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October 2011

Turn teacher preparation “right side up” Clinical Practice and Innovative Partnerships Promote Access to Quality Education

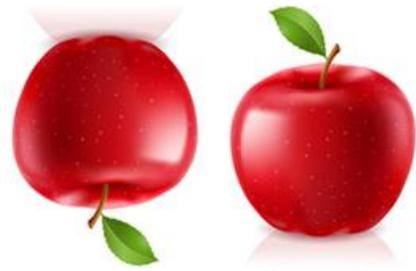
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Reaching what the [Lumina Foundation](#) calls [Goal 2025](#) requires a strong collective push and a long list of interrelated initiatives, including progressive legislation, policy transformation, community activism, strong leadership, parental involvement, teacher development, K-20 articulation and cross-walks, powerful curricular content, engaging educational experiences, quality teacher development programs, partnerships involving P-12 and higher education institutions, and well, the kitchen table – or at least grassroots conversations around it.



Fortunately, we are not starting with an empty toolbox.

In 2010, the [National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education](#) (NCATE) commissioned a Blue Ribbon Panel that recommended “turning teacher education upside down” by designing teacher preparation curricula to promote classroom readiness through clinical preparation and partnerships.

Last month, Representative Judy Chu (D-CA) introduced legislation that complemented that recommendation. If H.R. 2902, “[The Equal Access to Quality Higher Education Act](#),” is passed and funded, it would provide grants to partnerships between higher education institutions and high-need local education agencies (LEA).

Not surprisingly, the [American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education](#) “celebrated” [this proposed legislation](#), which also would support a variety of educator preparatory, retention, and mentoring programs if they incorporate a one-year residence in the high-need LEA and a three-year obligation to that district upon graduation.

Many public and private universities have progressive partnerships with their local school districts that promote the clinically based approach and advance the educational mission for all of the schools involved in the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary interconnections. Institutions like Butler University — which have longstanding partnership arrangements with area school districts — consider clinical practice to be a hallmark of their teacher education programs because it allows teaching interns, their college professors, and school-based teachers to work together as part of teams to ensure that the student interns can easily learn to blend theory and practice.

Maybe that’s why Butler’s placement rate for education majors is 100 percent.

As the [NCATE Blue Ribbon panel recommendations](#) imply, however, for many public and private institutions, adopting more clinical practice will be like doing a 180-degree turn. Granted, some teacher preparation programs are more advanced and are already accelerating the next turn in best practices.

Over the last few years, Butler — in partnership with the [Indianapolis Public Schools](#) (IPS) — has transformed the scope of its cooperative relationship, and thereby enhanced the current and possible impact.

With our [College of Education](#) squarely in the lead, the [Butler-IPS Partnership](#) connects all of Butler's six colleges and our student academic service programs with IPS students from pre-school through college — that's P-20. The new [Butler University Lab School](#) is a magnet school for pre-school through fifth grade. This year, we have pre-school and first grade, and we will add a grade each year for the next four years. Through a Memorandum of Understanding, the Lab School principal's salary is paid half by Butler and half by IPS. The Lab School provides high-quality education for its students and extensive clinical practice for Butler students.

We also have an MOU establishing a mutual connection between Butler and [IPS Shortridge Magnet High School for Law and Public Policy](#). In addition to providing clinical practice venues, this innovative arrangement connects middle and high school faculty with University faculty for curricula development, faculty development, and shared special programming.

This year we extended the partnership and access to quality higher education by launching an [Early College Program](#) that allows qualified Shortridge High School juniors and seniors to enroll in Butler courses offered on the Butler campus. Private and corporate grant funding helps cover costs for student tuition and transportation to and from our campus.

To me, this twisting of public, private, and corporate resources turns educational partnerships and teacher preparation “right side up” and has us all working collectively toward the goal of increasing the percentage of the US population that has access to quality higher education.