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STATE OF TEACHERS, TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION IN INDIA : POLICY MATTERS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Teachers, Teaching and Teacher Education Report for India (SoTTTER) is brought out biennially by the Centre of Excellence in Teacher Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences. SoTTTER-25 is brought out in collaboration with the Language and Learning Foundation.

1. Legislative Foundations and Evaluative Framework

The State of Teachers, Teaching and Teacher Education Report for India, 2025 (SOTTTER-25) reviews the structural and pedagogical shifts in the Indian teaching workforce. Policy has played an important role in professionalising teaching and improving quality and standards, and regulating the work of teachers and the preservice teacher education sector in India. This report is anchored to three historic educational and social policies that reached significant implementation milestones in 2025: fifteen years of the Right to Education (RTE) Act of 2009, ten years of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act of 2016, and five years of the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020. Together, these policies form the legal and normative parameters governing teacher qualifications, recruitment timelines, classroom pupil-teacher ratios (PTR), inclusive special education models, and professional working conditions. A special focus of SoTTTER 25 is the foundation period of schooling.

SOTTTER-25 employs a multi-state research design to evaluate these milestones. In addition to national dataset analysis (UDISE+ 2024-25 and Periodic Labour Force Survey [PLFS] (2024-25), the report incorporates primary data from the SOTTTER-25 field survey, which covered 499 schools (including standalone preschools and Anganwadis) across ten states: Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Odisha, Punjab, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh. It integrates a pre-service teacher education institution

(PSTE) study consisting of 53 teacher education institutions, 100 faculty members, and 786 student-teachers. It also draws on the Future LEARNS-2025 survey data from fifteen states.

2. Policy Directives for Teacher Recruitment & Deployment Benchmarks: RtE 2009 and NEP 2020

Teacher recruitment and school structures in India are governed by two distinct frameworks. The Right to Education (RtE) Act, 2009 provides a legally enforceable, statutory set of school-level metrics. Specifically, it mandates a school-level Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) of (making 30:1 for Grades 1 to 5 and 35:1 for Grades 6 to 8, requires a minimum of two teachers per school g single-teacher schools illegal), and mandates that middle schools deploy subject-specialist teachers for Science, Mathematics, Social Sciences, and Languages. The Rights of People with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 mandates provisioning of qualified special educators and to train all teachers and school staff to support inclusive education across levels of school education.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 introduces qualitative, equity-focused adjustments in addition to the RtE baselines. First, it targets a tighter PTR of 25:1 in socio-economically disadvantaged group (SEDG) areas to offset developmental gaps. Second, it restructures school organisation by advocating the School Complex Model—grouping pre-primary, primary, middle schools around a central secondary school to share specialised physical resources and teachers of physical education, art, music, and special education. Third, the NEP mandates rigorous, multi-stage recruitment criteria, urging states to look beyond simple state examinations by incorporating personal interviews and teaching demonstrations to assess pedagogical aptitude.

The **SOTTTER-25** report highlights several positive trends:

1. Improved working conditions for teachers with learning environments in two-thirds of government secondary schools reporting the presence of six of seven key teaching-learning parameters, which included: student displays (79% of schools), science labs (73%), libraries (67%), smart classrooms (64%), and use of computers for teaching and learning (63%).
2. Local Language Alignment and Integration: Across fifteen states surveyed, teachers showed high linguistic alignment with their classrooms, knowing the local languages and dialects spoken by their students. For example, in multilingual regions like Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh, several teachers spoke 3, 4, or even 5 of the local languages represented by their students.
3. Teachers with greater local connect: Approximately 68% of teachers teach in their home district. Furthermore, 35% live within a 20-minute walk of their school, and another 29% travel by two-wheeler and are only 5 to 20 minutes away. This is also indicative of reduced commute strain.
4. Structured Professional Development and Curricular Alignment: Comprehensive continuous professional development (CPD) has been scaled nationally via NISHTHA modules and DIKSHA platform.
5. The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) launched the 4-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP), mapping stage-specific pedagogical coursework directly to core domains in the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) to professionalize the incoming supply.
6. Cleaning Up Pre-Service Teacher Education: To enforce academic integrity in pre-service teacher education (PSTE), the NCTE instituted strict monitoring, including GPS tracking, geo-tagged infrastructure photographs, virtual inspections, and annual online performance appraisals mapping faculty PAN details. These measures successfully resulted in the derecognition of 2,962 non-compliant, low-quality institutions nationwide.

3. Macro Demographic Shifts (from SOTTTER-23 to SOTTTER-25)

A critical macro trend observed between SOTTTER-23 (which analysed 2021-22 UDISE+ data) and SOTTTER-25 (which analyses 2024-25 data) is a sharp demographic adjustment. Over the last five years, the total school student enrolment contracted by 15.5 million (falling from its peak of 265.24 million in 2021-22 to 232.89 million in 2024-25). Simultaneously, the teaching workforce grew by 0.6 million to 10.12 million overall. This has resulted in significant improvements in average PTR, but an accelerated privatisation and feminisation of the teaching force is also seen.

Table 1: Key Comparative Demographic & Structural Indicators

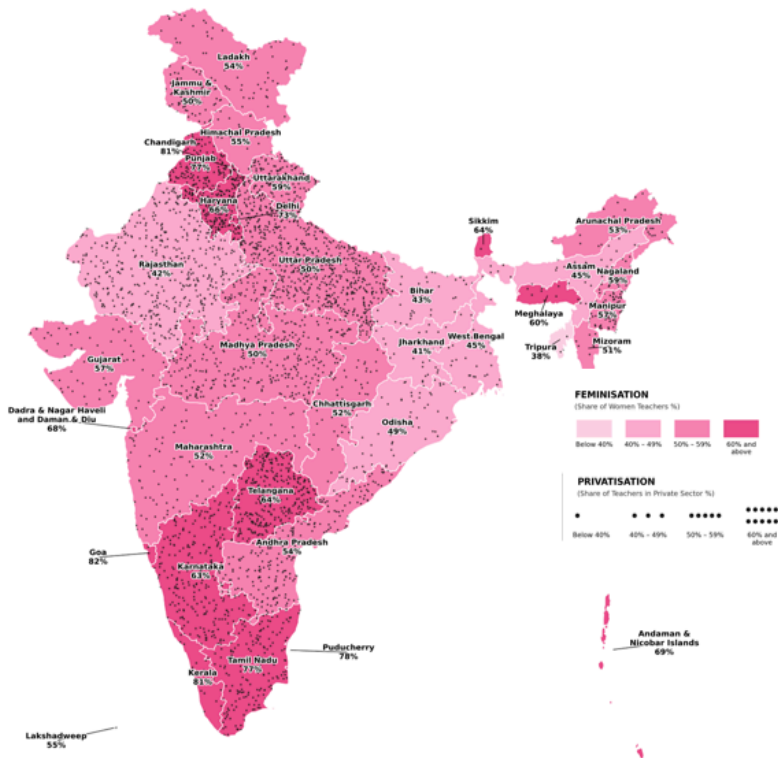
Demographic Indicator	SOTTTER- 23	SOTTTER-25	YoY Directional Shift
Total Teaching Workforce (Grades 1-12)	9.51 Million	10.12 Million	+0.61 Million (+6.4%)
Total Student Enrollment (Grades 1-12)	265.24 Million	232.89 Million	-32.35 Million (-12.2%)
National Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR)	28:1	23:1	Improved by 5 points
Share of Women Teachers (Feminisation)	51.0%	54.0%	+3.0 percentage points
Private Sector Share of Teaching Workforce	37.2%	41.0%	+3.8 percentage points

- **Feminisation of the Workforce:**

The share of women teachers nationwide has risen to 54% (up from 51% in SOTTTER-23). However, extreme spatial and regional imbalances persist: while urban areas are highly feminised (67% women), rural classrooms remain male-dominated with only 47% women teachers. In states like Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, and Tripura, women make up only 38% to 43% of the total workforce.

- **Privatisation Expansion:** The proportion of teachers employed in the private sector rose to 41% overall (with 39% in recognised and 1.5% in unrecognised private schools), reflecting a 3% point increase. Correspondingly, public-funded schools (state government, aided, and central society schools) witnessed a 3%

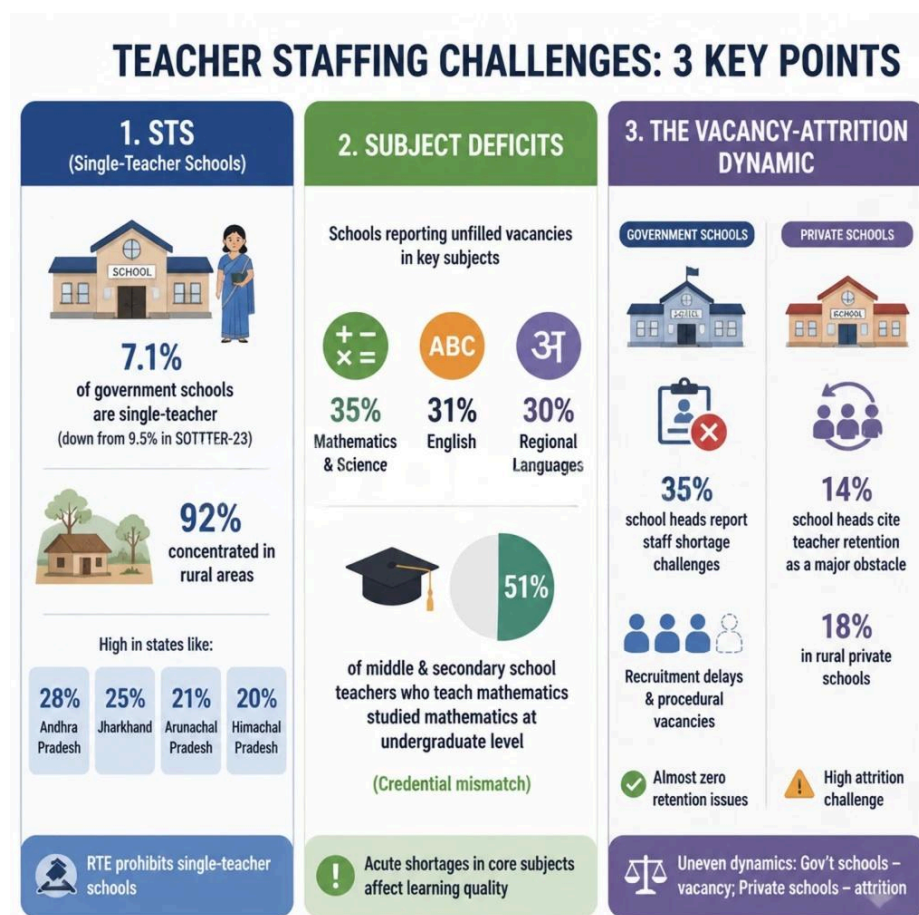
Figure: Feminisation and privatization in the teaching workforce in India.
Source: authors, based on UDISE_2024-25



point drop in their teacher share (now standing at 58% overall). Between 62-52% of the workforce is in the private sector in the states of Haryana, Puducherry, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Manipur and Uttarakhand.

4. Teacher Availability, Staffing Deficits, and Recruitment Hurdles

Although the average national PTR has settled at a highly favourable 23:1, macro averages mask severe regional and school-level staffing deficits. In public schools, Bihar (33:1) and



Jharkhand (41.5:1) are major outliers where pupil loads remain high, and 14% of government schools nationwide have a school-level PTR exceeding the RTE-mandated maximum of 35:1. The key staffing issues highlighted in the report include:

- Persistence of Single-Teacher Schools:** The RTE Act categorically prohibits single-teacher operations. SOTTTER-25 reveals that single-teacher government schools have decreased to 7.1% overall, compared to 9.5% in SOTTTER-23. However, 92% of these single-teacher schools remain concentrated in rural areas. In states like Andhra Pradesh (28%), Jharkhand (25%), Arunachal Pradesh (21%), and Himachal Pradesh (20%), single-teacher configurations are high.
- Acute Subject Deficits:** School heads report massive unfilled vacancies in core subjects. In the surveyed schools, 35% reported deficits in Mathematics and Science, 31% in English, and 30% in regional languages. Critically, only 51% of middle and secondary school teachers who teach mathematics actually studied mathematics at the undergraduate level, pointing to credential mismatches.

- **Uneven Public-Private Staffing Dynamics:** While government school heads struggle with recruitment delays and procedural vacancies (with 33% reporting staff shortage challenges), they face almost zero retention issues. Conversely, private schools can recruit quickly but suffer from high attrition, with 14% of private school heads citing teacher retention as a major operational obstacle, rising to 18% in rural private establishments.
- **Non availability of specialist teachers:** National availability of specialist teachers in primary schools remains critically low, with only 12% to 16% of government schools employing music/art teachers, 24% having physical education teachers, and less than 5% of schools nationwide utilising dedicated special educators. This severe staffing shortage is compounded by systemic regulatory gaps, including a complete lack of unified national qualification guidelines for music and art teachers, alongside an absence of institutional tracking for qualified special educators within the national school database.



5. Working Conditions: Infrastructure Gains and Pedagogical Stress

SOTTTER-25 registers substantial progress in basic school infrastructure, alongside rising pedagogical and administrative workloads that negatively impact teacher wellbeing:

- **Substantial Basic Amenity Gains:** Availability of drinking water and electricity is now reported to be nearly universal with 95% of schools reporting to having access. Digital and ICT Expansion has improved with the national internet availability in schools improving from 19% to 34%. Separate functional toilets for staff are now available in 77% of schools overall. This represents an extraordinary jump from SOTTTER-23 primary data, where only 33% of government schools and 46% of private schools had functional staff toilets. Nonetheless, standalone government primary schools remain worse off, with only 66% providing staff toilets.
- **Surging Multigrade Classrooms:** SOTTTER-25 reports a worrying surge in multigrade teaching configurations. Close to half (48%) of government primary schools operate as multigraded classrooms, which is a marked increase from the 38% recorded in SOTTTER-23. In contrast, only 26% of private primary schools utilise multigrade layouts. Multigrading reduces instructional time and places immense pressure on teachers trying to satisfy stage-specific learning objectives.
- **Administrative Overload:** Non-teaching workloads remain highly asymmetric. Among the government primary school teachers surveyed, 54% of rural and 47% teachers reported experiencing high administrative burdens (primarily related to data entry, Mid-Day Meal coordination, and other non-educational government duties), compared to only 15% of private primary school teachers.

The non-teaching duties are compounded by poor working conditions for government school teachers, with only 66% of schools having separate staff toilets, 48% operating as multigrade classrooms, and over 32% facing acute teacher and infrastructure shortages.

- **Implementing School Complex: State-Level Divergences:** The NEP envisages addressing staff availability as well as teaching learning conditions through the

implementation of the School Complex model. Currently this is highly fragmented and uneven across state administrations:

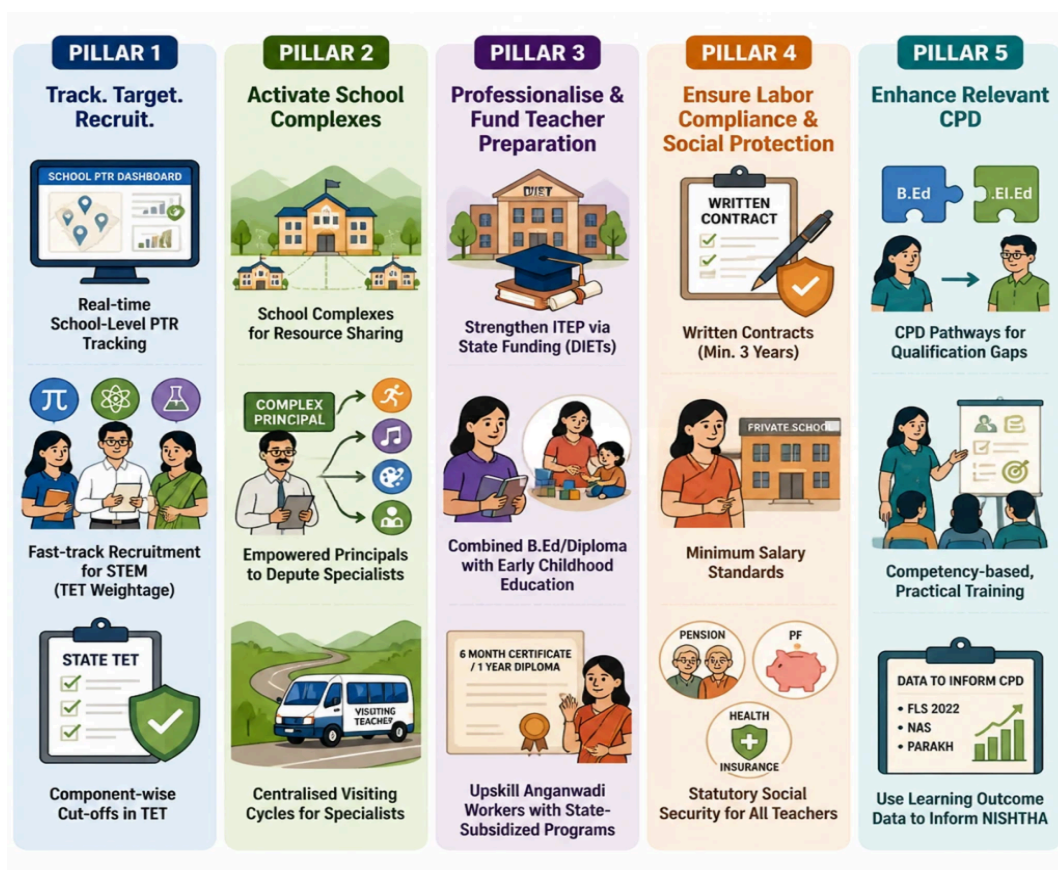
- **Himachal Pradesh** stands alone as the only state to issue formal School Complex guidelines (23.09.2025), granting complex principals the authority to depute teachers within the complex based on workload.
- **Karnataka** has integrated nearby secondary teaching duties into its 2026 recruitment rules, allowing cross-school deployment.
- **Maharashtra** limits sharing to sport/CWSN specialists at the cluster and block levels via its March 2024 resolution.
- **Telangana** maintains school complexes purely as clerical/administrative units for approving increments and leaves, with no classroom-sharing mechanism.
- **Uttar Pradesh** explicitly outlaws the movement of teachers between different schools within the same cluster.

6. Special Focus: Vulnerabilities in the Foundational Stage & ECE

A focal point of SOTTTER-25 is the Foundational Stage (incorporating 3 years of preschool/ECCE and grades 1 and 2). Despite the NEP 2020's strong emphasis on professionalising early childhood care, teachers in this sector remain highly casualised, under-credentialed, and economically vulnerable:

- **Severe Credential Deficits:** 62.8% of surveyed Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) have no professional qualifications in teaching. In private standalone preschools, 29.8% of teachers lack any teaching credentials. Only 20% of foundation stage teachers hold appropriate qualifications (such as a DPSE or NTT certificate).
- **Casualisation and Lack of Benefits:** Employment terms in the early childhood sector are remarkably fragile. While 51% of AWWs have 'regular' status with the government, they are classified as 'volunteers' rather than full-time employees and paid an honorarium. 28% of private preschool teachers operate with absolutely no written contract. Benefit eligibility is virtually non-existent: 68% of AWWs and 74% of private preschool teachers receive zero social security benefits (no Provident Fund, gratuity, pensions, or ESI health coverage).
- **Poor salary compensation:** The salary ranges for foundation-level teachers are severely restricted. The vast majority of AWWs (81.4%) and private preschool teachers earn between Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 15,000 per month. This low compensation model risks reinforcing teaching as a low-status, secondary-income profession.
- **Contractualisation in the Private Sector:** The overall precariousness of private sector compensation continues with contractual instability. For example in the preschool sector, 28.16% teachers operate with no written contract, while 36.89% have private long-term contracts, and 8.74% have yearly renewals. In private composite schools, 8.97% of teachers work without any written contract, 13.79% are on private long-term contracts, and 8.97% have contracts renewed on a yearly basis. This is compounded by an absence of benefits. A striking 74% of private preschool teachers receive absolutely no employment benefits (such as Provident Fund, gratuity, pensions, health coverage, or paid maternity leave).
- **Inadequate staffing provisions in government sector.** Some states have opened pre-school grades in schools, but have not made provisions for the addition of ECE teachers.

7. Policy Recommendations



To resolve the persistent teacher shortages, unequal deployment, and quality gaps, State Departments of Education should adopt the following five governance pillars:

Pillar 1: Systematise School-Level PTR Tracking & Targeted Recruitment

- Enforce automated, school-level PTR audits in real-time, focusing on rural and tribal pockets to dismantle the concentration of single-teacher schools (currently 92% in rural areas).
- Establish specialised fast-track recruitment cadres for STEM subjects (resolving the 49% mathematics mismatch) by giving up to 20-30% weightage to TET scores in final merit lists, mirroring successful models in Assam.
- Mandate component-wise cut-offs in State TETs to guarantee that teachers possess adequate language and basic numerical proficiency before entering classrooms.

Pillar 2: Activate School Complexes for Resource Sharing

- Rather than relying solely on Zilla Parishad school mergers (which are geographically impractical in hilly regions like Mizoram), states could actively develop the NEP's 'School Complex' model to share resources, including specialised teachers.
- Overrule restrictive state-level circulars (such as Uttar Pradesh's ban on teacher movement and establish a legislative framework modelled after Himachal Pradesh's 2025 guidelines. This must empower complex principals to dynamically depute specialised physical education, art, music, and special educators across schools.

- In high-density rural areas, utilise centralised 'visiting cycles' for special education teachers as seen in Gujarat and Odisha.

Pillar 3: Professionalise and expand state funding for teacher preparation for ECCE

- Extended pre-service teacher training by rapidly expanding state-funding for especially for the primary/ foundation stages, especially drawing on DIETs. The uptake of foundational-stage ITEP has been weak. Rather than stage-wise ITEP which leads to recruitment difficulties in states, combine foundation and preparatory to prepare primary teachers, with additional early childhood education. Offer early childhood education diploma or BEd.
- Develop mandatory, state-subsidized 6-month certifications and 1-year diplomas (DPSE) to upgrade the professional qualifications of the 62.8% of Anganwadi workers currently operating without any credentials.

Pillar 4: Establish Private Sector Labor Compliance & Social Protection

- Enforce baseline labour standards inside the private preschool and primary schooling sectors to curb the extreme casualization of young female teachers. Enforce written contracts of minimum 3-year durations to protect against arbitrary job losses.
- Mandate minimum salary scales and statutory social security benefits (pension, Provident Fund, and health insurance (including for government teachers) for all private school teachers (including pre-school), .

Pillar 5: Enhance Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Relevance and quality

- CPD Pathways for Qualification Gaps: In light of the 2023 Supreme Court ruling restricting primary teaching to DEIE holders, the government must design flexible continuous professional development (CPD) bridging and certification pathways for existing B.Ed holders wishing to transition to primary school teaching, and vice versa.
- Reform in-service teacher training programs by pivoting away from generic modules toward practical, competency-based strategies suited to local contexts, and responding to new and emerging needs of teachers. Incorporate diagnostic baselines from the Foundational Learning Study (FLS) 2022 as well as NAS/PARAKH learning outcomes data to inform NISHTHA modules.
- Institute calendarised of PD including short courses, multimedia resources, cluster meetings, mobile based learning forums.

This Executive Summary is being released on 5th September 2026, on the occasion of Teachers' Day in India. The full report will be released on 5th October 2026, on the occasion of International Teachers' Day. The first version of this executive summary was generated using Gemini Notebook from the SOTTTER-25 draft report and subsequently reviewed, revised and edited by the authors.

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partner. The Centre's overarching focus and agenda is improvement of teacher education in India, catalysing transformation through academic programmes, field action research, research, collaboration and advocacy.

Founded in 2015 the **Language and Learning Foundation** works in close collaboration with government systems to improve foundational literacy and numeracy learning at scale through strengthened teaching practices. LLF supports governments to strengthen how teachers are equipped and supported, through lesson design and classroom materials, continuous professional development, and academic mentoring that reaches teachers in their own classrooms. Across ten states, LLF has reached over 25.4 million children, directly improved outcomes for 1.7 million more, and strengthened the practice of 250,000 teachers and teacher educators.