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Critical Reflection and Professional Accountability: One Team's Experiences at the Teach to Lead Summit

By [Jori S. Beck](#) and [Rosemary Q. Flores](#)

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We were thrilled to be accepted to participate in the first-ever topical [Teach to Lead Summit on Teacher Preparation](#), held November 2-4 in Washington, DC. Our team worked on a state-funded project that focuses on recruiting high school and undeclared college students of color to education called [Abriendo Caminos: Opening Pathways for Students of Color to the Teaching Profession](#). Our participants included one active teacher, Cynthia Chavez; one undergraduate preservice teacher, Marcus Jackson; a doctoral student and assistant professor, Tonya Walls; and the two of us: Rosemary Q. Flores, a family engagement specialist, and Jori Beck, a teacher preparation representative. The purpose of attending the summit was to further develop our project, and we were provided with ample opportunities from both internal and external critical friends for this work.

Teach to Lead is a federal initiative with the aim to lift up teacher leaders, and one mechanism for this work is convening summits and leadership labs across the country. Last month's teacher preparation summit was the first of its kind, developed by the U.S. Department of Education in partnership with AACTE and the American

Association of State Colleges and Universities. To participate, we had to submit an innovative idea for consideration in a competitive process that chose 17 teams from the pool of about 100 applicants.

As we joined the kick-off reception the first night networking with educators from other states and learning about their programs, we could feel the energy of like-minded people wanting to be of service for the benefit of students. The following morning, we went into the summit with sleeves rolled up ready to work. Prodded by the “logic model” activity that we were assigned, we quickly realized that the assumptions each one of us had about our team’s project were not aligned. We struggled to define how children’s quality of education, especially for children of color, would actually improve through our project. We had to take time to listen to each other and seek answers to questions we had. The logic model forced us to critically reflect on our goals, activities, and inputs through deep conversation. This logic model will also be useful to us in searching for additional sources of funding since many requests for proposals require the inclusion of a logic model.

In addition to prompting critical reflection, the summit highlighted the importance of professional accountability. All of the participants were current or aspiring educators, parents, and community members. There was no one outside of the field who was watching us and holding us accountable. Instead, we were pushed by our own teammates, as well as by our critical friend from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, Patrick Ledesma, to drive our own improvements.

We are very grateful for the opportunity to refocus our efforts with support from members of the education community. The summit was a reminder of how important this community is.

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