. Yet much of our public discourse ends there. *Of course* more young Americans need better education to succeed. But what kind of education? Is the goal “college for all?” What do we mean by “college?” Do our young people mostly need a strong foundation in academics? What about so-called “non-cognitive” skills? Should technical education make a comeback?

Education for Upward Mobility provides fresh perspectives and concrete ideas for policymakers at every level

of government; for leaders and policy analysts in education reform organizations; for philanthropists and membership associations; and for local superintendents, school board members, and teachers. It combines the latest research evidence with in-depth explorations of promising practices on the ground, in real places. It answers some of the most critical questions in American policymaking: How can we help children born into poverty thrive, and what role can our schools play? ■

Courtesy of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute.



Michael J. Petrilli is an award-winning writer and president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, one of the country's leading education policy think tanks, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, and an editor of *Education Next*. He is the author of *The Diverse Schools Dilemma: A Parent's Guide to Socioeconomically Mixed Public Schools* and a member of the AAE Advisory Board.

With this provocative volume, Mike Petrilli has rendered a real service. He and his contributors offer much-needed straight talk on what it means to promote educational opportunity and upward mobility. Whether or not one agrees with Petrilli's recommendations, this timely volume is a valuable resource for policymakers, educators, and everyone else.

—Frederick M. Hess, director of education policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute & AAE Advisory Board Member

AAE Teacher Survey of the Month

What is your favorite genre of newsletter articles in *Education Matters*?

- AAE News Updates
- AAE Member Submissions
- Info on AAE Programs
- Federal Education News Updates
- Tips-n-Tricks for Teachers
- Humor/Just for Fun
- Educational Pieces
- Other

- ▶ Take the survey at tinyurl.com/aaeMay16Survey today and be entered to win an AAE prize pack with your very own copy of *Education for Upward Mobility!*—just for letting us know.

You can also scan the QR code to take this survey on your phone!



TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK: MAY 2-6, 2016

We Appreciate Our Members

AAE is proud to support you during this special week-long celebration of teachers. Join us in showing America's professional educators the recognition they deserve by sharing this graphic on Facebook and tagging the teachers you appreciate!

Visit tinyurl.com/IAppreciateThisTeacher.



NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL WEEK: MAY 1-7, 2016

Join us in raising awareness about this growing community by visiting aaecharters.org.



6 Exciting AR Apps for Student Learning

Augmented reality (AR) can serve a variety of purposes in your classroom. This exciting technology layers virtual content on top of the real world, providing an opportunity for students to interact with content in a completely new way.

It's important to think of augmented reality as more than just a gimmick. Sure, it grabs students' attention, but you want to make sure that it also sustains meaningful learning. I've written a new book all about using scannable technology for deeper learning, and it is a topic that connects to multiple learning environments. Moving beyond the gotcha factor is doable and necessary!

1. Quiver

Formerly known as ColAR, Quiver is a fantastic, easy-to-use, augmented reality app. Like many AR apps, after downloading it on your device, you'll have to visit that

company's website to download trigger images. The Quiver triggers images that you scan to activate the AR experience. Quiver uses coloring pages as triggers, and this video shows it in action. The app has a set of coloring pages that make cells pop off the page and let children spin a globe in midair. Quiver lets students go beyond the pictures in their textbooks to interact with three-dimensional figures.

2. Elements 4D

DAQRI, a terrific AR developer, has produced a handful of apps that you'll want to check out. One of my favorites is their educational app Elements 4D. This app lets students combine different elements to see chemistry in action. Teachers can print out and assemble blocks that become trigger images for an AR experience. DAQRI's website also includes lesson plans for using Elements 4D with elementary, middle, and high school students.

3. Blippar

Blippar is an AR creation tool that has been integrated with different educational experiences. One of my favorites is how Blippar is used with *Brainspace* magazine. You can scan the *Brainspace* cover and inside pages to connect with interactive content that brings the two-dimensional presentation to life. It can completely transform a child's reading experience by pushing him or her to think more deeply and explore a topic in a new way.

4. Arloon Plants

The team at Arloon has produced a handful of augmented reality apps. I especially like Arloon Plants. With this app, students can explore interactive plants to learn about structure and parts. Using the Arloon trigger, students can even watch a plant grow and move in an AR experience. This video on their website shows off some of the features that can help students wrap their heads around foundational science concepts when growing plants in your classroom isn't an option.

5. Aurasma

Aurasma is a popular tool for creating and exploring AR experiences. The Aurasma app works with triggers that teachers and students create on the web with Aurasma Studio. Users can upload trigger images of their choice and



add videos to make their very own augmented reality experience. In a recent post on scannable technology, I discussed how QR codes (and augmented reality) can be used to share student work. Aurasma is one great option for making this happen.

6. Math Alive

I had a chance to meet the folks at Alive Studios when presenting on scannable technology this year at FETC. They showed off some of their super-cool AR products including Math alive, which is designed for PreK-3 students. Math alive uses AR software downloaded to a computer, a camera, and special cards. Students and teachers place the trigger cards under a camera to practice counting and basic numeracy skills. A video overview on their site shows Math alive in action.

When you decide to bring augmented reality into your classroom, make sure that you're putting the learning first. Also be sure that the activities connect to your learning objective and that you've tried out the technology before introducing it to your students. Augmented reality can elevate learning experiences and energize everyday lessons! ■

Originally published on edutopia.com.



Monica Burns is an ed tech & curriculum consultant, Apple Distinguished Educator, and founder of ClassTechTips.com. In her role as a classroom teacher in general education and integrated co-teaching settings, she used iPads one-to-one with her students while aligning her instruction to the Common Core State Standards. Monica has presented to teachers, administrators, and tech enthusiasts at numerous national and international conferences including SXSWedu, ISTE, and EduTECH.

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Education Matters is an exclusive publication for members of AAE and its state chapters. This publication is brought to you by the Association of American Educators Foundation (AAEF).

aaeteachers.org • editor@aaeteachers.org • 800.704.7799



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