



Championing  
Stronger Pathways  
into Teaching

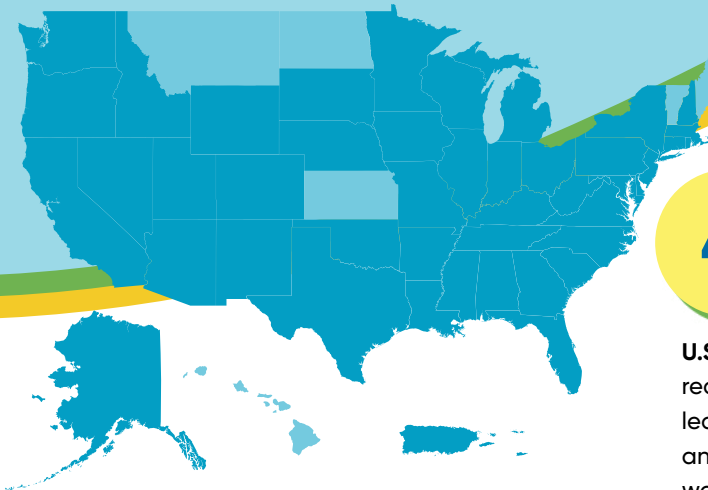


2025 IN REVIEW

# 10th Anniversary Edition

# Celebrating A Decade of Championing Stronger Pathways into Teaching

Since 2015, DFI has worked to ensure all students are taught by well-prepared teachers:



47

**U.S. states and territories** reached through our leadership, instructional, and policy and advocacy work

180+

**leaders of educator-preparation programs** supported through professional development and advocacy engagement

260+

**educator-preparation programs** served through redesigned learning experiences

110k+

**teachers** directly impacted through our programming



## Our Mission

Every child deserves to be taught by well-prepared teachers.

## Our Vision

A transformed education system that equips teachers with the tools to create rigorous, affirming classrooms—so that all children thrive.

## Our Work

We work across the system of education in partnership with teacher-educators, educator-preparation leaders, policymakers, and advocates to strengthen the preparation of future teachers.

# A Letter from our Executive Director



## Dear partners:

I remember countless moments back in the early days of DFI, asking, *what if?*

- *What if* teacher preparation wasn't as "stuck" as so many believed?
- *What if* we brought together teacher-preparation leaders who were energized by confronting the status quo – and set out to prove that transformation was possible in preparation?
- *What if* people could see teacher preparation not as an afterthought, but as a driving force for more sustainable pipelines of novice teachers and stronger student outcomes?

From the beginning, DFI was built on a simple but understated belief: education systems must be shaped by people who combine their deep empathy for others with a steadfast commitment to evidence of what works. That conviction guided our founding as a "third way" organization in 2015, and it defines us all the more today.

In 2025, we celebrated our 10th anniversary as an organization. Over the past decade, we've worked with practitioners, researchers, and changemakers from classrooms to statehouses to equip new teachers with the knowledge and skills that contribute to strong student outcomes. From supporting hundreds of educator-preparation leaders to reimagine their leadership in our year-long Impact Academy fellowship to moving the needle on instructional improvement with nearly 300 programs, we've shifted mindsets, beliefs, and practices to be grounded in evidence. We've shared those learnings through impact stories and data that have shaped policies and influenced public narratives about what's possible when aspiring teachers are ready to effectively teach from day one.

As we pause and look back, it's clear the field has evolved in profound ways. Educator-preparation programs are increasingly grounding instruction in evidence

of what works, better aligned with the needs of today's PK-12 classrooms, and being shaped by leaders who recognize that innovation and responsiveness are both possible and essential. In our "Hand in Hand, Place to Place" podcast, where we explore how teacher preparation has changed and where it's headed, our partners shared glimpses of key shifts over the last decade:

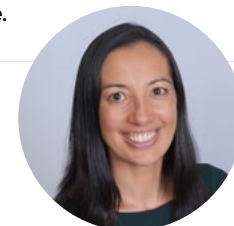
- A nationwide movement to adopt evidence-based instruction particularly in early literacy and mathematics, with EPPs strengthening coherence between research, coursework, and the instructional needs of today's classrooms.
- A growing embrace of paid, practice-based clinical experiences, such as teacher apprenticeships and residencies, that better prepare future teachers by ensuring high-quality, mentor-supported practice is accessible to all who aspire to teach.
- A shift from the mindset of "anyone can teach" in state policy toward the passage of new legislation and guidelines that actively invest in rigorous preparation, raise the floor on standards, and strengthen the long-term development and retention of the educator workforce.

Looking to the next 10 years, DFI will continue to support changemakers, ground our work in evidence, and amplify the ideas that stand to change the system to ensure more future teachers and students thrive.

Thank you for continuing to believe in us and in what's possible.

*With gratitude and resolve,*

**Valerie Sakimura**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DFI



# Our Focus Areas

We work on three, mutually-reinforcing levers across the system of teacher preparation.



## Redesigning Instructional Practice

Grounding teacher preparation in the science of how students learn.



## Building the Capacity of Leaders

Supporting and mobilizing leaders of teacher-preparation programs to build accessible, high-quality, and responsive pathways into teaching.



## Shaping Policy and Public Discourse

Collaborating with policymakers and advocates to enact and sustain policy conditions that enable future teachers and students to thrive.



# Redesigning Instructional Practice

Grounding teacher preparation in the science of how students learn.

From the beginning, we have worked shoulder-to-shoulder with teacher-educators to redesign how future teachers are prepared, anchored in a scientific understanding of how people learn. Our seminal 2015 report, *The Science of Learning*, translated cognitive science principles into practical teacher actions. Our 2019 report, *The Science of Early Learning*, followed, connecting these principles to literacy, numeracy, and agency for young children. These resources have been **accessed over a million times and shaped preparation practices across the globe.**

Our instructional support for teacher-educators is focused on redesigning programs to be practice-based and anchored in scientifically-informed instructional practices.



It ranges from **hands-on support for EPPs and PK-12 partners** in rural and urban communities – like the Learning Science Consortium in Maryland – to **multi-program collaboratives** – like the Tennessee High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) Network – that advance instructional quality at scale, ensuring that every aspiring teacher is ready to help students access deep and durable learning. We also provide a **library of tools and resources** that include instructional modules, anchor charts, and lesson internalization templates free-to-use for any educator interested in grounding instruction in a scientific understanding of how students learn.



2025 HIGHLIGHTS

# Redesigning Instructional Practice



## Grounding literacy instruction in evidence and HQIM

We've now supported **more than 40 programs** across **9 states** to ground preparation in **evidence-based reading instruction**. Case studies and impact data from our work reflect the broad range of our team's expertise and impact.

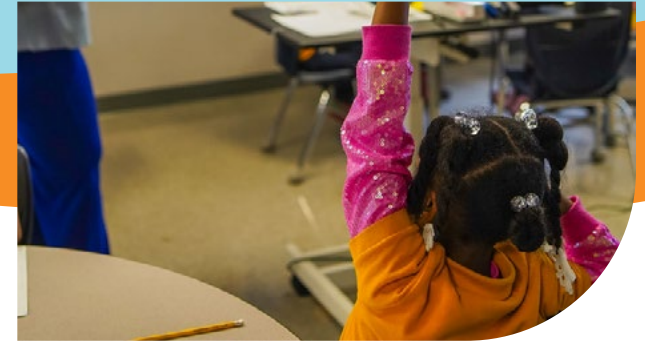
### States served through our instructional support in learning science, literacy, mathematics, and the use of HQIM:

Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia



## Fortifying the building blocks of mathematics

We wrapped the first year of our Early Numeracy by Scientific Design Network, a multi-EPP collaborative to ground math instruction in evidence, and rolled out **new early numeracy modules**. We're also supporting state and system leaders to take a more systematic approach to developing aspiring math teachers.



## Implementing learning science at scale

We continue to facilitate the third cohort of our Learning by Scientific Design Network, supporting EPPs and PK-12 partners to build and implement a **shared vision for instructional alignment** in support of new and aspiring teachers. Cumulatively, the network has served 14 EPPs across the country preparing 8,400 teacher-candidates annually.

### A preview of what's ahead:

We'll be releasing the second edition of our seminal report, *The Science of Learning*, in spring of 2026, pulling in updated research on best practices in translating cognitive science to instructional practice.



# Building the Capacity of Leaders

Supporting and mobilizing leaders of teacher-preparation programs to build accessible, high-quality, and responsive pathways into teaching.

Since our founding in 2015, we've understood that transforming teacher preparation requires working closely with program leaders. Leaders set the vision for what teachers know and are able to do to empower every student. It takes both individual change efforts and collective action to shape the systems in which our future teachers are readily prepared.

Through our **Impact Academy fellowship**, we equip cohorts of leaders from across the country with the resources and support to **make instructional quality a priority in**



**their programs.** We support the **nearly 200 alumni of our fellowship to champion pathways into teaching that are affordable, high-quality, and innovative and responsive** to their communities.

Together, these leaders are not only improving teaching and learning in their own communities but elevating the bar for preparing teachers nationwide.



2025 HIGHLIGHTS

# Building the Capacity of Leaders



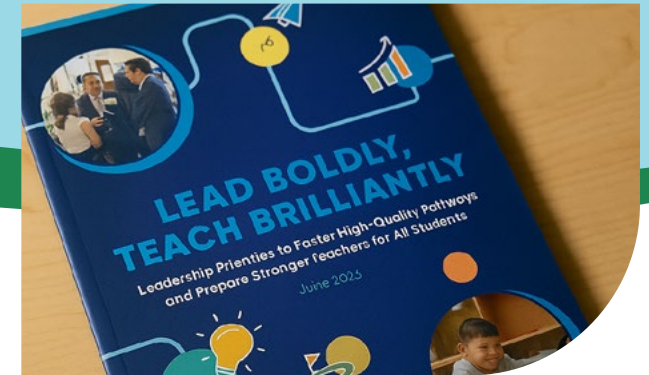
## Welcoming our 10th leadership cohort

We welcomed our **10th cohort of Impact Academy fellows**, a group of 18 educator-preparation deans and directors across pathways and geographies who are building a stronger workforce of future educators.



## Fueling leaders' innovation and responsiveness

We celebrated our **4th Leadership Collaborative Convening**, which brought Impact Academy alumni together to collaborate and problem-solve on the issues that teacher preparation is best positioned to address, from how to prepare aspiring teachers to engage with AI to advocating for policies that strengthen teachers pipelines.



## Marking a decade of leadership-driven change

We codified learnings from our first nine leadership cohorts in our **first leadership impact report**, *Lead Boldly, Teach Brilliantly*, outlining three key priorities that leaders can embody to enact and sustain change.

### A preview of what's ahead:

We're mobilizing our leadership network to shape the conditions that foster a future-ready educator workforce, including a working group focused on ethical and effective use of artificial intelligence in teacher preparation and the forthcoming launch of a new fellowship that supports and empowers mid-level educator-preparation leaders.



# Shaping Policy and Public Discourse

Collaborating with policymakers and advocates to enact and sustain policy conditions that enable future teachers and students to thrive.

Our first policy report in 2017, *From Chaos to Coherence*, examined the fragmented state of teacher preparation data and identified the most salient opportunities for coherence and quality. Since then, DFI has become a **trusted national voice that state and federal leaders turn to for strengthening instructional quality and the educator workforce.**

Grounded in the communities where we work, our policy work has:

- **Convened and mobilized programs across the country through coalitions** like the Aspiring Teachers as Tutors Network, National Registered Apprenticeship in Teaching EPP Collaborative, and the Tennessee Ed Prep Impact Coalition to ensure policies are directly informed by the day-to-day realities of the programs they seek to guide;
- **Produced field-defining resources** such as the federally-approved National Guideline Standards for Registered Apprenticeships in Teaching;



- **Advanced bicameral, bipartisan legislation in Congress** to prioritize high-quality instructional practice in teacher preparation; and
- **Shaped public understanding and policy decisions on what it takes to ensure all students are taught by well-prepared teachers** by partnering with media and nearly 100 advocacy organizations.

We've spent time in classrooms, communities, and EPPs across the country listening, learning, and translating insights into practical guides and compelling public narratives. These stories have influenced public discourse on what it takes to strengthen teaching and learning through multimedia content, op-eds, media coverage, podcasts, webinars, and reports that elevate lessons from the field. These efforts are addressing misconceptions about the field of teacher preparation and reshaping how stakeholders understand the role of teacher preparation in strengthening the educator workforce.



2025 HIGHLIGHTS

# Shaping Policy and Public Discourse



## Championing policy priorities for supporting future teachers with federal lawmakers

We mobilized 40 leaders in our network for a Hill Day in Washington, D.C. this past June, coordinating approximately 50 meetings with their respective congressional offices. Leaders advanced a core set of policy priorities to support future teachers.



## Securing public investments to transform teaching and learning across communities

We conducted advocacy that led to policy change in 15 states, ranging from increasing the affordability of teacher pathways to embedding effective instructional practice in preparation. Examples include the passage of House Bill 2 in Texas, an \$8.5 billion public education investment, and Louisiana's implementation of Registered Apprenticeships in teaching.



## Providing policy solutions for accessible, high-quality pathways

We released *Pathways that Deliver*, a comprehensive framework that provides case studies and concrete policy actions for philanthropic and policy leaders to adopt in their own contexts.

### A preview of what's ahead:

On the heels of our new policy framework, we're working in close partnership with leaders, practitioners, and advocacy partners to produce state-specific action guides that tailor our recommendations to individual state contexts.

# Our Supporters

We are deeply grateful for the generosity of those who have supported our work throughout the last 10 years.



# Our Partners

We have deeply valued working with hundreds of EPPs across the country that are strengthening pathways into teaching in the communities they serve. These include, but are not limited to:





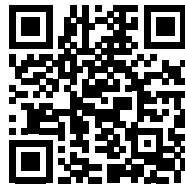
## Support our Work

For a decade, DFI has helped transform how teachers are prepared – through deep instructional partnerships, leadership development, and policy influence.

If you're seeking to invest in lasting change efforts and partner with an organization that delivers high-impact results, we invite you to learn more about supporting our work.

Click the button below or scan the QR code to support DFI today.

Support DFI →



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