

Institutional Navigation Map

A practical map for understanding the structures, people, policies, and informal dynamics that shape what is possible in teacher education.

Why this matters

Strong pedagogy alone does not prepare teacher educators for governance, accreditation, workload, budgeting, partnerships, hiring, policy mandates, or organizational politics. Institutional navigation is part of the professional repertoire of teacher education.

1. Name the issue you are trying to move

Examples: revise a course sequence, change a clinical requirement, strengthen a partnership, secure resources, alter an assessment, create a new role.

2. Map the formal system

Question	What applies here?	Who/what controls it?	What do I need to learn?
What policy or accreditation requirements shape this?			
What governance body must approve or review it?			
What workload, budget, staffing, or scheduling realities matter?			
What school/district/partner agreements matter?			
What data, documentation, or evidence will be required?			

3. Map the informal system

Who has influence even without formal authority?

Who understands the history behind the current arrangement?

Who is likely to support the change? Who may have legitimate concerns?

What institutional priority, culture, or hierarchy is shaping the conversation but is not written down?

Where might relationships matter as much as formal procedure?

4. Determine the kind of move needed

Move	When it may fit	My situation
Work within	Use an existing policy, committee, procedure, or resource more effectively.	☐
Build a coalition	The issue crosses roles, programs, schools, departments, or authority levels.	☐
Push against	A structure actively undermines learning, equity, or program quality and requires challenge.	☐
Sequence the change	The idea is sound, but timing, approval, relationships, or capacity are not yet aligned.	☐
Reframe	The proposal needs to connect more clearly to institutional priorities, evidence, or shared concerns.	☐

5. Equity check

How do institutional structures distribute opportunity, voice, resources, workload, recognition, or risk in this issue?

6. Navigation plan

First person I need to talk with:

Formal process I need to understand:

Coalition or relationship I need to build:

Constraint I need to plan around:

Next feasible action:

Navigation is not capitulation

Understanding a system is not the same as accepting it. Effective teacher educators learn when to work within structures, when to build coalitions, and when to push for change.

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