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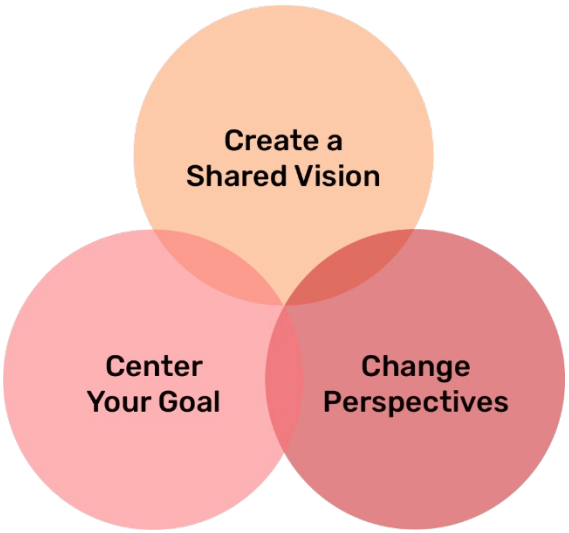
Narrative Shift Framework

The Groundwork for Policy Change in Teacher Preparation

Narratives are collectively held values or beliefs that influence how people think, feel, and talk about a topic. **"Narrative Shifts" replace old narratives with new ways of thinking, bridging the gap between current policy and your envisioned policy goal**. The ways we define problems or possibilities inform the ways policies are designed. Therefore, changing the narratives around what is possible in teacher preparation can help build momentum for productive, supportive policies that strengthen and unify the system. New narratives can frame paid clinical practice as a comprehensive driver of high-quality preparation, educator effectiveness, and student success. Use this framework and accompanying tools as a guide to shift your narrative landscape, whether you are unifying a state or planning a faculty meeting.

Principles

As you develop or pursue new policies, consider these principles to ground your narrative efforts in community, shared goals, and the future you hope to create.



1. Understanding Dominant Narratives
2. Changing the Conversation
3. Taking Action

Process

Starting from your existing strengths and community, use these steps to bring your policy goals to life. This process outlines the trajectory of how a new narrative can take shape, spread, and create opportunity for real policy and structural change.

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Narrative Shift Principles

Create a Shared Vision

Systems change in teacher preparation cannot be accomplished in isolation. Even a group of like-minded people or organizations is not enough to strategically move a narrative — **transformation requires a shared vision**. Bringing together representatives from schools, districts, preparation programs, unions, state education agencies, and more to reimagine teacher preparation offers multiple benefits. First, varied points of view strengthen the narrative —contributors identify potential blind spots, uplift compelling stories that inform effective policy, and ensure the new system works for everyone. Second, numbers matter. Building a network unified by a shared vision is crucial for spreading new narratives and policy initiatives. Each arm of your network has their own specific audiences who can engage with your shared narrative. Finally, **consistent messaging shapes public discourse and drives broader acceptance of your ideas**. **When multiple, varied sources communicate the same vision to an audience, clear policy solutions emerge and a path to change becomes clear.**

Center Your Goal

A successful new narrative contains a goal that is clear to the audience. One way to ensure this, whether in crafting or sharing your narrative, is to **anchor your message in your policy goal rather than a refutation**. Most of the engagement with your new narrative will not be in face-to-face conversations, so the basic policy goal should be easily understood without further explanation. Spending your limited airtime pushing your policy goal, versus the ideas you do not want to linger on, will bring your new narrative to the forefront of public discourse. It can be tempting to go the route of "I know what you may be thinking…" or "many people mistakenly believe…," but **dwelling on ideas that go against your goal may inadvertently reinforce those ideas in your audience**. In other words, **your new narrative should focus on what you are shifting *to*, instead of *from*.** There will be mental roadblocks that will need to be addressed, but these are better discussed in face-to-face conversations (*see our Back Pocket Conversation Planner*) and not in your headlines and broader messaging. True change happens by *replacing* the dominant narrative with one of action and progress.

Change Perspectives

Existing dominant narratives can be comprised of and reinforced by pre-conceived knowledge, tradition, or myths, and can be difficult to change. Often in the work of systems change, the biggest hurdle is challenging the mindset that change is not possible. **The purpose of changing a dominant narrative is ultimately to change perspectives.** In fact, a new narrative typically is a change of perspective, showing people a new way to think about an issue, a group, or a system. This is important to keep in mind as a narrative crafter because **if you want a new destination, a new perspective is required**. In other words, a change of narrative is what bridges the gap between the current policy and your envisioned policy goal. A new mindset of hope and excitement can pave the way for new teacher preparation policy.

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Narrative Shift Process

Keep in mind the guiding principles of creating a shared vision, centering your goal, and changing perspectives. To develop your own narrative, follow along with our tandem resources, *Narrative Shift Brainstorm Chart* or *Facilitation Deck*.

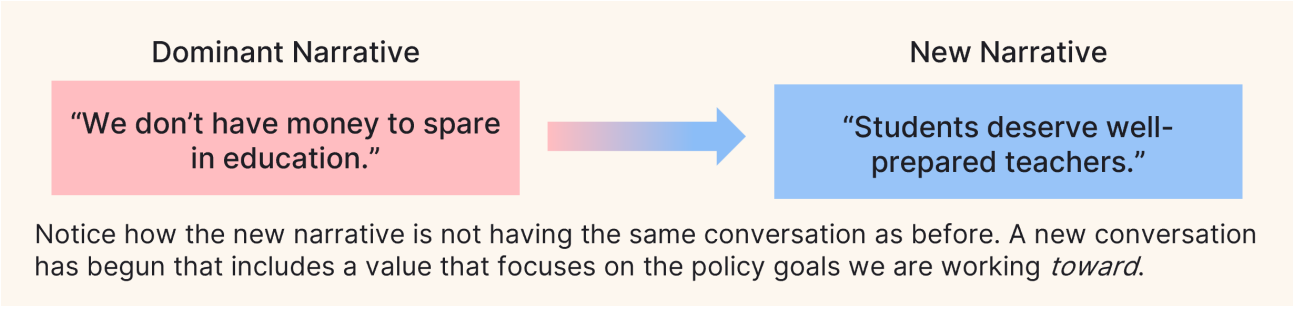
Understanding Dominant Narratives

Before crafting a new narrative to create change in your teacher preparation ecosystem, it's important to understand the dominant narratives around your topic. **Rhetorically analyzing your topic, including common knowledge, language, and misconceptions, helps determine what we are changing *from* to the goal we are working *toward.*** This analysis also informs what we should avoid in messaging. When researching, consider the true meaning and goals behind these dominant narratives to fully understand the context of the conversation.

In addition to understanding the current conversations surrounding the topic, it's important to understand who is having these conversations, who is affected by existing narratives and policies, and who already shares your perspective and would be willing to work with you to develop and share your message.

Changing the Conversation

The next step is to **replace the dominant narrative(s) with a new narrative** that prompts a mindset shift in your audience to enact meaningful change in the teacher preparation system.



Notice how the new narrative is not having the same conversation as before. A new conversation has begun that includes a value that focuses on the policy goals we are working *toward*.

When crafting this new narrative, remember that there is great strength in your community. Work with your collaborators to build a goal and accompanying narrative that can shift your audience's perspective. Ask yourselves, "what do you ultimately wish to accomplish within the teacher preparation ecosystem?" Dream big, be future oriented, and most of all, be specific. Consider what circumstances need to change and what mental bridges your audiences need to reach your new policy goal. **Your new narrative should be succinct, centered in your clear goal, value-based, and easy to repeat and share with others.** Also consider related narratives that can be released in tandem that bolster your cause and help people understand the new perspective.

To prompt this broad shift in perspective, build a system of stories around your goal-driven narrative. Stories are a tool to change minds and consequently change the narrative, strengthening your messaging through the element of human connection. With your community, identify who has stories or data to share that support your policy goals.

Who can speak to the benefits of your proposed plan, or who can speak to the consequences of existing structures that need to change? Storytellers could be school leaders, aspiring or veteran teachers, even P-12 students. Check out our *Storytelling Planner* to build a system of stories that support your narrative and our *Narrative & Data* resource to consider what data can build the case for your policy goal alongside your narrative.

Taking Action

While the work of changing the narrative ecosystem is ongoing, once you have a clear, succinct, and goal-oriented narrative the next steps are to grow your network, spread the word, and take action.

First, **how can you grow and build upon your structures of community, connection, and communication?** The goal is to maintain momentum, grow your "supporters," and use the political will you have garnered to prompt desired policy shifts. These structures can vary based on context and can expand as you grow your reach; some examples include communities of practice, recurring meetings across institutions or teams, and newsletters. Next, lean on your network to spread your narrative. **Who can be mobilized to discuss and share your message?** Each member of your community has connections that go beyond the immediate network — use this to spread your message in creative and personal ways! Finally, **think about what actions your community and your audience can take to advance your goals.** Contact legislature, hold meetings with potential partners, develop campaigns around your goal — anything that amplifies your message and brings it closer to becoming the logical next step in policy. When communicating with leaders, think about what materials you can create from your stories, messages, and evidence that can be used as guidance and reference for those who are enacting change. These can include sample legislation, white papers, brochures, commercials, PowerPoint presentations, and more.

Narratives are a powerful force of change. **Through these principles and processes, your new narrative can change the conversation and shape the future of teacher preparation.**

To explore more resources on Narrative Shift, visit Prepared To Teach's Guided Toolkit, Narrative Shift: The Groundwork for Policy Change.