



# Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner  
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## Reforming Teacher Preparation Programs

Over the past few weeks, I have attended several meetings that, on the surface, do not seem related but are very much connected.

I serve on the [National Assessment Governing Board](#), which oversees the nation's report card – the National Assessment of Educational Progress ([NAEP](#)). We had our quarterly meeting recently, and there were two presentations that caught my interest.

The first presentation related to the changing [demographics](#) in our nation. Over 90 percent of the population growth in our country in the past 10 years has been in ethnic minorities. For the first time in our history, the majority of births this past year were to minority populations. The nation's demographics are shifting so that by 2025, the majority of school-age children will be minorities. There are many positives about this data; however, there are concerns that minorities often also have large percentages of poverty, and poverty is a strong indicator of lower performance on state and national assessments.

The second presentation that piqued my interest was an analysis of the demographic change on the NAEP scores over the past 30 years. Our schools have done a tremendous job over the past 30 years. All groups of children – white and non-white – have increased NAEP performance by as much as 20 to 30 points over the past 30 years. However, the overall NAEP has moved only a couple of points.

In statistics, this is called [Simpson's Paradox](#). The paradox is that all groups have improved significantly, but due to changing demographics and increasing percentages of students in poverty and non-white categories, the NAEP overall average has not increased as much as individual groups.

This has tremendous implications for teacher preparation programs. While our teachers have done a terrific job over the past three decades in raising achievement of all children, the challenges are going to continue to be more difficult. Students with special needs such as disabilities and language barriers are going to require a significant change in the way teachers are prepared. ALL teachers need training and support in diagnosing and meeting the needs of a growing diverse population. Our teacher preparation programs and certainly our professional development programs must adapt to the challenges.

The next meeting I attended was the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation ([CAEP](#)). This group is recommending new standards for the accreditation of teacher preparation programs. The group had the same conversation as did the NAGB board. Given the changing demographics of our nation's children, there are tremendous implications for change in the way schools of education prepare our nation's teachers.

Over the coming months, I will keep readers informed about the progress of the CAEP standards. These standards have a direct impact on Kentucky schools of education and our licensure system. Our Kentucky teachers and teacher preparation programs have done tremendous work over the past 20 years in improving student performance in Kentucky. However, just like the rest of the nation, our demographics are changing.

Our students are bringing more challenges to the classroom than ever before. It is imperative that our P-12 systems work very closely with teacher preparation programs to provide prospective teacher candidates with clinical experiences and training that prepare them for the children they will be teaching. Our state and national economies are very much dependent on our ability to ensure that children of poverty and children with learning challenges are prepared for college and careers.

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