PREPARED TO TEACH

Narrative & Data

Translating Voices into Public Policy

One person's voice is powerful—a chorus of voices is all the more impactful. **When systematically gathered and documented, lived experiences can drive meaningful change and influence how policy is framed and strengthened.** Uplifting common experiences communicates a broader context that reveals system-level insights. These insights can help craft narratives that build the case for investment in high quality teacher preparation, such as paid yearlong clinical practice models. An overarching narrative, individual stories, and a range of data can all work together to drive policy that ensures high quality teacher preparation is accessible and sustainable.

From Stories to Shared Understanding

Simply presenting numbers or data does not guarantee an audience will arrive at your desired conclusion. **The proof points found in datasets help create your narrative to drive change by establishing a fuller picture, revealing one person's experience as part of a larger, interconnected, story.** For example, an aspiring teacher may have the individual worry about paying for their living expenses while student teaching, but a larger dataset can show that worry is held by many other aspiring teachers across programs. A single data point is one limited experience and could be understood as outside of the norm, while a dataset and a narrative can work in tandem to communicate a shared experience of a need for change. These insights create a call to action that mobilizes multiple spheres of education and educator preparation to band together to create a system-level solution, such as paid yearlong clinical practice.

Garnering the Will to Act

How you frame facts and figures within your narrative influences how your audience will react. **Communicating insights from data through a narrative or story helps audiences understand the information, which can garner political will and drive action toward your goal.**

When brainstorming what types of data will be most effective, consider your specific audience, their motivations, and what they might respond to. Building a case for a legislature? Surface broad financial and societal impacts. Talking to a school principal? Focus on student outcomes or teacher experiences. Your overarching narrative can stay consistent across audiences, but you may emphasize different ideas or highlight different datapoints and stories depending on who you are communicating with. **A well-crafted narrative leads listeners to a change in mindset, rather than leaving your message up to interpretation.** For more information on how to craft narratives, check out our *Narrative Shift Framework*.

Uplifting Community Voices

Look to your local context to find compelling and relevant information for your narrative. Data, and the stories they reflect, can be found anywhere—but the closer to home the better. **Consider all of the ways people's experiences in your context can be heard and weaved into a larger picture that supports your narrative and policy goals.** Whether

your organization is just beginning to gather information or already has systems in place for ongoing data collection, review this sample list of data types that can provide support to build the case for funding paid clinical practice in your context.

Types of Data to Collect:

Data Types	Examples
Surveys	Financial surveys, program experience surveys, and related instruments.
Interviews	Qualitative interviews from teacher candidates, teachers of record, P-12 students and their families, principals, districts, program leadership, etc.
P-12 Student Outcomes	By subject area, social emotional progress, suspension rates, SPED referrals, etc.
Teacher Logs	Documentation of how time is used co-teaching, planning, time spent working outside of school, etc.
Demographics	Students, teacher candidates, teachers of record, etc.
Teacher Preparation Program Numbers	Recruitment, enrollment, and completion rates in teacher preparation programs—teacher residencies, apprenticeships, fast track, traditional student teaching.
Teacher Retention Data	Salaries, school vacancies, school turnover, teachers leaving the profession, etc.
Secondary Data	District, state, and federal trends regarding demographics, retention, outcomes, etc.

The list goes on! Keep your eyes open for all the potential opportunities you can collect information in your context. **Think about existing data you can draw from and new opportunities to collect data directly relevant to your goal and narrative.** If you don't yet have proof points in your own context, look outward! Are there schools, districts, or states that have accomplished goals similar to what you aim to achieve? Point to them as evidence of possibility and success.

Example: Building the Case Through Data & Narrative

Data collected through *Prepared To Teach's Financial Burden Survey* shaped a national narrative advocating for paid residencies by transforming individual stories of hardship into shared evidence that strengthens the case for funded clinical practice. The survey, administered to aspiring teachers during their preparation, is designed to provide a comprehensive view of a teacher candidates' lived experiences and key drivers of financial anxiety.

The figures below showcase both quantitative and qualitative data on a national dataset of aspiring teachers' financial burdens. **The graphs provide a bird's-eye view of common financial realities; the quotes ground those graph values in real human experiences.**

Figure 1: Aspiring Teachers' Level of Difficulty for Unexpected Expenses (in Percentage)

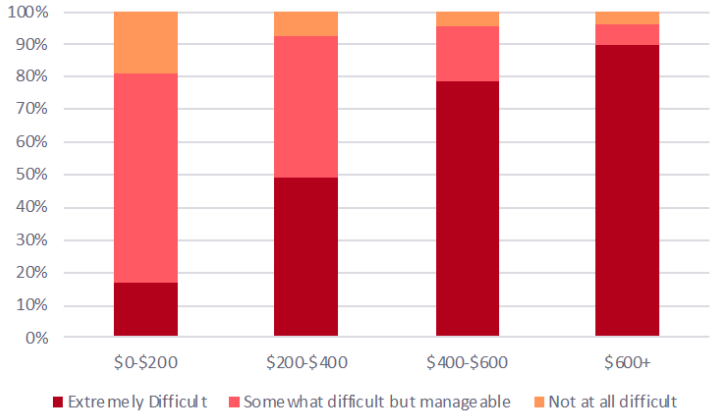
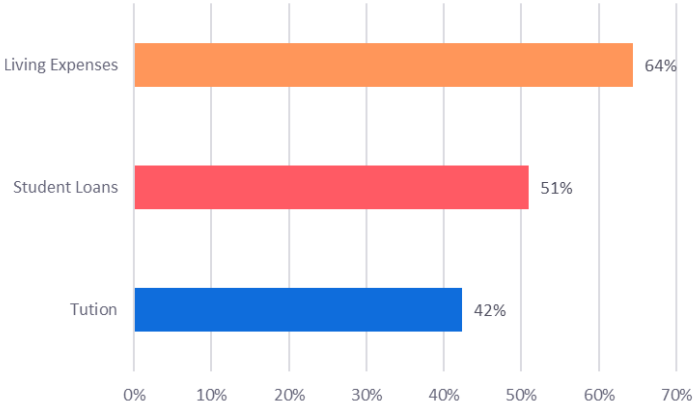


Figure 2: Levels of Financial Anxiety "TO A GREAT EXTENT or TO A VERY GREAT EXTENT" on paying living expenses, student loans, and tuition (in Percentage)



"I work 3 jobs while finishing up school in order to pay bills. Luckily, one of my jobs relates to my field of study, but I have struggled this past year to make ends meet. The university told me I couldn't have other jobs, but I had no choice."

"All student teachers need a stipend for the work that we do. It is unreasonable to expect to produce diverse educators with vast amounts of professional experience without ensuring equitable funding for all students."

"I feel like I could have given my students an even better experience if I was just able to focus on student teaching. I lost sleep at times because of my job and working past when I needed to be in bed to get a good night's sleep."

Source: Aspiring Teachers' Financial Burden Survey: Spring 2024

The voices of these aspiring teachers contribute to a narrative that advocates for teacher candidates to be paid during their clinical practice. This framing from Prepared To Teach and other institutions who have administered this survey, allows audiences to consider the broader implications of paying teacher candidates and instills a sense that there are actionable steps to achieve a worthwhile goal. Weaving this data into a narrative accomplished various policy goals since its inception in 2019:

- → Built the case for statewide residency stipends for teacher candidates in Colorado.
- → Prompted new public investments in teacher residencies in New Mexico.
- → Motivated tuition reductions and curriculum redesigns across institutions who administered the survey to their populations.

The strongest policies are shaped by the voices of the people they affect. How might your organization collect and leverage data to inform narratives and enact meaningful change in the teacher preparation landscape?

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