September 2022

The State Education Standard

The Journal of the National Association of State Boards of Education

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Recruitment and Retention in Missouri
Preparing Pre-K Teachers
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Cover Photo Credit: iStockphoto
Long before the pandemic, teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention topped the list of NASBE members’ priorities for better information to guide state board policymaking and convening. The authors in this issue answer that call with diverse perspectives on policies affecting educators and the school systems where they work.

The issue begins with a bird’s-eye view of the national picture. The University of Pennsylvania’s Richard Ingersoll and colleagues have long tracked the trends confronting the workforce, which the pandemic may obscure or exacerbate. They ground the issue by encapsulating five trends. State boards with an eye on the long term will want to seek data that illuminate these trends in their states. Howard University dean emerita Leslie Fenwick details the lessons that emerge from her 50-state scan of the crazy quilt of policies that govern teacher preparation programs. To support their aim of a quality educator for each child, state leaders should ask pointed questions about the rising tide of alternative programs. The State Education Standard

The State Education Standard is published periodically by the National Association of State Boards of Education, 123 N. Pitt Street #350, Alexandria, VA 22314. Published by NASBE under Creative Commons license CC By-ND 4.0. ISSN 1540-8000. The opinions and views expressed in this journal do not necessarily represent those of NASBE.
News & Notes

With midterm elections looming, Senate and House Democratic leaders recently made significant progress on several priorities with implications for education, including disparate measures to revitalize the nation’s semiconducter industry, boost scientific research, address climate change, and strengthen consumer privacy. Committee leaders also unveiled a proposal on school nutrition, and U.S. Department of Education officials published school discipline guidance.

Global economic competitiveness bill becomes law. Following weeks of negotiations, Senate and House leaders set aside conference negotiations over a far-reaching economic competitiveness bill, opting to pass only the provisions to expand domestic production of semiconductors and update key federal science programs and activities. The new semiconductor and scientific research law, known as the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, will invest $50 billion in revitalizing domestic production of chips for electronic devices while also updating federal science programs at several agencies.

House Commerce Committee approves Data Privacy and Protection Act. In July, the House Commerce Committee approved the American Data Privacy and Protection Act (H.R. 8152, ADPPA) by a vote of 53-2. The measure would establish, for the first time, a comprehensive federal consumer privacy framework. Among other provisions, the bill would create additional data protections for children younger than 17, including a prohibition on targeted advertising, and would establish a Youth Privacy and Marketing Division at the Federal Trade Commission.

House leaders introduce child nutrition bill. House Education and Labor Committee Chairman Bobby Scott (D-VA), along with Representative Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), introduced a comprehensive proposal in July to reauthorize and update federal child nutrition programs. Dubbed the Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids Act (H.R. 8450), the proposed legislation is intended to expand student access to school meals by expanding the community eligibility provision so that more school districts can provide free meals and ensuring that children on Medicaid are automatically certified for free school meals. The bill also would increase access to nutrition programs during the summer months and provide greater support for school-based breakfast and lunch programs.

Department of Education releases new school discipline guidance. The U.S. Department of Education unveiled guidance in July to help K-12 state and district education leaders address long-standing disparities in discipline for students with disabilities. The guidance follows a 2018 Government Accountability Office report that found that students with disabilities, particularly students of color, face disproportionate rates of school discipline as compared with their peers. The guidance reemphasizes the requirements of Section 504 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act while highlighting best practices regarding implementation.

Thanks to Jamie Brandon and Reg Leichty at Foresight Law + Policy for this update.

Figure 1. Districts Offering Summer School Programs throughout the Pandemic (Percent)

Source: Melissa Kay Diliberti and Heather L. Schwartz, “Districts Continue to Struggle with Staffing, Political Polarization, and Unfinished Instruction,” Data Note (RAND, 2022). Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
State Board Voice

**Educator Mental Health**

In my second grade classroom this year, my students exhibited higher levels of anxiety, stress, and frustration than in previous years. After our first fire drill, students were sobbing, shaking, and expressing concerns that they would die or their backpacks would burn up. Staying calm and providing supports to meet these mental health needs took a toll on me as well. Stressors like these are resulting in higher than normal numbers of people retiring and leaving the profession. What is the path forward?

House Bill 301 would require the Delaware Department of Education to create a K-12 mental health program. The bill passed in 2022 and awaits the governor’s action. A synopsis states,

This Act increases student awareness of mental health by requiring the Department of Education, with the approval of the State Board of Education, to establish and implement statewide mental health educational programs for each grade, kindergarten through grade 12, in each school district and charter school in this State.

Annie Slease, Delaware’s director of advocacy and education for the National Alliance on Mental Illness and a 25-year classroom veteran, writes:

To effectively teach mental health literacy, we must first master it ourselves. Understanding the facts, acknowledging the stigma, and embracing help-seeking and self-care practices must begin with our education leaders. To do this, our educators need support. They need time. And they need to feel valued. The self-care and help-seeking behaviors included in mental health literacy must be prioritized by them, but also for them. This means administrators must embrace these concepts, too. All education professionals should experience the benefits of positive mental health through their own literacy and shouldn’t feel burdened doing so. They need incentive to develop this expertise. That could come with microcredentials in mental health training, increases in compensation for educators with that training, and Youth Mental Health First Aid as part of student-teacher preparation.

Megan Blanco, NASBE’s director of safe and healthy schools, recently wrote this outstanding piece: “Six Questions State Boards Should Ask About Student Mental Health.” I’d like to recast her questions a bit:

1. What existing policies, services, and funding streams address **student educator** mental health in our state?
2. What is the state of our **students’ educators’** mental health, and are there subgroup differences?
3. What partnerships can our board build that support **educator mental health**?
4. What mental health education do **students educators** receive?
5. How is our state building adult capacity to support **student educator** mental health?
6. What is our board doing to eliminate stigma and public misunderstanding about mental health?

Board members can initiate conversation on educator mental health and support policy that builds the system Slease described. This work also needs a place in educator preparation. Educators live at the intersection of policy, practice, and people. They are a critical resource who education leaders must nurture and protect. Do you know the state of educators’ mental health in your state? Now is the time to do this work.
Student Voice

Three Ways to Boost Student Engagement with State Boards

We are two of four student representatives selected to serve on the District of Columbia State Board of Education. We co-chair the Student Advisory Committee (SAC), attend all state board working sessions and public meetings, and sit on several state board committees. We believe student engagement plays a critical role in the success of education policy in our city and that meaningful engagement of students gives our state board a critical window on the state of schools and what policies are truly needed at a given time. We have three recommendations for other state boards that would like to increase student engagement in their work, as DC has.

Have at least one student member on the board. The DC state board has four openings for student members. To boost student representation from traditionally underrepresented groups in education policy, one slot is designated for a student who lives in or attends a school in the city’s Ward 7 or Ward 8. Student members are appointed for at least one year and have all the responsibilities of the elected state board members. This recommendation elevates student voices and gives stakeholders a better idea of student priorities. As student representatives, we not only bring personal experience to the table, we also bring the experience of our peers through what we hear daily in the halls of our schools. Student members can conduct outreach in a way that elected board members cannot: through talking casually to students in school.

Create a space specifically for student voices. The SAC is one of the state board’s committees, made up of about 40 students who meet bimonthly. The goal of the committee is to provide education agencies with student voice, advise the state board on resolutions and projects, and carry out specific projects that engage students across the District. In February 2022, the SAC published a citywide survey that focused on student experiences in school during the pandemic. This survey was made by students, for students. Based on the results, the SAC created recommendations to guide its work and that of the state board moving forward. Everyone should have their voice heard in the work of a board, but having a space exclusively designated for students is powerful. The SAC ensures that the information the state board receives is relevant to the current state of schools, and it increases students’ motivation to respond to outreach meaningfully.

Require (through bylaws) that the board engage with students before voting on resolutions. It is easy to promise that student engagement will occur, but the only way to guarantee continued inclusion of students is through its codification in board policies and practices. These bylaws should hold the board to high standards. Boards have—and should use—the ability to build relationships with students and student groups, who will then share their perspectives with the board. That can only happen when boards hold themselves to rigorous standards for student engagement.
The U.S. elementary and secondary teaching force in recent decades has changed significantly and in important, sometimes surprising ways. It has become far larger, far less experienced, less diverse by gender, and more diverse by race-ethnicity. And it remains unstable. Yet researchers, policymakers, and the public appear not to have much marked these trends, even the most dramatic ones.

When we embarked on exploratory research on the teaching force several years ago, we were surprised to discover these transformations.¹ Our data source was the U.S. Department of Education’s nationally representative Schools and Staffing Survey and its successor, the National Teacher Principal Survey, which collected extensive information from large samples of teachers from public, private, and charter schools in all states over the three-decade period from 1987 to 2018.² It is the largest, most comprehensive source of data on teachers in the U.S.

While our intent was simply to provide a bird’s-eye view of key developments, these trends raise significant questions. Why are they occurring, what are their sources, and what are the implications for education reform and policy? I will summarize five of the key trends we identified, along with some takeaways and questions for state boards of education and others involved in state education policymaking to consider.

1. Ballooning

The K-12 teaching force is one of the largest occupational groups in the United States. Moreover, over the past three decades, it has grown dramatically—and far faster than the student population. Although elementary and secondary student enrollment has risen 22 percent

Richard M. Ingersoll, Elizabeth Merrill, Daniel Stuckey, Gregory Collins, and Brandon Harrison

State policymakers looking to increase recruitment and retention should keep an eye on these long-term trends.
since the late 1980s, the number of teachers has grown 54 percent (figure 1).

One source of this dramatic growth in the teaching force has been class-size reduction, particularly at the elementary level, which has been a popular reform in some states. But a far larger factor has been the growth in particular fields and subjects. For instance, the numbers of math and science teachers grew by over 75 percent during this period—at least partly due to increases in the number of math and science courses required for secondary school graduation. Two other growth fields have been special education and foreign language teachers, which increased by 84 and over 100 percent, respectively. Another growth field has been elementary enrichment/elementary subject specialists, who teach only one subject such as art, music, physical education, computer science, or mathematics to different classes of elementary school students. These specialists increased by 146 percent. But the most dramatic growth field has been in English as a second language (ESL)/bilingual education, which jumped by a whopping 201 percent.

We have not yet uncovered all the factors responsible for the rapid increase in the number of teachers. But further investigation of the sources of this growth is warranted, given the broad implications. It is important to recognize that schools have been hiring more math, science, special education, ESL/bilingual, foreign language, and elementary enrichment/specialist teachers in response to what the public wants. These are high-demand fields. And while entirely beneficial for many students, this expansion has been costly, given that teacher salaries are a large portion of school budgets.

How much extra has the ballooning cost beyond what would have been necessary to simply keep pace with student enrollment increases? My colleagues and I made an approximate and conservative estimate that, from 1987 to 2018, the additional aggregate cost of salaries due to hiring teachers at a rate more than twice that of students was well over $45 billion. Our point is not that these increases were unnecessary, excessive, or ill spent. Our point is simply that the ballooning leaves us with sobering questions: How have school systems coped with such costs, how has this been paid for, and what will it mean for future increases in teachers’ salaries that reformers have proposed?
Greening could offset some of the increased payroll costs from ballooning.

2. Greening

Simultaneously, the number of beginning teachers has increased dramatically—a workforce “greening” made starker by retirements of veteran teachers. Most of these beginners are young, recent college graduates. However, a significant number are older, but inexperienced, beginning teachers who have made mid-career switches. For instance, in 2018 about 36 percent of new teachers in schools were over age 29, and about 15 percent were over 40.

The distribution of teachers by years of teaching experience is illustrated in figure 2. In 1987–88, the modal, or most common, teacher had 15 years of teaching experience under their belt. By 2017–18, the modal teacher was a beginner in their first year. In raw numbers, there are far more beginners than before. For example, in 1987–88, there were about 84,000 first-year teachers. By 2017–18, there were about 300,000.

On the one hand, it can be beneficial for schools to bring in new faculty. They can be a source of fresh ideas and energy. On the other hand, an increasing number of beginners coupled with a decreasing number of veterans can hamper students’ academic achievement by depriving them of the quality of instruction that experienced teachers can provide.

Greening also has large financial implications. An increasingly inexperienced teaching force is cheaper, as they tend to earn lower salaries. Thus greening could offset some of the increased payroll costs from ballooning. For instance, in 2016, the average starting salary for public school teachers with a college degree and no teaching experience was about $38,800; that same year, the average salary for veteran public school teachers with over 15 years of experience and a master’s degree was about $66,500.

3. More Female

Teaching has traditionally been female dominated, and despite the growth in other career options available to women, teaching has become surprisingly even more female. The proportion of female teachers increased from 66 percent in 1980 to over 76 percent in 2018 (figure 3). This change in the female-to-male ratio has not been caused by a decline in the number of males entering teaching—that...
number has grown by 29 percent since the late 1980s. But the number of female teachers grew over twice as fast during the same period, with the growth concentrated at the secondary level.

The reasons are unclear. Perhaps the increase has to do with the challenge of negotiating dual roles of homemaker and breadwinner—the fit between work and family life. Given that teachers have regular seasonal breaks and at least ostensibly early-ending work days, caring for family is sometimes thought to be more manageable for teachers than for those in many other jobs and careers. In turn, given the continuing disproportionate responsibility women are bearing for household labor and child rearing, this perceived workday structure may still be attracting women to teaching at disproportionate rates.

If the trend continues, 8 of 10 U.S. teachers may soon be female. A large percentage of elementary schools will have few, if any, male teachers. An increasing number of students may encounter few male teachers in either elementary or secondary school. Given the importance of teachers as role models and even as surrogate parents for some students, some will see this trend as a problem and a policy concern.

4. More Diverse by Race-Ethnicity

While the teaching force is becoming more homogenous gender-wise, the opposite is true for racial and ethnic diversity. At first, this finding may also seem surprising. There has been a great deal of concern in recent decades that the teaching force looks less and less like America and, in particular, less and less like the students. As the nation’s population and students have grown more diverse, it is widely held, the teaching force has not kept pace. In response, numerous government and nongovernment organizations have instituted and funded programs and initiatives to recruit teacher candidates from underrepresented racial-ethnic groups. By 2010, over half of the states had such teacher recruitment policies or programs in place.

A hidden success story emerged. While the proportion of students of color in schools is still far greater than that of teachers of color, between 1988 and 2018, the number of minority and teachers of color increased faster than that of White, non-Hispanic teachers and also than that of students of color (figure 4). Since the late 1980s, the number of teachers of color has increased by 148 percent, to 810,000. However,
does not tell the whole story. Since the teaching force has grown much larger, numerically there are far more teachers departing schools now than in the past.

Teacher turnover rates vary across states, regions, and school districts, but the largest variations are between schools, even within the same school district. Annually, about 45 percent of all public-school teacher turnover takes place in just one-fourth of public schools, with high-poverty schools and both urban and rural schools experiencing higher rates of turnover.

There are also large differences in turnover among types of teachers. As mentioned already, minority teachers and teachers of color have higher than average rates of turnover. But beginning teachers have among the highest departure rates. Our analyses of national longitudinal data document that between 40 to 50 percent of those who enter teaching leave teaching altogether. Coupled with the balloon-tipping trend, this trend indicates a growing flux and instability in the teaching force, as both the large numbers of those entering teaching and the large numbers of those exiting have been increasing in recent years. In short, those in the largest group, beginners, in one of the largest occupations—teachers—have been leaving at

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**Figure 4. Number of Students and Teachers, by Race/Ethnicity, from 1987–88 to 2017–18 (percentage change)**

- **ALL**
  - Students: 22%
  - Teachers: 54%
- **White, Non-Hispanic**
  - Students: -14%
  - Teachers: 41%
- **Black**
  - Students: 21%
  - Teachers: 29%
- **Hispanic/Latino**
  - Students: 252%
  - Teachers: 373%
- **Asian**
  - Students: 170%
  - Teachers: 263%
greater attention to retaining beginning teachers, minority and teachers of color, and teachers in disadvantaged schools should be a key priority of school leaders and policymakers.

Implications

There are good reasons to investigate the sources of these trends and to continue tracking them. If they do indeed continue, serious financial, structural, and educational consequences will follow for America’s educational system. For instance, will the teaching force continue to grow at a faster rate than the student population it serves and, if so, why? If the teaching force does continue to balloon, the expense to local school districts could become unsustainable. Will the teaching force continue to become more female and, if so, why? If the teaching force does continue to become even more female-dominated, with the presence of male role models a rarity for an increasing number of K-12 students, there could be negative implications for students, both male and female. Will an increasing number of new hires decide not to stay in teaching, making it increasingly an occupation practiced by the young and inexperienced, and, if so, why? If this trend continues, the expense to local school districts could become more sustainable because of lower

Figure 5. Among 2007–08 College Grads Who Entered Selected Occupations by 2012, Percent Gone from Occupation by 2018

Table 1: Among 2007-08 College Grads Who Entered Selected Occupations by 2012, Percent Gone from Occupation by 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Percent Gone from Occupation by 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child-Care Workers</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretaries</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paralegals</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineers</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Officers</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Therapists</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacists</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
State statutes impede students’ equitable access to profession-ready teachers.

The Uneven Landscape of Teacher Preparation

Leslie T. Fenwick

In a recent landscape analysis of policies in 50 states and the District of Columbia, I found that states vary significantly in how they authorize, review, and approve teacher preparation providers and programs. What these policies have in common is a requirement that all programs meet the same standards. But in practice, they do not. Too often, alternative certification programs

concentration of students of color. Further, 61 percent of California’s teacher interns taught in the state’s poorest schools. The court starkly stated: “We conclude that the Appellants established injury in fact. This disproportionate distribution of interns…results in a poorer quality education than Appellants would otherwise have received.”

It is more important than ever to ensure that students of color and students experiencing poverty have fully credentialed, profession-ready, caring, effective teachers. The pandemic and racial injustice protests revealed just how much further the nation has to go in order to fulfill children’s rights to equal educational opportunity. Yet the pandemic, coupled with mass shootings at schools and increasingly public, politicized scrutiny about what teachers teach, placed inordinate demands on teachers, exacerbating teacher shortages. Under these circumstances, will states and districts be forced to barter away teacher quality and the equitable assignment of high-caliber teachers just to have warm bodies in front of classrooms?

**Preparation Program Trends**

For the 2018–19 academic year, states reported to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) that 2,178 teacher preparation providers offered 21,508 state-approved teacher preparation programs (TPPs) in the United States. These programs enrolled 560,500 students and produced over 150,000 program completers. While a bit higher than in 2017–18, these numbers are lower than a decade ago, when states in 2010–11 reported that slightly fewer providers (2,163) delivered 25,000 programs, enrolled more than 622,000, and produced more completers, at about 205,000. In sum, by 2018–19 there were slightly more providers offering fewer programs to fewer students and producing fewer program completers.

ED requires that states report providers and their programs that are low performing and at risk of closure based on an inability to meet state standards. According to the 2020 Title II report, 16.7 percent of traditional and 34 percent of alternative route programs were low performing and at risk. Texas had the largest number of low-performing and at-risk providers and programs,
A review of the typical requirements for traditional and alternative program admission, matriculation, and completion reveals just how different these requirements are.

Traditional versus Alternative

The 2021 landscape report lists TPP review, approval, and authorizations standards and processes (as defined by state statute) and analyzes similarities and differences between traditional and alternative route programs (IHE and non-IHE based). All 50 states and the District of Columbia specify that all providers and programs must meet the same standards. Yet even in states that have an agreement with a national accrediting body, all programs do not meet these standards.

At least three practices provide a loophole for alternative route providers and their programs not based at IHEs to skirt rigorous standards and accountability:

- The state’s statute or regulation is bifurcated, requiring traditional IHE-based programs to meet national accreditation standards (which are aligned with state standards) and alternative route programs not based at IHEs to meet delineated state standards but not national accreditation standards.
- The state allows programs two options: meet state standards or meet state standards and national accreditation standards.
- The state offers provisional approval to providers, enabling them to offer programs for up to three years without having to meet the standards imposed on traditional program providers. After the three-year period, provisionally approved providers are required to show evidence that they are meeting state standards or making progress toward completing the application for eligibility for national accreditation. In practice, how states treat alternative route programs that are not based at IHEs is so nuanced that it is difficult to capture all the variations. All states exhibit at least one of these nuances.

A review of the typical requirements for traditional and alternative (not IHE based) program admission, matriculation, and completion reveals just how different these requirements are in the “amount and substance of coursework requisites, quantity of field experience obligations, length of time spent student teaching,” and time devoted to reflective, supervised practice under a fully certified, prepared preK-12 teacher (usually with at least three years of successful teaching experience) and university faculty member. It is clear that these two routes are not producing similar calibers of teachers.
Based on the report’s findings, I recommend six policy actions:

- Employ federal and state regulations to enforce *Renee v. Duncan*. Enforcement would entail ceasing the practice of placing teachers in training as teachers of record.
- Incentivize states to approve only those providers and programs that meet national accreditation standards.
- Incentivize states to work with districts to develop plans that equitably distribute fully certified, profession-ready teachers.
- Require states to maintain public-facing portals with up-to-date, accurate TPP regulations.
- Incentivize states to remove entrance licensure examinations that disproportionately bar teachers of color from entering the profession.
- Increase federal and foundation funding to historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to strengthen the pipeline of Black teachers. HBCUs constitute 3 percent of the nation’s colleges and universities yet prepare 50 percent of the nation’s Black teachers. Increased fiscal resources could further expand these institutions’ recruitment, preparation, and graduation efforts and outcomes. Without these strong engines, the nation is not likely to reach its educator workforce diversity goals.

## Findings and Recommendations

Five findings emerged from my analysis:

- Traditional and alternative route TPPs and providers differ in each state and are highly idiosyncratic, subject to state legislative changes, and deeply reflective of each state’s policy context—so much so that it is difficult to capture all the nuances in surveys, interviews, or political modeling.
- Alternative route program providers that are not based at IHEs are growing and spawning new provider types.
- Alternative program graduates have a higher probability than traditional program graduates of teaching in schools serving students of color, students experiencing poverty, and students with disabilities.
- The practice of disproportionate placement of alternative route teachers in training with these groups of students does harm to these students by depriving them of the right to a profession-ready, fully credentialed teacher.
- For a variety of reasons that appear to be related to the nuances of states’ legislative processes, rulemaking, and changes in external factors, many states do not post up-to-date, accurate TPP review, approval, and authorization requirements. In these cases, public-facing information can be inaccurate.

**HBCUs constitute 3 percent of the nation’s colleges and universities yet prepare 50 percent of the nation’s Black teachers.**

## Conclusion

State constitutions define the right to an education in evocative language. Eighteen states declare that the state’s provision of a public and free education is a democratic imperative. Other states use the language of “fundamental value” and “paramount duty” (see box).

State education leaders have a choice: They can tinker at the edges of the current order and attempt a return to a pre-pandemic sense of normalcy, or they can use the moment to do something different. The former approach will not serve the majority of today’s public school students well, as they have not benefited from the prevailing order. In sustained, systematic ways, Black and Latinx students’ lack of access to the best educational resources—high-quality teachers—has stymied their opportunity for a
Most alternative-route teacher interns become teachers of record before completing substantive teacher training.

quality education, as it has for students of families experiencing poverty. These students are more likely than their White peers to be taught by teachers in training who are enrolled in alternative TPPs, which differ from traditional TPPs in at least one significant way: Most alternative-route teacher interns become teachers of record before completing substantive teacher training. That is, they are not profession-ready on day 1, and they are training on the backs of students who most need a profession-ready teacher.

Not only are a disproportionate share of students of color saddled with teachers in training, nearly 40 percent of special education teachers come from alternative preparation routes. So even when special education students and students with disabilities come to school ready to learn, their teacher likely is only learning to teach.

The Black, brown, and poor children who are languishing in too many schools will soon be the majority of Americans. They already constitute the majority of public school students. What will it mean for American democracy when these young people—many of whom have been pushed and held at the margins of the social, political, and economic order—are the majority? Will their commitment to democracy and public schooling be resonant or absent?

In their state constitutions, Arkansas and California offer some of the nation’s most eloquent, inspiring language about education. Arkansas proclaims that “intelligence and virtue are the safeguards of liberty and the bulwark of a free and good government, and that the state shall adopt suitable means to secure to the people the advantages and opportunities of education.” California links schooling to liberty and scientific advancement: “A general diffusion of knowledge and intelligence is essential to preservation of the rights and liberties of the people and that the Legislature shall encourage by all suitable means the promotion of intellectual, scientific, moral, and agricultural improvement.”

Tennessee’s constitution asserts an “inherent value” to a free education. Maryland’s declares that education must be “thorough, efficient, free, and that its funding be kept inviolate.” Georgia proclaims that provision of public education is a “primary obligation of the state.” Virginia declares that its educational programs must be of “high quality and continually maintained.”

Box 1. Commitments in State Constitutions

In their state constitutions, Arkansas and California offer some of the nation’s most eloquent, inspiring language about education. Arkansas proclaims that “intelligence and virtue are the safeguards of liberty and the bulwark of a free and good government, and that the state shall adopt suitable means to secure to the people the advantages and opportunities of education.” California links schooling to liberty and scientific advancement: “A general diffusion of knowledge and intelligence is essential to preservation of the rights and liberties of the people and that the Legislature shall encourage by all suitable means the promotion of intellectual, scientific, moral, and agricultural improvement.”

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Leslie T. Fenwick, PhD, is dean emerita of the Howard University School of Education and dean in residence at the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. She is author of Jim Crow’s Pink Slip: The Untold Story of Black Principal and Teacher Leadership (Harvard Education Press, 2022).
A Data-Driven Approach to Staffing Schools

With three school years touched by the pandemic so far, the extent of the damage to this generation of students is coming into focus. Three concerns are top of mind for state and district leaders: making up for disrupted learning, ensuring that schools have enough quality teachers and staff to lead this work, and

Lowering teacher standards may fail to solve actual pipeline problems and can create new ones.

Hannah Putman and Heather Peske
building a diverse teacher workforce. Many states are tempted to lower requirements for teachers in the hopes that it will address some of these concerns.

Before signing on to such changes, state boards of education should seek evidence about the exact nature of the problems a policy change is designed to address, whether the change is likely to help, and what the unintended consequences might be. Is there evidence, for example, that lowering teacher requirements will bring more teachers into the schools that are struggling to hire them? And what inadvertent harm will students suffer at a time when their learning recovery is most fragile?

**Fighting the Urge to Lower Standards**

School leaders have been worried they will have a labor shortage on their hands because of a potential mass attrition of current teachers and fewer people starting careers in education. A recent National Education Association survey reported that more than half of members intended to leave teaching sooner than planned. But there are reasons to believe that headlines of impending large-scale attrition may be misleading. While it is unlikely that half the workforce is departing right away, attrition has been predicted to tick upward in the 2022–23 school year. To date, states have reported only a modest increase in teacher attrition. In any case, state and district leaders would do well to gather more concrete data on whether teachers are actually leaving their schools.

But no matter what they find, lowering standards for teachers to enter the profession—even as a temporary solution—may not work as planned. Removing licensure tests is a go-to policy reaction to allow for faster entry into the classroom, and it comes up whenever fears of shortages arise. While there is no perfect predictor of who will be more effective, licensure tests serve as a guardrail to quality and are typically found to be modest but statistically significant predictors of teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom.

Most important, lowering standards for teacher quality will likely exacerbate students’ learning loss. Students who have already fallen furthest behind during the pandemic are likely to be harmed the most from lower standards for teachers. Decades of research show that these least qualified, inexperienced teachers will be assigned to teach students who need the most support, likely perpetuating a cycle of inequity.

Further, lowering standards for entry actually makes the profession less appealing to academically stronger students. And because more effective teachers tend to stay in the classroom longer, maintaining reasonable standards for quality could even forestall staffing issues in the coming years.

Perhaps even more troubling are calls to lower standards for teacher licensure as a means to increase the diversity of the teacher workforce. All students, and especially students of color, benefit tremendously when they learn from teachers of color. However, the strategy of lowering expectations for teachers in service of teacher diversity carries the pernicious implication that many aspiring teachers of color cannot meet current expectations, which simply is not accurate. Inequities in educational experiences for students of color are well-documented; solutions should focus on righting these inequities, not ignoring them. Teacher quality and teacher diversity are not, and should not be viewed as, at odds with each other—and dozens of institutions across the country exhibit both racial equity and excellence in supporting aspiring teachers of color on these licensure tests.

In reality, broad-brush efforts to increase the supply of teachers may do little to address districts’ specific needs. For example, recent research on Washington state found that two of every three candidates who trained to become teachers did not initially get hired in a teaching position, and half of those (one-third of all candidates) never got a public school teaching job in the state, even though these certified teachers earned less when they took jobs in other fields. At the same time, Washington state consistently had staffing challenges in rural districts.

This trend is apparent nationally as well, in that some certification areas, like elementary education, have boasted a surplus of teachers while others have had consistent shortages. Simply adding more teachers to the workforce without matching them to the subjects and schools that most need them may not address the real problems.
Better Ways to Build the Pipeline

State and district leaders that want to address concerns about the teacher pipeline without sacrificing teacher quality need to marshal data and evidence to assess the problem, evaluate the pipeline, and act based on the evidence to build a diverse, qualified teacher workforce.

First, assess the problem. Solutions should be targeted to the problem at hand, one understood through data, not anecdotes. Districts and states should answer these questions:

- In what regions of the state, or in which schools, are there persistent vacancies? In which subjects?
- What is the demographic composition of the workforce, and how well does it align with the student population?
- What is the supply of new teachers completing teacher preparation programs, and how does that align with district needs (both in volume and in specific certification areas)?
- What are teacher retention rates? In which schools or subjects do they tend to be lower? How do those compare across districts? How do they compare to other states? In which schools are retention rates higher? What factors contribute?

Many of the staffing challenges facing states and districts predate the pandemic. For example, special education positions have been states’ most commonly cited shortage area every year for more than two decades. Similarly, rural schools have persistently had more challenges hiring teachers than suburban and even urban schools.

States need more data than most have on hand to fully assess the staffing needs in their state. Currently, 29 states publish at least some teacher demand data, although no state's current reporting is complete. Reports should include the number of teachers currently employed, the number of vacant positions, the number of new hires, and ideally the prevalence of teachers teaching outside their certification areas, all broken out by certification or subject (see box).

Second, evaluate the pipeline. While many students dream of being teachers when they grow up, aspiring teachers often get lost between those early hopes and becoming a certified teacher of record. Understanding how aspiring

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Box 1. Detailed Dashboards

Several states have done work to increase the transparency of workforce data. Colorado stands out for its detailed teacher workforce reporting. Its dashboard displays open positions and positions filled by substitutes, retired educators, or teachers with emergency credentials. The data can be searched by certification area and are disaggregated by rural designation.

Other states are building data systems to answer questions about their teacher pipelines. Texas has an extensive set of dashboards that includes not only licensure test pass rates but also data on hiring and retention linked back to individual teacher prep institutions. North Carolina recently updated its dashboard to include first-attempt pass rates and information about the number of times people take licensure tests, as well as more data disaggregated by test-taker race and ethnicity. And New Jersey passed legislation requiring the state to publish first-attempt pass rates.

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teachers proceed from one step to the next—disaggregated by certification area, race and ethnicity, and other data points of interest to the state—can help target resources to the pipeline’s leakiest points.

States should examine these questions across all aspiring teachers, disaggregated by race and ethnicity:

- How many people enroll in teacher preparation programs, and what proportion of them complete programs?
- How many college students consider teaching but do not enroll?¹⁸
- How many candidates pursue preparation in each certification area? How does this align with the state’s anticipated hiring needs?
- What proportion of program completers earn state certification overall and by certification area?
- Among candidates who do not earn certification, what is the reason? Difficulty passing licensure tests? A failure to complete coursework? A decision not to complete the application process?
- What proportion of newly certified teachers are hired in the state? What do the certified teachers who do not take teaching jobs do instead?

States report some of these data to the U.S. Department of Education, as required by Title II of the Higher Education Act. These reports include the number of candidates who enroll in or complete teacher preparation programs each year, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, and subject area. However, this report does not track the number of candidates who are lost between program enrollment and completion, nor what proportion are hired in their state or others. Only nine states independently publish teacher supply data that are disaggregated to the institution or preparation program level and certification level.¹⁹

To fill in some of this information, states can examine pass-rate data on teacher licensure tests. The National Council on Teacher Quality has published data on elementary content licensure tests in nearly every state, showing the proportion of test takers who pass on their first attempt and the data on test takers who pass after multiple attempts.²⁰ These data also indicate how many people take the test once and do not retake it, a useful insight into a potentially large pool of aspiring teachers who never reach the workforce. The Tennessee State Board of Education recently took a step in this direction, publishing first-attempt pass rates at the institution level, although the data are not, for now, disaggregated by exam.

States seeking to build a more diverse workforce should pay close attention to pass rates for aspiring teachers of color. First-attempt and best-attempt pass rates tend to vary widely among institutions within each state, and some institutions are supporting their aspiring teachers of color to achieve much greater results. It can also be informative to look at how many test takers of color are passing or failing at each institution. If some institutions have large numbers of aspiring teachers of color who have not successfully earned a teaching license, those institutions may be ripe for interventions. In fact, institutions where aspiring teachers are most successful, especially those institutions that are less selective but also achieve a high pass rate, may have lessons to offer on how to help more aspiring teachers learn core content and succeed on licensure tests.²¹

Third, act based on the evidence. Understanding the nature of a state’s staffing challenges can help leaders devise targeted solutions (figure 1). If shortages in hard-to-staff regions are a concern, state leaders should employ strategies to attract teachers to those regions. For example, rural districts have a higher vacancy rate and proportion of teachers with emergency credentials compared with suburban or urban schools.²² Flooding the state with more teachers is unlikely to solve rural teacher shortages. Instead, districts can recruit more student teachers to teach in these schools, since teachers are likely to get their first teaching job near where they student teach.²³

Similarly, drawing in teachers at the start of their career holds great promise. As one example, the Ozarks Teaching Corps awards scholarships to teacher candidates who commit to teach in a rural Ozarks school for at least three years and has placed more than 60 teachers.²⁴ This program reports that 91 percent of the candidates who were placed in a rural Ozarks school...
taught for at least three years; most are still teaching in the district that hired them.

Much of the challenge of recruiting teachers into rural areas may not be financial but perceptual. Rural schools may be seen as offering fewer growth opportunities, or rural districts may be viewed as less appealing to new college graduates. A 2016 meeting of the Rural Teacher Corps Project focused on solutions less grounded in pay or in lowering standards but in marketing the communities themselves and in helping teachers build ties to those communities so that they want to stay.25

If finding housing presents a challenge for teachers just starting their career, states may want to help districts offer housing stipends, like those offered in big cities such as Boston and New York or build new affordable housing for teachers.

If specific schools are harder to staff, states may consider incentives targeted to those schools. Texas is several years into the Teacher Incentive Allotment program, paying high-performing teachers more to work in high-needs schools as well as rural schools. The dollar amounts are substantial, ranging from $3,000 for “recognized teachers” to $32,000 for “master teachers.” The system also gives districts some flexibility in how to develop their evaluation system and disburse funds. While the Texas system is still new, preliminary research on its pilot program, the Dallas Principal and Teacher Excellence Initiatives, found that providing higher pay to draw effective teachers into underperforming schools led to improved instruction and student achievement.26 Washington, DC, also encourages teachers to work in high-poverty schools by offering an annual bonus up to $25,000 (compared with $3,000 for highly effective teachers in low-poverty schools). This system has been associated with higher retention rates for effective teachers and more effective incoming teachers.27

Figure 1. States Can More Effectively Minimize Shortages if They Target Solutions Directly to the Problem
If attracting people to work in certain subjects or certification areas poses a perennial challenge, states can incentivize teachers to work in those fields. Hawaii gained national attention for increasing the salaries of its special education teachers by $10,000 a year. In the year after this policy went into effect, the state cut in half the proportion of special education positions vacant or filled by teachers unlicensed, with nearly 300 more licensed special education teachers compared with the year before the policy began.28

If candidates are struggling to pass licensure tests, states should examine the data to understand where the challenges lie. For example, do few aspiring teachers at an institution pass on their first attempt? Review the course requirements, both from the teacher preparation program itself and from the university’s general education requirements, and determine if more aligned requirements and early diagnostic testing could help fill in some knowledge gaps before candidates sit down to take the test.

If candidates take the test once, fail, and do not retake it, it may be that testing fees pose a burden.Covering those fees could help many more aspiring teachers retake the test rather than abandon efforts to earn a teaching license, as several states now do.

If test takers at some institutions repeatedly retake the test without success, states should work with preparation programs to track licensure test data. Every institution has access to a data management system from the testing company that oversees the test, allowing the institution to regularly identify aspiring teachers who repeatedly fail and assign additional coursework or tutoring to meet those needs. Several institutions where aspiring teachers of color earn high pass rates have taken these steps, using data to guide interventions with any test takers who struggle to pass exams (figure 2).29

If current teachers are leaving their schools at high rates, states should examine the reasons and address the root causes. This past school year, many districts offered bonuses to encourage teachers to return. Roughly 40 percent of large districts across the country offered teachers such bonuses, ranging from $350 to $5,000.30 But states and districts can consider nonmonetary bonuses as well. Some school support services that benefit both students and teachers, such as guidance counselors and school nurses, have been found to be more appealing to teachers than a sizable raise.31

All these solutions address targeted challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers; none requires states to lower standards.

Keep Teacher Diversity Central

The research is clear and compelling: All students, and especially students of color, benefit from being assigned to teachers of color.32 Yet the diversity of the teacher workforce is far from reflecting the diversity of students. Aspiring teachers of color are lost at disproportionately high rates along every step toward becoming a teacher of record.33 States should examine data targeting the most problematic points:

- What points along the pathway into the classroom are disproportionately hindering aspiring teachers of color?
- Which institutions of higher education, school districts, or other entities are successful in supporting aspiring teachers of color? What promising practices can be emulated?
- What do teachers of color experience once they reach the classroom? Do they disproportionately work in schools that tend to have higher turnover rates? What supports do they receive? Are there ways that their administrators could better assist them?

This analysis will likely reveal disparities between White test takers and test takers of color on guardrails such as licensure test pass rates. These disparities reflect the effects of systemic inequities in education and broader experiences. The response should be to help more aspiring teachers of color reach the classroom equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to create greater opportunities for their own students. Many institutions stand out in this regard. In a recent report, NCTQ identified 89 institutions where test takers of color earn pass rates on elementary content licensure tests that exceed the state average for all test takers and where there was little or no disparity in pass rates for test takers of color compared with White test takers.34

Similarly, some school districts are firmly committed to diversity, evident from a teacher workforce that closely mirrors their student
Instead, states and districts should identify their specific staffing challenges and target their actions to those needs. We cannot accelerate student learning with teachers who themselves are starting behind.


4. Matt Barnum, “Uptick but No Exodus: Despite Stress, Most body. States can leverage the ones within their borders to identify promising practices.

**Few Easy Answers**

Recovery from the damage of this pandemic will not come easily. Teachers and students had to consistently respond to the uncertainty the pandemic wrought. Given its effects, it is critical to have teachers who can help students make up for lost learning opportunities.

The path forward must prioritize student learning and teachers’ essential role, which means staffing every classroom with an effective teacher. That goal cannot be achieved by lowering requirements for becoming a teacher.

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Figure 2. States Where Institutions Support Aspiring Teachers of Color In Achieving Equity and Excellence

![Map showing states where institutions support aspiring teachers of color](image)

- At least one institution achieves equity and excellence for aspiring teachers of color.
- No institutions achieve equity and excellence for aspiring teachers of color.
- No institution-level data disaggregated by race/ethnicity.
- Data not yet available.


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Licensure Tests as Barriers to the Profession

At a time when schools are facing the most severe staffing challenges in recent memory and with interest in becoming a teacher a fraction of what it was a generation ago, it has never been more important for state policies to support innovative approaches to teacher hiring and retention and remove unnecessary barriers into the profession.¹

One policy area that is ripe for a closer look is teacher licensure exams. Most states require prospective teachers to pass one or more standardized tests, usually from the Praxis series, to earn even a provisional license. While these requirements—often set by state boards of education—are well-intentioned efforts to ensure that teachers have a baseline level of knowledge and skills before entering the classroom, they may be doing more harm than good: They are costly to take and administer, and they are weak predictors of teaching ability that screen out a disproportionate number of teachers of color, undermining goals around teacher quality and diversity.

There is a better approach. Instead of relying so heavily on standardized tests to predict teaching ability, states can set more meaningful licensure standards focused on demonstrated teaching ability. And because so many states waived testing requirements during the pandemic, leaders have a rare opportunity to demonstrate the real-world benefits of a new approach—following the lead of states already making the shift—without getting stymied by theoretical concerns about lowering teaching standards.

High Costs, Few Benefits

Licensure standards for any profession must strike a delicate balance: Set a clear, high standard but do not put up barriers that dissuade qualified people from even trying to clear them. With teacher licensure, a state’s goal should be to create the minimum number of hurdles necessary...
to ensure prospective teachers have the skills they need to help students learn. Requirements that fail to provide valuable information about someone’s teaching ability have no good reason to exist.

By this measure, Praxis and most other licensure tests fail badly. They are an expensive burden for prospective teachers, costing as much as $200 per attempt. That is a significant deterrent in the context of a profession that already offers a poor financial value proposition: The average starting teacher salary is only $41,000, made even lower in practice by the student loan debt that nearly half of all educators accumulate (more than $58,000 on average). More than half of all prospective teachers fail licensure tests on their first attempt. Of those, one in five never retake them. Many may have gone on to successful careers in the classroom—to say nothing of the number who choose other professions due to concerns about licensure requirements.

A barrier this substantial is only useful if it reliably predicts a teacher’s ability to help students learn. Yet multiple studies have found that scores on licensure tests are weak predictors of success in the classroom and have little effect on student achievement. Most important, they cannot consistently predict teaching ability at the individual level: Even when they point in the right direction overall, they produce far too many “false positives” (weak teachers who pass) and “false negatives” (strong teachers who fail). Those false negatives are a critical, often-overlooked flaw in the tests. Their failure to consistently predict teaching ability might be more tolerable if the error were always in a helpful direction—that is, if it occasionally screened out good teachers but never screened in bad ones. But the error cuts both ways, meaning that licensure tests regularly allow the wrong prospective teachers into the profession even as they keep some of the right ones out.

My organization has seen this firsthand in our own teacher preparation programs, which have trained more than 50,000 U.S. teachers over the last 25 years. Every year, we see teachers with a proven ability to lead students to big academic gains—as reflected in test scores, classroom observations, and other measures—face the prospect of losing their jobs because of low scores on licensure exams. We also see many teachers who pass licensure tests but struggle in the classroom.

In other words, debates about whether licensure tests set the bar for teaching too low or too high miss the reality that they are not a meaningful bar of any kind—at least not if the goal is to screen for teachers who can help students learn. No matter how much passing a test might feel like clearing a meaningful hurdle, the evidence shows it cannot consistently predict how well someone will teach. Passing these exams is far from a guarantee of effectiveness, and failing is far from a guarantee of ineffectiveness.

Even if licensure tests could reliably predict teaching ability, policies in many states would negate most of their benefit. Defenders of licensure tests often imply it would be a radical change to allow teachers who have not passed into the classroom, but the truth is it happens all the time. Even before the pandemic, most states allowed schools to hire full-time teachers—sometimes for multiple years—before they had passed licensure exams. Several states offer emergency certification to help fill vacancies, while others exempt certain types of schools from licensure rules entirely or create “districts of innovation” that offer additional flexibility. Some states simply set the deadline for passing certification tests up to a year after a teacher’s first day in the classroom. And nearly all schools hire long-term substitutes, who effectively function as classroom teachers but do not always need to pass licensure tests.

In addition to these exceptions already built into testing requirements, 33 states temporarily waived some or all requirements during the last two years, when the pandemic made administering many licensure tests difficult or impossible. It is safe to estimate that hundreds of thousands of students each year learn from teachers who have not passed licensure tests—with no evidence it affects their school experience significantly one way or another.

**A Barrier to Diversity**

As if inconsistency in predicting effectiveness was not problem enough, licensure tests actively undermine another urgent priority: diversifying the teacher workforce. When they have teachers of their same race, students of color are less likely to be suspended, more likely to be referred
and no leader wants to be seen as “lowering the bar” for teaching. Fortunately, states can start implementing better alternatives to licensure tests without eliminating them right away—and start a more productive conversation about the issue in the process.

This conversation should start with a recognition that the solution to flawed teacher licensure tests is not different tests. Policymakers have tried for decades to find a reliable proxy for teaching ability—a score on one licensure test or another, college grade point average, completion of an advanced degree, or number of years in the classroom. But research and experience have made clear that there is no magical way to predict whether someone will become an effective teacher. It is what author Malcolm Gladwell has called the “quarterback problem”: Teaching, like being an NFL quarterback, is a job so difficult and complex that real-world performance is the only way to gauge someone’s ability to do it.

Instead of spinning their wheels trying to find or make a better test, state policymakers should reorient teacher licensure rules around a demonstrated ability to help students learn—in student teaching, preservice training, and in a teacher’s first years on the job. There is no need to rely on proxies for teaching ability or create extra hurdles for prospective teachers when preparation programs and school systems already observe their performance directly. Such an approach would create the high bar for the teaching profession that testing requirements currently try—but fail—to set.

Making this shift requires allowing some teachers into classrooms before they have passed licensure tests, but since that is already happening in most states, there is little practical or political downside. In the short term, states can simply allow evidence of strong classroom performance as an acceptable substitute for licensure tests. All teacher preparation providers should be required to develop performance-based criteria for granting temporary or initial certification that can substitute for preservice testing requirements. And local school systems should be required to develop similar criteria that can substitute for any tests required for earning full certification. States should then waive any testing requirements for teachers who meet the alternate requirements set by their program or school system.

State policymakers should reorient teacher licensure rules around a demonstrated ability to help students learn.
These measures do not have to include or be limited to student scores on annual reading and math assessments: Classroom observations, assessments of student work, and student surveys—some or all of which are part of many districts’ teacher evaluation systems—can provide valuable information on teacher effectiveness. District evaluation ratings themselves could be a potential measure, as could new or existing portfolio-based assessments. States can offer guidelines to help preparation programs and school systems develop these measures. But state boards and state education agencies should not mandate a one-size-fits-all set of criteria; each program and school system should be able to find the best solution rooted in data they already collect—the key to minimizing any additional work required from teachers to meet licensure requirements.

Some policymakers may have concerns about letting individual programs and school systems assess teacher performance, given the lack of differentiation produced by most teacher evaluation systems. But in my organization’s work with districts, we have found that even the least rigorous evaluations tend to identify the lowest-performing teachers and especially low-performing early-career teachers—the exact group that is most important for any licensure standard to screen out.

More important, state leaders do not need to settle for a hypothetical debate on this point or any other aspect of a performance-based licensure standard. Since so many teachers are already in classrooms without having passed licensure tests, states should take the opportunity to gather evidence on how current test-based rules compare with the performance-based alternative, focusing on effectiveness, retention, and diversity of teachers certified under different criteria. They should be transparent about the results, so that people on all sides of the debate about licensure tests can see which approach leads to a more effective, diverse teacher workforce.

If the performance-based standard proves to be a better or even as good as standardized tests at predicting future classroom effectiveness, states should make the substitute requirements permanent. They should also then consider eliminating testing requirements entirely—or, at minimum, eliminate any tests that have not shown a strong, reliable connection to individual teacher performance.

### States Leading the Way

These alternatives to teacher licensure tests are not theoretical. Several states have already implemented them and shown that they are both logistically and politically possible:

- **New Mexico** recently announced it was ending licensure test requirements entirely and presented a clear case about the high cost and low returns of these tests. The state plans to issue new regulations this summer creating a portfolio process for teacher licensure, based on evidence from a prospective teacher’s clinical experiences that show they possess the content and pedagogical knowledge required of new teachers.

- **Colorado** recently passed legislation (currently awaiting the governor’s signature) that will offer several alternatives to teachers who do not pass licensure tests—including the ability to submit a portfolio of coursework approved by the state’s education department showing they have met the competencies covered on the tests.

- **Mississippi** is piloting a performance-based approach to licensure specifically designed to increase teacher diversity and effectiveness while mitigating teacher shortages. It gives current teachers who have struggled to pass licensure tests an opportunity to earn certification through their evaluation ratings and measures of student learning.

- **Massachusetts** has implemented a performance-based assessment of teaching skills—the Massachusetts Candidate Assessment of Performance, or CAP—aligned to the state’s evaluation system for fully certified educators. Prospective candidates must pass CAP during their student teaching to successfully complete their teacher preparation program. A study found that CAP predicts teachers’ evaluation ratings during their first year in the classroom more accurately than traditional licensure exams.12

Leaders in other states should adopt and build on these efforts to move beyond licensure tests toward requirements rooted in what matters most: a teacher’s ability to help all students.
Many educators and policymakers have long recognized the need to transform schools and classrooms to better support students’ academic, social, and emotional needs. The increased stress, mental health challenges, disconnection and disengagement, and inequities observed during the pandemic have reaffirmed the need to create safe, welcoming learning environments for students and educators alike. A whole-child approach, which prioritizes the full scope of a child’s developmental needs—academic, social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and psychological—is an important step toward this end. This approach can improve student and school outcomes. When it becomes part and parcel of educator preparation, it can also overcome major hurdles such as the teacher shortages nearly every state is facing.

Advances in neuroscience and the science of learning and development back this shift in thinking about what learning environments and experiences should look like. These advances point to a new understanding of how schools and classrooms should be designed to maximize every child’s potential (figure 1),

State leaders have a role in ensuring that educator preparation both models and reflects the science of learning and development.

Jennifer DePaoli and Ryan Saunders

Figure 1. Guiding Principles for Equitable Whole-Child Design


www.nasbe.org
including structures and practices that promote the following:

- **positive developmental relationships**, which help children develop positive attachments to caring adults and their peers;

- **environments filled with safety and belonging**, which are physically, emotionally, and identity safe and where all children feel valued and have consistent norms and routines;

- **rich learning experiences that support deep knowledge development** through authentic activities that allow learners to build on their prior knowledge and cultural contexts and enable them to work collaboratively with peers to develop higher-order thinking skills and transferable knowledge;

- **development of social, emotional, and cognitive skills, habits, and mind-sets** that foster social, emotional, and cognitive competencies, which support children’s development of self- and social awareness, empathy, resilience, and perseverance; and

- **integrated support systems** that provide easily accessible academic, health, mental health, and social service supports that remove obstacles to learning and promote healthy development.

**What Teachers Should Get from Preparation Programs**

To support the shifts needed to foster whole-child school design, teacher preparation programs need to develop teacher candidates with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that support and engage children and their families in culturally competent and equitable ways (figure 2).

**Figure 2. Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Teaching**

![Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Teaching](image)

**Knowledge.** Preservice teachers need to develop three general areas to be successful:
- knowledge of learners and how they learn and develop within social contexts;
- subject-matter and curriculum knowledge, to be taught in light of the social purposes of education; and
- knowledge of teaching, which includes understanding diverse learning styles, classroom management skills, and assessment for continuous improvement.²

Sociocultural and motivational factors strongly influence students’ ability to learn, so teachers also need deep understanding of learners’ prior knowledge, experiences, motivations, interests, and language and cognitive skills, as well as a chance to reflect on their own experiences and cultural influences.³

**Skills.** The science of learning and development also underscores teacher candidates’ need for opportunities to develop important skills:
- **adaptive expertise** so they can develop appropriate instruction for diverse learners, which encompasses making plans based on students’ needs, analyzing student learning, and developing and revising curricula;
- **metacognitive ability** to reflect on their practice and on student learning and ask what they could be doing better;
- **inquiry** about their students’ different ways of learning, prior experiences and knowledge, and cultural and linguistic capital;
- **culturally sensitive listening and questioning** so they will learn about students and their families and create environments where students feel they can take on academic challenges;
- **observation and analysis** of what is going on in the classroom and how best to respond;
- **curriculum design and instruction**, including the ability to scaffold lessons (i.e., breaking up new concepts to help students grasp new materials) to respond and adapt to a variety of student needs and ensure personalized support; and
- **reflection and diagnostic skills** to assess where students are in their learning and how to support their growth and development.

**Dispositions.** Teachers also need certain dispositions and attitudes about themselves and their students that preparation programs can help them develop:
- **empathy and building trusting relationships** so that they are able to view children’s behavior through the lens of child development and with an understanding of the effects of trauma;
- **social-emotional competencies**, both to support the development of these skills in students as well as tend to their own mental health and well-being;
- **cultural competence and affirming beliefs** in all students’ abilities to succeed; and
- **a sense of efficacy**, a belief in their ability to apply their knowledge and skills in the classroom.

**Redesigning Educator Preparation**

Educator preparation programs should give new teachers opportunities to build the knowledge, skills, and dispositions described above. To center on whole-child learning and development, those who redesign these programs should apply these strategies:

**Pedagogical alignment around a coherent whole-child vision.** Teacher candidates need to learn in the ways they are expected to practice, and thus they should experience the same kinds of teaching strategies they will use with their future students. To ensure that prospective teachers have these experiences, educator preparation programs must align coursework, knowledge development, and clinical practice to instill key capacities in new teachers that they are being asked to develop in their students: the ability to think critically and solve problems; apply knowledge to new situations; and engage and communicate effectively with others. Therefore, “learning about pedagogy derived from the science of learning and development also means learning with and through such pedagogy.”⁴

**Well-designed clinical experiences.** Similarly, educator preparation programs need to engage teacher candidates in clinical work designed to ensure they can put into practice the pedagogy they are learning in their coursework. Unlike alternative certification programs, which provide
little or no opportunity for supported practice, high-quality programs provide synchronous opportunities for new teachers to apply what they are learning in carefully selected and designed settings, such as long-term student teaching or residency placements. These settings allow candidates to observe expert teachers; relate coursework to work in a classroom; and reflect on the influence of specific practices on student learning. Many U.S. educator preparation programs have established partnerships with schools and districts to create sites for clinical learning in which best practices can be developed, observed, and studied in an authentic learning environment.

A developmental approach to the development of educators. In designing preparation programs, care should be taken to use a developmental approach to consciously support educators as they learn and grow as teachers. Just as students need a scaffolded approach to learning, teacher candidates need thoughtful guidance and experience to move from a focus on self to a focus on the student; from questioning unexamined assumptions about teaching learned from their own experiences to understanding of teaching through professional knowledge and studying student experiences; from attention to their own teaching practice to their students’ processes of learning. Supporting teacher growth in this way can advance candidates’ abilities from simply managing a classroom to promoting learning. And much like students need opportunities to apply new knowledge in practice, receive feedback, reflect, and practice again to gain proficiency, so too do teachers need chances to connect pedagogy to practice in meaningful ways that allow them to build adaptive expertise and fully develop best classroom practice.

Implications for the Workforce

Strong certification and preparation systems rely on essential elements that help all teachers acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to support students’ social, emotional, and academic development. On the one hand, state systems establish standards that define high-quality practice, teacher preparation accreditation, and program approval processes that support continuous improvement. They ensure candidates receive standards-based learning experiences and performance-based assessments to demonstrate that they meet the standards. On the other hand, strong certification and preparation systems also support broad access to candidates, through incentives such as service scholarships and loan forgiveness programs. They draw candidates into their programs and offer mentoring and coaching to support novice teachers’ continued growth and long-term retention. Taken together, these two areas of focus—guiding practice and ensuring access—function as “two hands clapping,” working together to ensure that all the essential elements are in place (figure 3).

Recommendations for State Policymakers

The following recommendations aim at helping state education agencies and boards of education take steps to build a strong, diverse, stable teacher workforce that can support whole-child school design.

- Support research-aligned, performance-based systems of teacher licensure and preparation program approval. Strong systems of licensure and teacher preparation work in tandem to broaden students’ access to high-quality teaching practice. To build and reinforce these systems, states can do the following:

  - Revise teacher licensure and accreditation or program approval standards to reflect current knowledge about student learning and development. In 34 states, state boards of education approve teaching licensure standards, which regulate entry into the profession; define the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by teachers; and thus influence the practices and curricula of teacher preparation programs. Revising licensure standards to incorporate the science of learning and development communicates to the teacher preparation field that these classroom-ready knowledge and skills are a necessary part of teacher preparation programs and preservice experiences. For example, California has transformed its educator certification and preparation program accreditation over the past decade, revising its teacher and leader preparation...
Support for high-retention preparation pathways (i.e. residencies, grow-your-own)

Scholarships and forgivable loans that subsidize preparation

School-university partnerships that support professional development schools

Funding and incentives for intensive (or year-long), high-quality clinical training

Mentoring for candidates and novice teachers tied to career ladder roles for accomplished teachers

Standards that reflect what we know about how people learn

Performance assessments that assess what educators can do in practice

Accreditation that looks at what programs provide and what candidates learn

Data reflecting the recruitment, distribution, and retention of qualified educators

Induction systems that enable accomplished educators to mentor novices


standards to align more closely with whole-child development.5

Design licensure assessments to assess what candidates can do in practice and preparation program approval systems that look at what programs provide and what candidates learn. In addition to revising its teacher and leader preparation standards, California also requires all candidates to pass a teacher performance assessment as a condition of licensure and operates a more performance-based system of program approval and accreditation.6 This system includes, for example, regular surveys of teacher preparation program completers, mentors, and employers to more fully understand how well programs are preparing teacher candidates.

Support broader access and use of teacher supply and demand data to inform policies at the state level and recruitment efforts at the local level. Such data should include clear, detailed teacher workforce demographics, the pathways through which individuals enter the classroom, and the movement of teachers within and outside a district. Illinois and Michigan publish annual supply and demand reports on the teacher workforce. Michigan’s report is notable for its detailed reporting across the career continuum, including preparation, early-career teachers, overall retention, teacher experience, teacher longevity in districts, and National Board Certification.

Promote recruitment and retention strategies that increase teacher supply, diversity, and quality. As teacher shortages have become more widespread, many states have learned that hiring individuals with minimal to no preparation for teaching undermines whole-child school design and the ability of schools to adequately meet the needs of
their students. Underprepared teachers often struggle in the classroom because they lack strategies to create safe, productive classrooms and leave at high rates, creating significant churn that further destabilizes school climate and student achievement.7

States can provide comprehensive supports for a stable, well-prepared teacher workforce in these ways:

- **Support institutions of higher education and districts in designing clinically focused and high-retention preservice preparation for teachers.** Supervised clinical experiences in schools should model the creation of positive, developmentally supportive learning environments and experiences for all students. To support design and implementation of these types of preparation programs, policymakers can expand high-retention pathways into the profession, including research-aligned teacher residencies and grow-your-own programs.

  For example, New Mexico recently expanded its teacher residency grant program. Funded in 2020 at $2 million and expanded in 2022 with an additional $15.5 million appropriation, the program provides a stipend of no less than $20,000 per year for teacher residents who commit to three years of service in the sponsoring district after they complete their program. Programs awarded funding must be designed to diversify the state’s teacher workforce and fill high-need teaching positions.8

  States can also support funding and incentives to sustain reciprocal university and district preparation partnerships, which can develop intensive clinical training for candidates.

- **Adopt or expand forgivable loans and service scholarships that broaden access to high-quality preparation.** When of sufficient size to address the high costs of preparation, service scholarships and loan forgiveness programs can open a professional pipeline for a more diverse, representative generation of educators and help solve persistent teacher shortages in high-need fields and schools. West Virginia recently expanded the renamed Underwood-Smith Teacher Scholars program in 2019 to provide up to $10,000 a year for teacher preparation in exchange for five years of teaching service in a critical shortage subject area.

- **Ensure access to high-quality mentoring and induction for all novice teachers.** Research-aligned programs for new teachers include mentoring, coaching, and feedback from experienced teachers in the same subject area or grade level; opportunities to observe expert teachers; orientation sessions, retreats, and seminars; and regularly scheduled collaboration time with other teachers. Educators who were involved in effective induction programs are more than twice as likely to remain in the profession compared with educators who were not.9 Induction programs have also been linked to improved instructional effectiveness and positive impacts on student achievement in the years following the program.10 Delaware, for example, requires all new teachers to participate in a four-year induction and mentoring program to advance their initial license.

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9Richard Ingersoll and Thomas M. Smith, “Do Teacher Induction and Mentoring Matter?” (University of Pennsylvania Scholarly Commons, 2004); Anne Podolsky et al., “Solving the Teacher Shortage: How to Attract and Retain Excellent Educators” (Learning Policy Institute, September 2016).
Missouri’s teacher retirement system suggested that the state was on pace this summer to see 30 percent more retirement applications above the average over the six previous years.

Missouri is not alone in its struggles to provide each of its students a high-quality, diverse, and appropriately credentialed workforce. Unfortunately, there is abundant, compelling data that confirm the inadequacy of our efforts thus far. It is also a safe assumption that the pandemic over the last two years further stymied those efforts.

Fifty years of research have fully established and repeatedly confirmed that the quality of the teacher and their teaching is the number one school-related factor affecting student learning. Investments in improving teacher quality have direct outcomes for students. Thus it is critical that the Missouri Department of

Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Missouri

Providing Missouri students a highly qualified, appropriately credentialed workforce has grown steadily more challenging over the past decade. Unsurprisingly, the pandemic made it even harder. Multiple surveys indicate Missouri educators’ growing dissatisfaction over the last two years. These data, coupled with figures on declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs, increased vacancies, uncompetitive salaries, and declining retention rates, have prompted state education leaders to take bold steps to improve teacher recruitment and retention in Missouri.

One survey conducted by a state teacher association found that more than half of Missouri teachers have considered leaving the profession before they reach retirement age, citing increasingly difficult working conditions and not being valued as educators. Data from Missouri’s teacher retirement system suggested that the state was on pace this summer to see 30 percent more retirement applications above the average over the six previous years.

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Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the state board of education, governor, and state legislators take new, unprecedented steps to address our teacher recruitment and retention challenges.

Supply and Demand

Missouri is a very diverse state. It has more than 550 school districts and charter schools. Some are very small and some much larger. Our state has school communities in deeply rural areas as well as urban areas. There are drastically different needs in these vastly different communities. The teacher workforce comprises approximately 70,000 teachers serving nearly 900,000 students.

The root cause of Missouri’s teacher recruitment and retention challenges can be summarized as an issue of supply and demand. The supply of new teachers is not enough to meet the demand, as more and more teachers leave the profession. Anyone in the business world would say that this is a recipe for trouble. In a school, it is particularly problematic due to the incredible effect that teachers have on student learning.

This issue is not new. Missouri’s educator preparation programs clearly show a steady decline of nearly 30 percent in enrollment over the past decade. Obviously, fewer enrollments mean fewer individuals complete those programs. Over the course of that same decade, program completion rates have declined by nearly 25 percent. This decline translates to a reduced number of new teacher candidates becoming eligible for certification and entering the teacher workforce each year. In the past three consecutive school years, there was a nearly 39 percent decline in the number of appropriately certified teacher applicants, resulting in a statewide average of single-digit applicants per position.

At the same time, the annual hiring rate in Missouri school districts has consistently averaged around 11 percent for the past six years, which equates to a demand to fill approximately 8,000 teaching slots per year. This rate places Missouri above the national average of 8 percent annual attrition and nearly triple that of high-performing countries such as Finland and Singapore, which average around 4 percent.

Data from the past six years show that more than 50 percent of available teaching slots are filled with first-year teachers, resulting in a workforce with less teaching experience. Approximately 30 percent of Missouri teachers have fewer than five years’ teaching experience, and nearly half have fewer than 10 years’ experience.

The elevated hiring rate and share of new teachers in the workforce contribute to retention rates that are too low. Over the past six years, on average just 60 percent of new teachers will complete year three and continue to year four in the profession; about 45 percent of new teachers will complete year five and continue teaching in year six. These data all suggest that the demand for new teachers to fill teacher vacancies will continue to increase each year. During the past three consecutive school years, there was a 3 percent increase in the overall number of teacher vacancies.

The Missouri State Board of Education has regularly reviewed the data about educator workforce supply and demand issues, which gave the board and DESE a clear rationale for directing federal relief funds toward addressing recruitment and retention. Nearly $55 million in relief funds have been earmarked to support recruitment and retention grants across the state. Every educator preparation program and community college in the state took advantage of the opportunity. Recruitment grants were also made available to every public school district and charter school in the state to create grow-your-own programs or support established programs. Eighty-five percent of school districts and charter schools submitted applications, increasing the number of grow-your-own programs in the state from 115 (in 20.7 percent of schools) to 470 (85 percent).

The state board is taking additional steps to bolster educator recruitment and retention. The board made this pressing issue one of its top legislative priorities for the year and created a Blue Ribbon Commission made up of business leaders and other education stakeholders to further study this issue. The commission has been reviewing the data on the state’s educator workforce in monthly meetings this summer and plans to generate recommendations by October.

Teacher Compensation

Another contributing factor in Missouri’s recruitment and retention challenges is teacher
In addition, the General Assembly approved funding for the Career Ladder Program, which provides supplemental pay to all teachers with more than two years of experience in public schools for duties and responsibilities for which they are not already compensated.

Valuing Teaching as a Profession

Low teacher compensation also contributes to an overall devaluing of the profession, which teachers and school administrators have consistently cited in surveys as a contributing factor to Missouri’s recruitment and retention challenges and points to a clear need to raise the profile of the teaching profession. The public relations component of TEACH Missouri is designed to improve the public perception of the teaching profession, attract the next generation of diverse and high-quality teachers, retain a greater percentage of the current teacher workforce, and develop a statewide recruitment and retention system. This campaign includes public service announcements, grow-your-own materials for use by school districts and charter schools, and a one-stop-shop web portal for prospective teachers that will include free tools, one-to-one coaching, and financial assistance information. Candidates will use the web portal to better understand the profession, determine the most appropriate pathways for teacher preparation, and more easily navigate applying and being accepted into an educator preparation program. TEACH Missouri’s ultimate goal is to right supply and demand in Missouri’s educator workforce.

TEACH Missouri’s other major component is Pathways to Teaching Careers. This initiative offers regional informational and training sessions for classroom teachers to help them become effective recruiters of high school students. These sessions cover the status of the teacher workforce as well strategies for identifying, recruiting, and supporting high school students with an interest in the teaching profession.

Recruitment funds are now available to communities across the state, intended to increase the supply of new teachers over the next three to five years. Hundreds of individuals in school systems and on college campuses are working together more closely to promote
Perhaps as important as funding these strategies is the evaluation of their effectiveness.

the teaching profession to high school students and other interested candidates, sharing what an incredibly rewarding career it can be. A wide variety of recruitment strategies are being implemented across the state:

- a marketing campaign funded by area consortia to promote the region as a great place to work;
- reimagined Career Days and Recruitment Nights for past, present, and future educators to network and form mentorships;
- mentorships for current high school students that will provide support throughout their college educator preparation programs;
- substitute teaching experiences for those considering the teaching profession; and
- week-long summer events for prospective teachers.

In addition to hundreds of recruitment efforts now under way, teacher retention grants were made available to every public school and charter school in the state. Over 500 applications were submitted, representing 92 percent of school districts and charter schools. These grant funds allow school leaders to implement immediate solutions to decrease the need for new teachers. In their applications, schools selected one or more of 12 research-based and proven practices, including these:

- paying teachers stipends to complete microcredentials, which they can complete on their own schedules and can improve teacher practice;
- hosting onboarding days in the spring for new hires to meet mentors and tour buildings and the community;
- hiring additional staff to address challenging or disruptive student behaviors in a location outside the classroom;
- repurposing space at schools for onsite exercise or "calm down areas" to support the mental health of teachers;
- providing onsite daycare for staff in schools without access to child care in their communities;
- hiring school support specialists to help teachers meet greater student needs; and
- offering more teacher leadership opportunities in schools and throughout the school district.

Evaluating State Efforts

Perhaps as important as funding these strategies through the recruitment and retention grants is the evaluation of their effectiveness. Although school districts, charter schools, educator preparation programs, and community colleges had great flexibility in developing and implementing strategies they felt would best address the specific needs of their communities, each was required to include an evaluation component that specifies how they will track whether their strategies are working and ultimately succeed.

DESE is collecting and compiling these data and will use an external evaluator to ask and answer research questions around recruitment and retention:

- What kind of strategies are being implemented?
- Are these strategies different based on school size or location?
- Which strategies seemed to work best for solving which kinds of staffing problems?
- Which strategies would be most successful in maintaining a high-quality, appropriately credentialed teacher workforce?

Over the next several years, Missouri will conduct a border-to-border study of hundreds of recruitment and retention strategies in all Missouri school communities. The most effective strategies will become the foundation of a first-of-its-kind state recruitment and retention system to continually address workforce issues. The goal is to keep Missouri from having extreme workforce challenges again. But most important of all, this system will work to ensure a high-quality, appropriately credentialed teacher for every Missouri student.

Ensuring Equity in Grow-Your-Own Programs

Created by partnerships of educator preparation programs, school districts, and community-based organizations, grow-your-own programs recruit, prepare, and place community members as teachers. They typically recruit and prepare high school students, school classified staff (e.g., paraeducators, afterschool workers, bus drivers), career changers, and leaders and activists from local schools and geographic communities.

An overwhelming majority of teacher candidates do not know and do not hail from the communities in which they will work.

State-level criteria for programs’ design can yield better outcomes in preparing and retaining diverse teachers.

Conra D. Gist
should address four equity areas: structural, disciplinary, cultural, and interpersonal. These areas provide lenses for exploring how state education policymakers can understand, confront, and overcome barriers community TOCIT may experience when attempting to enter the educator workforce.

**Structural**

Structural power refers to how power relations shape the organization and structure of institutions or systems. As a set of structures and practices that provide access to resources and opportunities, education has a particular power to transform individual and community outcomes. By promoting education careers for those who otherwise might not have the opportunity to pursue them, grow-your-own programs can create opportunities for economic mobility through developing and investing in the talent and cultural wealth of the community. They can combat race, gender, class, and language inequities by creating a career development system with livable salaries and opportunities for community members to move from semiprofessional to professional autonomy. But there must be structures in place before these good outcomes can materialize.

Collective bargaining and district partnership agreements can be high-leverage approaches for advancing this work. For example, a long-standing career ladder program for paraprofessionals was originally establish as a partnership with the New York City's teacher's union and its department of education. Another example is the California Mini-Corps program, in which the state education agency partners with districts to provide pathways to the education profession for children of migrant farmworkers. Structural barriers can be further reduced through loan forgiveness, tuition reimbursement, or scholarships that limit the cost of educator preparation. The Los Angeles Unified School District's tuition reimbursement program for paraeducators is an example of pairing program structures with financial incentives.

**Disciplinary**

Disciplinary power can be understood as the differential impacts of policies and regulations
that create inequities for certain groups. Barriers to entering the profession can signal areas where policymakers may need to rethink and revise practices, policies, and regulations.

Certification exams and rigid coursework and learning opportunities are places where disciplinary power is evident. Standardized exams have historically excluded TOCIT from equitable access to educational opportunities. Yet Dan Goldhaber and Michael Hansen found that Black teachers in North Carolina with low certification exam scores had higher impacts on Black student achievement than White teachers with high certification exam scores.

Recognizing the racialized and problematic nature of the program entrance exams, the Illinois State Board of Education removed the basic skills exam as a prerequisite for entering educator preparation programs. This shift arose in part from grassroots advocacy efforts on the part of the grow-your-own Illinois program to eliminate testing barriers for TOCIT.

Flexibility in program policies and regulations—offering evening classes or Saturday sessions, for example—is another way to advance equity for aspiring teachers with full-time jobs. Some programs have partnered with school districts to arrange a certain number of Friday release days each month so paraprofessionals can complete coursework. Another approach to expanding learning opportunities is to offer summer institutes and bridge programs. These approaches often involve organizing teachers in small cohorts, which allows the program to guarantee course availability and ensure teacher candidates’ access to courses needed for program completion.

**Cultural**

Cultural power derives from dominant, taken-for-granted narratives, assumptions, and ways of viewing, and being in, the world that are normalized as appropriate and acceptable. TOCIT bring to teacher education programs knowledge, dispositions, and skills steeped in distinct ways of being that challenge dominant narratives in teacher education. Initiatives committed to valuing the knowledge systems of TOCIT view schools and teacher education locales as sacred spaces in which educators can engage in self-reflexive, dialogic, reciprocal, and antiracist practices. Grow-your-own program initiative Abriendo Caminos in Nevada and the Indigenous Teacher Education program at the University of Arizona demonstrate what this work may look like in practice.

The cultural power of community can also be valued by expanding the place in which teacher education classes and learning experiences are situated. To do this, learning is not solely based in university settings or led by university professors, but also taken up by local school and community educational experts in neighborhoods, community-based organizations, and spaces that are important cultural markers for the community. Indeed, local schools, grassroots organizations, and historical sites are often organized or led by community members with deep knowledge and expertise that can support the development of effective community teachers.

**Interpersonal**

The nature and type of interpersonal relationships influence the barriers or opportunities that teacher candidates experience. By placing communities at the center of teacher education, grow-your-own programs can foster reciprocal relationships between community members and teacher education programs, identify and nurture community-based educators, and invest in equity-focused schools.

Grow-your-own programs can cultivate relational power by involving the local community in key decision-making processes, attract subawards and grants for community and school collaboration, examine data and address inequities, and foreground commitments to equity across the teacher development continuum. As an example, the Community Teacher Equity Development program, a partnership between the University of Houston and Greater Houston school districts, created community-centered research-practice partnerships dedicated to generating teacher development designs for local school and community members. The ecology of support for TOCIT is not held exclusively by educator preparation programs but interwoven with authentic, reciprocal community and educational stakeholder
partners, whose voices and expertise inform and shape teaching and learning experiences in the grow-your-own program.

**Role for State Boards**

Many state boards of education have authority to require educator preparation programs to present evidence of their commitments to advance equity in their applications for initial accreditation and ongoing state approval. At a minimum, this process for grow-your-own programs should involve the following:

- examining equity provisions and outcomes in educator preparation programs related to teaching and learning development of community TOCIT;
- reviewing equity commitments in program evaluation protocols for community TOCIT;
- piloting equity-embedded program evaluation protocols; and
- ongoing assessment of evaluation processes and their progress toward advancing equity for teachers, students, and schools.

I offer the following questions that state boards and accreditation officers can use to explore how structural, disciplinary, cultural, and interpersonal equity considerations are being advanced in their state's grow-your-own educator preparation programs: 16

- To what extent is the educator preparation program intentionally recruiting from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community members (e.g., community organizers, church leaders)? If it is not, how might the program center their voices, experiences, and needs? If it is, what evidence demonstrates the program's recruitment practices are effective?
- Is the program recruiting BIPOC in semiprofessional roles in schools (e.g., teacher assistants and school personnel) and preparing them in their professional roles as teachers? If not, how might the program do better? If it is, what evidence shows its effectiveness?
- Does the program provide financial, academic and/or socioemotional support structures to ensure the retention of TOCIT community members? If not, how might it do so? If it does, what is its evidence of effectiveness?
- Are university educator preparation program entry policies and regulations designed to eliminate inequitable disparities for community TOCIT? What is the evidence these policies and practices are effective? If they are not evident, how might the program advocate for or create them?
- To what extent do certification and licensure exam policies and regulations disadvantage community TOCIT? If these policies and regulations evidence inequities, what needs to be done differently? If inequities are not evident, what more can be done to ensure equitable certification and licensure exam practices continue for community TOCIT?
- What stipulations at the state and district levels are in place to ensure that BIPOC community members have equitable access to grow-your-own programs? What policy, practice, and regulatory changes are needed to expand access to coursework and learning opportunities for BIPOC communities?
- What are the narratives about teacher quality that permeate the educator preparation program? How are BIPOC community members characterized and positioned in these narratives? What aspects need to be challenged and reimagined to center, honor, and value community TOCIT?
- In what ways does the program’s curriculum and design value local funds of knowledge and community cultural wealth? What aspects need to be challenged and reimagined?
- In what ways is the educator preparation program providing teacher education classes and meaningful learning experiences in schools and communities? What aspects need to be revised and reimagined?
- To what extent does the program leverage reciprocal, authentic, and meaningful partnerships with community-based organizations and TOCIT in the local community? Is it evident these partnerships are effective? What may need to be done differently?
- To what extent does the program recruit, nurture and support community-based teacher
educators? Are these approaches effective based on evidence provided by the program? What may need to be done differently? To what extent are the voices of TOCIT and BIPOC community members reflected in the design and implementation of the educator preparation program? What roles do community schools play in this process? Is there evidence that community voices and schools are effectively embedded in the educator preparation program? What may need to be done differently?}


3Richard Ingersoll and Lisa Merrill, “A Quarter Century of Changes in the Elementary and Secondary Teaching Force: From 1987 to 2012” (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers (TOCIT) share sociopolitical histories of marginalization by K–20 schools and higher education institutions, structures, policies, and practices as well as transformative epistemological, pedagogical, and community-based practices. Positioning TOCIT from a group standpoint when theorizing and conducting research affords more comprehensive, complex understandings of their experiences. The term Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers—along with Black, Indigenous and People of Color and Students of Color and Indigenous Students—is capitalized throughout the article to acknowledge this collective history and give credence to more contemporary efforts to view group standpoints from a perspective of solidarity as a type of intellectual activism intended to advance the production of knowledge for equitable education systems in K–12 schools and higher education institutions.


9Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, Intersectionality (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2016). In it, the authors describe how different types of power intersect to shape the way people experience the world.

10Emery Petchauer, Navigating Teacher Licensure Exams: Success and Self-Discovery on the High-Stakes Path to the Classroom (New York: Routledge, 2019).


Creating State Education Systems That Value Student Cultures

The last two years disrupted public education systems, but they also highlighted opportunities. Schools and districts can apply the nimbleness they demonstrated during the pandemic to efforts to reconnect and reengage their students. In this moment, state boards of education are in the perfect position to guide schools and districts, not just to a return to normal, but to a system that invites back students’ whole selves through inclusive, culturally relevant practices.

Schools and classrooms have always been cultural spaces, but as Zaretta Hammond suggests, education communities ought to understand whose culture is being attended to. Students bring cultural knowledge and expertise to their classrooms. Are diverse cultures welcomed there? How do districts and states support the development of classroom and school culture?

At a time when school systems have reported sharp declines in student enrollment, it is important to recognize that when students are disconnected from school they are disconnected from multiple facets of development. Culturally responsive practice makes use of culture as a basis for engaging and motivating students, and it fosters proactive classroom management and positive student behavior. Such practices also lead to improved academic performance, attendance, credits earned, retention rates, and positive self-identity.

The Role of State Boards

State boards set conditions. Although the levers within a state board’s control vary, most boards have jurisdiction over learning standards, professional educator qualifications, accountability systems, and standards of accreditation. Even in cases where state boards do not have direct control over policy areas, they function as guides for directing districts and schools. State boards raise citizen voices on education issues, engage experts and stakeholders, and bring coherence to state policy.

In shaping state policy, setting standards for practice, and advocating for equitable supports, state boards can set the stage for ensuring that districts and schools are culturally responsive environments. Being culturally relevant and responsive requires that educators exercise pedagogical dexterity as they learn aspects of their students’ lives, what would be relevant to them, and how best to respond to what their students reveal about their interests. What would be relevant in one class with one group of students would be completely irrelevant to students in another (see box).

To emerge from the instability of the past two years with a state education system that values culturally responsive practices, state boards should lead an ongoing strategic process with an eye toward consistent understandings and evidence of culturally responsive practices.

Education policy often falls into a trap of reform and policy churn, resulting in contradictory or disconnected policies that hamper consistent implementation across districts and schools. States can lay the foundations now for consistency—to create ongoing processes of meaning making to ensure that education systems value culturally responsive practices.

There is no perfect or singular algorithm for shaping district or school culture. For schools to be responsive to culture, the direction and support they receive must be dynamic and ongoing. State boards can lead by example. They can engage in their own continuous process of learning as they engage varied communities across the state. They can create definitions for...
what it means to be culturally responsive. They can engage stakeholders and build coalitions to advance implementation strategies aligned with that statewide understanding.

The Delaware Department of Education facilitated a process that began with state-level education leaders engaging in deep reflection on what it means to be culturally responsive and on what should occur at the state level in order to achieve an equitable education for every student. Staff at the department reflected on their own personal biases and used that reflection to review policies, procedures, and practices that were barriers to creating a culturally responsive education system. They worked to develop a statewide shared understanding of and definition for culturally responsive education and sought answers to strategy-defining questions across relevant topic areas:

- **Priorities.** What will you focus on in your area? Each agency leader challenged their groups to choose three or fewer priorities to avoid committing to too many.
- **Goals.** What do you hope your priorities will accomplish? It is ideal to have no more than three goals for each priority.
- **Activities.** What activities are needed to achieve each goal for each priority?
- **Outcomes.** What are the intended outcomes for each priority? This portion gave leaders a way to measure progress on their priorities.
- **Evidence.** What will be the evidence of success for each priority? This is where leaders could engage stakeholders and build coalitions to advance implementation strategies aligned with that statewide understanding.

While cultural relevance is wholly contextual, this example may help illustrate its classroom impact: Consider a lesson on the environmental impact of the closure, removal, and relocation of a large neighborhood Walmart. The building was torn down, leaving a vacant space in a local strip mall.

Students might ask the following: How were building materials disposed of? What impact could there be on air quality, water, electricity? How does the loss of the building affect the local economy? How might it affect local transportation patterns for citizens who rely on public transportation? Such an exploration would afford students an opportunity to explore specific content in environmental science as it relates to their local context. Students could then apply their content knowledge to the cultural dynamics around them.

**Box 1. Lesson Plan**

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**Culturally sustaining teaching requires placing value on community languages and practices and community input.**

- **Resources.** What resources are needed to meet the goals? Asking this question gave leaders an understanding of what was needed to achieve the goals set by each department.

Teams within the department engaged in the same facilitated process and used their understanding to align to interdepartmental and statewide definitions. Departments then had a foundation for engaging districts to identify evidence of cultural responsiveness in their own local school contexts that could inform contexts across the state. Critical to Delaware’s work is a recognition that the process is ongoing and evolving, with flows of understanding that move back and forth between state and local contexts.

To ensure that a process of culturally responsive practice is clear and sustainable, states should keep in mind several key considerations.

- **Expert and public engagement.** Culturally sustaining teaching requires placing value on community languages and practices and community input. State boards should understand how districts vary, ensure inclusion of stakeholders that are representative of those diverse communities, and communicate clearly across audiences.

- **Partnership development.** Partnerships with teacher preparation programs, community organizations, and state teaching organizations can be valuable resources in understanding varied contexts within the state and identifying evidence of culturally responsive practices.
form relationships with students, families, and community members to bridge the divide that often exists between families and school.

States should consider if programs include

- professors who are themselves experts in culturally responsive pedagogy with relevant, recent classroom experience;
- observations with classroom teachers identified as exhibiting quality culturally responsive practice; and
- strategies for diversifying their pool of candidates.

Professional Development. Amendments to preparation programs should be mirrored in changes to teacher professional development requirements and program design. States should take into consideration that teachers trained in traditional approaches to education are often resistant to adopting culturally responsive practices and may harbor misunderstandings about discrimination and exclusionary practices. Resistance to culturally relevant practice is a multilevel problem of learning that cannot be addressed by courses or training that are perceived as add-ons. States should push for training that situates culturally responsive practice as integral to holistic education and to supporting social, emotional, and academic development. Teachers also need the time, resources, and support that will allow them to develop deep understanding of how to implement culturally responsive practices in their respective contexts, which may be starkly different from their own or from those they encountered in preparation programs.

Teacher Diversity

Creating a pipeline for a more diverse workforce is another important path toward more culturally responsive practice. Nearly 80 percent of public school teachers are White and non-Hispanic. It is no surprise then that teachers are often predominantly White and non-Hispanic in schools where the majority of students are not. A more racially, culturally diverse teacher workforce benefits all students and can lead to improved test scores, discipline rates, and graduation rates. However, like culturally responsive practices more generally,
High-Quality, Representative Instructional Materials

A major component of culturally responsive practice is providing teachers with high-quality instructional materials (HQIM). When teachers receive HQIM that supports culturally responsive practice, it saves them from having to find supplemental materials on their own.22 State boards can advocate for HQIM that are closely aligned to standards, allow students to see themselves in their learning, and engage and challenge students in a straightforward way.

Alignment to standards. States should advocate for instructional materials that have been reviewed for quality, such as those identified by EdReports, which conducts rigorous reviews of materials to ensure they are aligned to Common Core State Standards and that materials are user friendly for students and educators. States should additionally review the alignment of materials to state-specific standards.

Representational balance. High-quality materials are representative materials. States can take advantage of the many tools for reviewing how student cultures and languages are represented in curriculum, such as the culturally responsive curriculum scorecard from the NYU Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, the tool for assessing bias from the Great Lakes Equity Center, and the guidelines for improving English language arts materials for English learners from the English Learners Success Forum.

Incentivization. States can use the information they gain from reviewing materials to incentivize districts to adopt curriculum that are high quality and representative and ensure they are supported in implementation.

Inclusive School Contexts

State boards can also focus on the ways in which schools support learning that engages students’ cultural strengths. Budgets are value-defining documents, and a major lever for creating inclusive contexts is ensuring that funds are equitable and directed to student supports. Although most state boards do not make direct funding decisions, they often are well placed to advocate for adequate, equitable funding.

Equitable funding. State boards can review state funding policies using the FundEd tool.23 They can recommend that funding formulas include additional weights for students whose families face economic hardships, English learners, and students with disabilities and can target funds for districts with rates of low property wealth.24

Holistic supports. States can ensure funding is more equitably directed to support districts and schools in adopting policies and practices for holistic student support.25 They can suggest that funding be directed, for example,
to support districts and schools' adoption of evidence-based restorative justice policies and practices, and where possible, provide wraparound services. When students see themselves as belonging in the school building, it decreases negative student behaviors and disciplinary encounters.26

Conclusion

Recent attacks on public education necessitate clarity of vision, a willingness to educate oneself against the misinformation about critical race theory and how it is being conflated with cultural responsiveness and responsibility. There are no silver bullets, and it often feels as if the goalposts keep changing. However, ensuring an excellent, equitable educational experience for every child in this country requires concerted, deliberate, sustained effort. State boards play an important role by forming strategic partnerships and seeking consistent evidence that schools and districts are using every tool at their disposal so that children receive the education that each state has committed to providing.

Preparng Pre-K Teachers: Policy Considerations and Strategies

Amaya Garcia with Cara Sklar

Children across the nation lack access to high-quality pre-K programs that can support their development and build foundational skills for elementary school. The pandemic set pre-K enrollment and funding back further, with an enrollment decline of nearly 300,000 children and state spending remaining...
As children and families return to public pre-K, state policymakers must focus on investing in program expansion and strengthening quality. Those efforts should start with a pre-K teacher workforce that is well prepared and fairly compensated.

In recent years, early childhood education (ECE) advocates have pushed for credential requirements to enhance the skills and competencies of early educators. A seminal 2015 National Academies report, which recommended requiring bachelor degrees, has faced pushback, given the barriers that many early educators face in earning a degree. These barriers include low wages that put the cost of paying tuition out of reach, the need to work full-time, familial obligations, a lack of familiarity and knowledge of available programs, and navigating admissions requirements.

Further complicating efforts to support pre-K teachers’ degree attainment is the fact that credential and training requirements vary tremendously. Of the states that offer a publicly funded pre-K program, 18 do not require a bachelor’s degree and certification for all lead teachers. There are also within-state differences, with 11 states setting higher expectations for teachers working in pre-K programs in public schools than for those who work in community-based programs. Every state pre-K program uses a mixed-delivery model in which programs are offered across schools, child care centers, and family child care homes. This adds an element of complexity to teacher preparation and credentialing that is uncommon in the K-12 system.

At the same time, early educator compensation is low and not necessarily tied to credentials and attainment. In many states, pre-K teachers are paid differently depending on the setting in which they work. Furthermore, too few educators are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and credentials required to teach pre-K, and enrollment in teacher preparation programs has declined overall, with some universities choosing to eliminate programs in ECE entirely.

Teacher preparation is quickly changing, with new models emerging to develop more accessible, affordable, flexible pathways. While programs are often labeled as traditional (e.g., four-year undergraduate programs) or alternative (e.g., fast-track programs for career changers), these classifications do not reflect the diversity of these new models.

We will describe four of these approaches: allowing community colleges to confer bachelor’s degrees, supporting paid work-based training through registered apprenticeships, funding grow-your-own programs that remove barriers for teachers within communities, and encouraging institutions of higher education (IHES) to collaborate on developing aligned, articulated pathways.

Community College Baccalaureates

In 25 states, community college baccalaureate (CCB) programs allow community colleges to offer four-year bachelor’s degree programs. Ten states currently offer programs in teacher education, with Florida offering the most, at 47 programs that span early education, elementary education, secondary education, and special education. These state-level policies arose out of a need to increase access to four-year degree programs for students that higher education institutions have historically underserved.

Because they eliminate transfer gaps between two- and four-year institutions, CCB programs can make earning a bachelor’s degree more straightforward. In addition, the programs are much more affordable, which helps expand access, particularly for nontraditional students. In California, for example, a survey conducted by the state’s Legislative Analyst’s Office found that students perceived the low cost to be the biggest benefit of CCB and that 51 percent of students reported that they would not have gone on to get a bachelor’s degree if it had not been offered at their community college.

A study examining CCB programs in Florida and Washington suggested that the programs are an entry point for promoting greater access to bachelor degrees for students of color.

Washington adopted its CCB policy to help grow their teacher workforce and address pressing shortages. For example, Highline College, close to Seattle, offers a bachelor of applied science in ECE, which includes an option to earn a P-3 endorsement and licensure but also has a pathway for individuals who want to earn a bachelor’s but do not need licensure. And in Arizona, which just approved CCB programs,
Mesa Community College will launch a bachelor of arts program in ECE with a focus on dual language instruction. Many policymakers have embraced CCB as a strategy to meet employer needs and local workforce demands, including in education. As states seek strategies to attract more individuals to teach, particularly early childhood educators who need a low-cost option, CCB should be examined.

**Registered Apprenticeship**

Registered apprenticeship is a highly effective “earn-while-you-learn” workforce development strategy. ECE apprenticeships are a particularly attractive model for the incumbent workforce since they build on prior experience, offer support for nontraditional adult learners, and treat employment as a central asset to degree attainment rather than a barrier. Typically lasting two to three years, registered apprenticeships have several core components: employer involvement; paid, on-the-job learning under the supervision of skilled mentors; related, classroom-based instruction often delivered in partnership with a community college; rewards for skill gains assessed against established competency standards; and, upon completion, a portable, industry-recognized credential, post-secondary credit, or degree. To benefit the early childhood workforce most, an apprenticeship program of study should be aligned with state ECE competencies. Quality apprenticeships either include credit-bearing, transferable coursework that positions learners to earn further postsecondary credentials (college-connected apprenticeship) or are designed to seamlessly lead to an associate or bachelor’s degree (degree apprenticeship).

Both college-connected and degree apprenticeship models must involve higher education partners in articulation agreements that ensure that coursework, credits, and degrees transfer between institutions. And the culminating degree, license, or credential should be recognized at the state or national level, be portable between jurisdictions, and qualify the recipient for employment across early learning settings. One of the nation’s most well-regarded programs, the Pennsylvania Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship Program, lets educators transition from a child development associate credential to an associate degree to a bachelor’s degree.

**Grow Your Own**

Grow-your-own programs are an increasingly popular strategy for recruiting and preparing racially and linguistically diverse teachers already living in the communities they would serve. States and localities have implemented these programs to expand the pool of well-prepared educators who understand the needs of their students and families. Many of these future educators are already working in local schools or child care programs but have not been able to earn a teaching credential due to structural barriers and inequities. To address these barriers, grow-your-own programs may provide financial assistance, paid job-embedded learning, academic advising, flexible scheduling for courses, mentorship, tutoring, test preparation, and a cohort model. In addition, many programs employ navigators that can tailor support for individual candidates.

Partners often cocreate grow-your-own programs to address specific workforce needs in the community, such as bilingual teachers, special education teachers, and pre-K teachers, and can use a variety of preparation approaches. Chicago Public Schools launched a bilingual teacher residency program in summer 2018 in partnership with the National Center for Teacher Residencies and National Louis University. Born out of Chicago’s need to expand public pre-K and identify culturally competent, bilingual teachers to serve young English learners, the program recruits local paraeducators to spend a year working with a mentor teacher while taking classes that will lead to a master’s degree and educator license. They are provided a modest salary to help cover living expenses and discounted tuition. The program’s design puts paraeducators on a faster track to earning a teaching license and boosting pay, which serves as an incentive to participate.

Over 30 states plus the District of Columbia fund grow-your-own program development and expansion or provide direct scholarship support to teacher candidates. However, these
Similarly, the University of Colorado–Denver is leading an effort to remove systemic barriers within higher education and state policy to attaining degrees in Colorado. In partnership with four other Colorado IHEs, it launched a consortium to develop and implement curriculum enhancements and alignment, expand access to bachelor’s degrees, and identify and address barriers to degree persistence. Through online bachelor’s degrees and teacher residencies, each educator preparation program is piloting distinct approaches to offer in-depth clinical training and mentoring, facilitate greater access in rural communities, use grow-your-own strategies, and provide credit for prior learning. The goal is to scale these practices in the state and to make credit transfers between IHEs more seamless.

While these efforts are still under way, they do offer models for how to foster stronger alignment within higher education and ultimately strengthen pre-K teacher pathways.

Opportunities for State Leaders

Thus state education leaders have a role in strengthening pre-K teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention. They can do the following:

- convene stakeholders—including teachers—in public meetings, special sessions, or working groups to highlight successful recruitment and preparation efforts and identify continuing needs, including funding for programs that prepare pre-K teachers;
- advocate for expansion of lower cost pathways for earning a teaching degree;
- create teacher certification and licensure systems that offer multiple approaches to measuring educator skills and competencies;
- make information on available educator preparation pathways, financial assistance, and requirements easily accessible and available in multiple languages (as needed);
- work with relevant agencies to produce an annual teacher workforce supply/demand report that is inclusive of ECE programs within and outside public schools;
- engage in efforts to boost teacher compensation and create salary parity for pre-K teachers working in different settings and with similar qualifications;

Higher Education Consortia and Collaboratives

A handful of states are strengthening alignment and fostering collaboration among IHEs. The lack of alignment has produced a mixed landscape of degree programs, with uneven quality in curriculum and clinical experiences. IHE consortia help foster alignment and address key barriers to earning credentials: lack of articulation between community colleges and four-year institutions, a lack of guidance and academic support, rigid course schedules that do not serve working adults well, and unpaid student teaching requirements.16

In 2021, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity Act, which codified a partnership between public universities, community colleges, and any private university that wants to opt in to meet the needs of the early childhood workforce by “streamlining, coordinating, and improving the accessibility of degree completion pathways” among IHEs in the state.17 Regional hubs will be developed to allow students to take courses at any institution in the hub and make it easier for students to access a class when they need it and in the format (in-person, hybrid, online) that works for them. In addition, universities in the consortium will be expected to accept the full transfer of associate of applied science degrees and parallel credentials obtained through the state’s Gateways to Opportunity program. Students will also receive direct support from navigators, who will assist with the application and financial aid process, and program coaches/mentors, who will help students stay on track and graduate. In addition, an existing Illinois policy allows student teachers to be paid during their clinical training, which consortium members can leverage.
As the country emerges from the pandemic, developing high-quality ECE preparation pathways takes on added urgency. Children are entering pre-K with a wider range of behaviors and abilities than ever, and they need teachers who understand early development and have the skills to support children’s learning and growth. While states have largely led on funding and expansion of universal pre-K, a large federal investment in child care and pre-K could create even more pressure to grow the workforce and strengthen degree programs.

But these efforts must be paired with reform of compensation systems so that pre-K teachers are paid the same across settings and at a level equal to K-12 teachers. Members of state boards of education should use their authority to identify resources and pursue practices that give young children the chance to have a nurturing relationship with a teacher who helps them thrive.

Amaya Garcia is deputy director of preK-12 policy, and Cara Sklar is director of early and elementary education policy at New America.
How can we make the teaching profession something people aspire to?

Christine Benson: First of all: Empower teachers. Value relationships. Value your teachers. Every kid, every day—perseverance. When I was appointed to the state board in Illinois in 2019, this was a discussion we had initially: How do we get people interested in becoming a teacher? Number one: We don't talk about it enough. We don't celebrate it and sometimes don't encourage it. I read a recent article in the Chicago Tribune that talked about parents not encouraging their children to go into education, but also teacher parents not encouraging their children to go into education.

My specialty is in administration leadership. I presented school finance workshops across the state and taught at St. Francis University's school of finance, and I serve as a chair of the Illinois State Board of Education's Finance Committee. So you can bet I love data and numbers. In God we trust, but give me the data. Yes, there are the gut reactions you have to some things, but the data are telling.

Quality of education in Illinois is determined by zip code. Many of you have that same situation: The main focus of resources to supply schools is done via property tax values. That contributes to the whole discussion of equity; it contributes to the discussion of structures in place and biases.

But here's the good news. Illinois enacted a historic school funding reform in 2018. They call it EBF—evidence-based funding—and they based it on the adequacy model rather than the general state formula. It increased the adequacy of school funding, but it also took care of equity of its distribution. This was major.

Since that time, the state has increased its investment in public education by more than $1 million, and 99 percent of that increased investment has gone to our underfunded schools. Simultaneously, the teacher workforce has grown every single year since we added that money. We've added more than 5,000 teachers to the profession since enacting that funding reform.

Now we have an influx in federal pandemic relief funds. We added another 5,600 teachers this year alone. From 2019–20, enrollment in teacher prep programs rose more
We're talking about a problem that's deeply rooted in equity, so our solutions need to be just as deeply rooted in equity.

Historically, we've had the highest unmet demand in special education and bilingual education. We've dedicated $5.6 million of our ESSER state set-aside in grants to districts to implement research-based strategies to improve the retention of special education teachers. This grant is prioritized to districts that have low special education teacher retention rates and/or special education vacancies.

In bilingual, we've had students in some school districts with 100 languages. We launched a $4 million grant to recruit more bilingual educators, and these funds will help us provide that financial support for educators currently working as teachers on a short-term license as they pursue their full bilingual license or educators with a full license who wish to add that on to their ESL endorsement.

What promising practices expand the diversity of the profession?

Sharif El-Mekki: I'm from Pennsylvania. I work at the Center for Black Educator Development. Before that, for 26 years I was a teacher and principal. What attracted me to the profession was Dr. Martin Ryder talking about the connection between education and racial equity. I wanted to be a lawyer, but he said, "Activism in the classroom could have a real impact." That fueled me for 30 years. What I also noticed was that the pipeline into teaching was pretty dry.

A few years ago, Pennsylvania had a 60 percent decrease in teachers being certified, which preceded the pandemic by over a decade. We have dozens and dozens of teacher prep programs. But in 2017, there were four Black men certified in the whole state. Only two of them ended up in the classroom.

At the Center for Black Educator Development, we recognize that creating a Black teacher pipeline that's sustainable, highly effective, and predictable is key to elevating a profession, because who are we elevating it for? It's not just theory. Many of our students are students of color. Elevating the profession means them seeing themselves as part of this educational system.

We were supporting Black men in Philadelphia. They were from all over the country—South Carolina, California, New York—but they were working in Philadelphia. We had mentors to support them, and some were saying, "We're thinking about leaving the profession." I was like, "No, you can't. There are less than 2 percent of you in the profession already. Let's get together." As a practitioner, I felt obligated to provide support. But what we recognized was that not a single one of these 17 Black men, including myself, was approached, invited into the profession, tapped on the shoulder, either in high school or in college. They were invited into the profession once they graduated from their program.

When we asked our colleagues—most of them White women—the average response on when someone engaged them about teaching or leading a classroom was third grade. Some adult was having a conversation with third graders—classmates of ours—about leading a classroom. That chasm speaks to the need to elevate and amplify what it means to lead a classroom.
Dr. Walter, what’s happening at Virginia State University’s college of education? Are you seeing the kind of enrollment you’d like? What partnerships are helping nurture students going into the profession?

Willis Walter: We’re not seeing enough. Freedom School is an important part of that mechanism because it makes education fun again. It shows future educators the hopes and dreams and drive you need to have to be involved and engaged.

For us, we’re selling a mission. Growing up in Chicago, where I became a parent liaison, a teacher, then an administrator in urban and rural settings, every situation was different, but the one commonality was you had to care about students. We miss that in our standards: We don’t look hard at the disposition it takes.

The DOVE program (Developing Outstanding Virginia Educators) is our dual enrollment connection. We’re also doing GROWS (Gaining Real Opportunity With Students) to bring high school students to campus for a week in the summer to see what college is all about and learn how to be an educator and navigate those barriers, those assessment pieces, long before they become educators.

And they need a living learning community around them. All our students are on the same floor and can talk about some of these barriers and issues. They’re also supported by extracurricular activities. Some of our students had never been to a play. We took a whole busload to see The Lion King in Richmond. Even though we’re a historically Black institution, we serve all students, and we wanted to make sure all the students understood what other students might see in that kind of play, how it connects to them.

Are there other effective strategies that have promise?

El-Mekki: We’re seeing some great grow-your-own programs, some great engagement. Illinois just invested $17 million in Freedom Schools, and that’s core to our work. Building a national pipeline for us is a 12-year process. That means we need visions that extend well beyond a board member’s seat in their chair or a superintendent’s time. For us, it’s not a school district or a school board but a consortium of people saying, “This is important for us. This is important for our region. This is important for our state.”

We launched in 2019, and already we have 24 Black educators who came from our program and are working as teacher residents or teachers of record in Philadelphia. The reason for that is, our vision is a 12-year process: engagement and support in high school, engagement and support in college, and then the first four years of teaching.

We’re moving to Detroit as our first outside-of-Philadelphia expansion, and we used a Freedom School model as our teacher prep program. These high school students have a paid apprenticeship teaching first, second, and third graders, being coached by our staff in out-of-school time, and with that is a teacher academy.

We’ve written curriculum for a three-year sequence. Tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders can take this as an elective. As part of the elective, you’re teaching one on one, but it’s not about Horace Mann, John Dewey, and B.F. Skinner, which is typically how teachers are trained to teach students of color. They learn European educational theory, White America behavior theory, child psychologists. But what did Dr. Carter G. Woodson say about teaching Black children? What did he say about training teachers? What did Lucy Craft Laney say? These are Black educational theorists who are widely successful in developing teachers, developing a pipeline and finding success, capturing what they’ve done, using the teacher academy model as well as paying. We got criticism for that: “Why are you paying high school students to learn how to teach?” Because it’s that important.

Are expectations for teachers aligned with what the science is telling us?

Ryan Saunders: The Learning Policy Institute partners with NASBE and other national organizations in our Teacher Licensure Collaborative. Its broader vision is to dig deeper into expectations for teachers and what we envision for teaching based on the science of learning
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Right now, in the 15 states we’re talking to, most candidates are coming through routes that do not include clinical practice experience or the chance to work in a classroom under the tutelage of a mentor. They do not include a connection between that coursework to the classroom. Sometimes in certifications, you’re getting maybe five or six credit hours each year to keep that license, but no one talks about what that coursework should be. No one talks about how coherent that coursework is. Is it connected to what you’re doing in the classroom?

Walter: And are those pathways congruent when you start talking about gender and ethnicity?

Dr. Benson, how does this factor into the way the Illinois state board and department engage?

Benson: The National Council on Teacher Quality has a triennial report on educator supply and demand. We’ve used that heavily to understand demographics, enrollers, completers—all the things that you’re talking about. But we found that waiting every three years was not good enough, so we utilized ISBE.net, where we devised Illinois Educator Preparation Profiles. The data told us where we need to grow, and one of these areas is in teacher diversity. We have a pilot of 26 programs creating recruitment and retention plans for teachers of color. These plans will be required for all prep programs next year. We’re working on an invitation to hire subject-matter experts with a track record in this work as consultants, because we know a lot of these institutions do not have people with this expertise. We also have a research base in place on residency because it leads to higher retention. Teachers feel better prepared on day one with those supports in place. You remember when COVID hit and we shut down. Think of all those in teacher prep who were ready to go into their clinical experiences. How are they going to get that?

You’ve also got the investment of getting individuals into preparation. I saw an example of paying high school students to get into residency pathways. That should not be an exception to the rule; that should be a commitment at the state level and a commitment at the national level. Ultimately, it gets back to the data that Dr. Benson was talking about. Do you have access to the data that shows you the routes [by which] your teachers are coming into the profession? Do you have data on how frequently those individuals are leaving and what the timeline is? Can you track and say, “We know teachers coming through this preparation route are staying longer than teachers in this route, so we should be investing and encouraging teachers to come through those types of routes”?

and development. A lot of our standards were written and revised 10, 15, 20 years ago, and there’s a lot they don’t reflect about what practicing teachers should be able to do to support all students—from culturally responsive pedagogy, to social-emotional learning, to trauma-informed practice. To support that whole-child vision, standards are a first step; ultimately the standards run through your whole system. They support how preparation programs design their programs, how induction and mentoring programs are designed, and professional learning expectations throughout your system.

We started with 15 states to think about how to revise those standards. The panelists have all highlighted how that work is a long-term project. It’s not “We revised our standards last year. I think we’re done.” It’s “How are we supporting preparation programs to ensure they have the investment, financial support, and capacity to bring those practices into their programs?”

In Sharif’s example, those high school students are getting coaching, collaboration, and mentoring at the earliest point in their careers. Then they get four years of induction. That’s fantastic. That’s not guaranteed to most teachers. That’s a short-term challenge every state in this room is going to face. You’ve got new teachers who need coaching, collaboration, connections to other new teachers, and the chance to watch good teachers do the work. They may not get that, and they’re twice as likely to leave the profession for that reason. In the short term, those are the teachers you want to think about.

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they’re so needed and then following up that first year when the teacher goes out, where you have the highest dropout rate.

**Dr. Walter, talk about the misalignment. What can we do to get everyone on the same page?**

**Walter:** First, we need to look at the education pipeline preK-20. In our state, we moved our undergraduate pipeline to include teacher education again, after 15 years of only master's level teachers, which changed the equity in our system as well as led to our teacher shortage. We said, “As universities, you can start having undergraduate teacher education programs.” That also affects principals, assistant principals, the curriculum and instruction specialists.

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation changed its standards to be more inclusive, to say, “There are multiple ways in which you can demonstrate this skill or standard.” However, many states have not picked up that ball and run with it. That allows for those barriers to remain—even when the standards have adjusted to get around those barriers and focus on things that are more congruent with being a quality educator.

Looking at the work we did with the Wallace Foundation in developing a principal pipeline, many of the issues were relevant to the teacher pipeline. You can’t have quality principals if you don’t have quality educators. It makes it difficult to recruit and retain quality minority educators, especially at the principal leadership level, if you don’t have quality teachers in the pipeline.

**What conditions need to be created for those teachers to want to teach for a long time?**

**El-Mekki:** I don’t think we’re talking about this enough. A lot of people are trying to recruit diverse educators, but many of them sound like they’re on safari. “Look at that elusive Black man. Let me capture him for my school.” They haven’t thought one second about what retention looks like.

When Dr. Martin Luther King talked about integration, he also would say, “I fear that I’m integrating my people into a burning house.” In many ways, we’re inviting teachers into burning school houses. If you’re not thinking about the ecosystems, the mind-sets, what’s happening in systems to support retention, then you don’t actually have a recruitment plan. Because if any recruitment plan doesn’t involve a retention effort that’s robust and sustainable, it is not a recruitment plan.

People pretended that we had Black teachers in our pockets. They were calling and filling our inboxes: “We need a teacher tomorrow.” We’re like, “I don’t have a teacher in my back pocket, but I do have a model that you can build that will support your ongoing efforts but that includes retention.” Eventually, we designed a retention toolkit. We built it for HR and talent; principals, coaches, and supervisors; and leadership teams, which include principals. In that ecosystem, people are thinking, “It’s not just the principal we want to retain.” There’s a consortium of people saying, “This is good for our school. This is good for our district.”

We’d ask many of our districts, how do you engage people who are dissatisfied? They said, “Oh, we have exit interviews.” Let’s ditch the exit interviews. We can look on their Facebook page to find out why they’re leaving. How about insight interviews? Ask them, “How do you experience our leadership? How do you experience being in our building? What supports aren’t you asking for that you need? What should we start, stop, and continue doing as school leadership teams, as principals, as HR accountants?” Suppose that’s the norm. If you’re going to do that, then you should also think about the trust and community that you have to build in order to get honest answers. Let’s be intentional to ensure that recruitment efforts are matched with a stronger retention plan.

**Saunders:** Virginia was shifting its teacher evaluation system away from the decade-ago focus on test scores and incorporating a culturally responsive/sustaining element. But they were also exploring how to redesign the whole system of professional learning and retention around principles of supporting and keeping people versus a precedent that was set around evaluation systems. If I were to think about the system as a whole across the country, that piece of trust has been eroded, and there’s a lot of working back from that.

At the same time, your evaluation system should not be your professional learning system
or your professional support system. And your principal shouldn’t be the only one running that [evaluation], because they’ve got other things to do. Yet most state systems rely on them, so you end up getting checked boxes.

We encourage broader vision. How are you redesigning your professional learning system to better support teachers and keep them in? If we want to retain teachers of color and bring them in, how are our systems supporting them?

El-Mekki: Often bureaucracies seek to become more efficient, but in actuality they become less—with this cookie-cutter model, where they’re saying, “This is the efficient way to do things.” But then they end up having to hire or rehire because they had this cookie-cutter model. Some districts we’ve been working with are saying, “Yes, we have induction, but we recognize that teachers of color may need some nuance in that induction.”

As Dr. John King and others say, what’s the invisible tax on male educators of color or teachers of color in general? What do they experience? Are they supported in a regular induction? Are they supported in regular professional learning? Are they supported in a regular teaching model? Who’s coaching that teacher of color who’s leaving the classroom? Who’s supervising that teacher of color leaving the classroom? Who’s on their board? Who’s leading the school? Then what’s the intellectual genealogy of the people who prepared them to teach?

Every year, we have a Black male educators’ convening. It’s open to anybody, but we’re particularly elevating the Black male experience and but also giving them toolkits. What is that ecosystem that you’re working in? We’ve had districts say, “We want affinity spaces,” but there’s no budget connected to it, there are no policy changes connected to it. We’re interested in affinity spaces where we’re a part of a feedback loop. It’s not just us talking in our group chats or at the barber shop, but we’re giving the feedback that’s not only going to make our spaces better but very likely make every student’s experience better because teachers of color were in those seats. Not only do they remember the experience in those seats, they’re getting microaggressions from colleagues and supervisors as professionals. And they’re trying to protect the students in those seats. That’s a trifecta. Then [district leaders] say, “We’ll order you a pizza, just sit around a table and talk.” Are you going to change anything? “No.” Are you going to implement things? “No.” Do we have leadership we can lean on? “No.” Then we don’t need your space.

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**What assurances do you have in the alternative pathway that it is being monitored at the same level as your traditional process?**

**Saunders:** Especially when we think about the practices we want teachers to develop. They may not have gotten that in their preparation, so we need systems to build them up through their careers.

**Walter:** Plus, if the majority of your teachers are being prepared through an alternative system, not your traditional system, then what is that saying about your traditional pathway? And what assurances do you have in the alternative pathway that it is being monitored at the same level as your traditional process?

**What does good in-service professional development look like, and who’s doing good work?**

**Walter:** Our state does give us funding for clinical practice grants that allow the universities we work with in some of the surrounding communities to provide the professional development that the community is seeking. That way, you are pairing professionals with those in the community who know where the rubber meets the road.

Our state also gave to certain universities to build a UTeach program to make sure that individuals of color have access to programs that would support their becoming science and math educators. Grants like that, as well as our residency grant, give the opportunity for professional development and partnerships with school districts in a different way than in the past. It allows us to make sure the needs of regions are being met.

**El-Mekki:** Sometimes bureaucrats seek to become more efficient, but in actuality they become less—with this cookie-cutter model, where they’re saying, “This is the efficient way to do things.” But then they end up having to hire or rehire because they had this cookie-cutter model. Some districts we’ve been working with are saying, “Yes, we have induction, but we recognize that teachers of color may need some nuance in that induction.”
cont’d from page 11...Five Trends Shaping the Teaching Force

overall average salary costs per employee. In other words, there may effectively be a financial trade-off between the growing numbers of teachers and their decreasing experience. But as the older segment of the teaching force retires, will the newcomers stay long enough to become the next generation of veterans?

The national data we analyzed ends with spring 2018, raising questions about whether the pandemic that began in spring 2020 will alter the trajectory of these trends. The answers will not be revealed until the next cycle of national data is released—probably by 2023. I would guess these long-term trends will continue. Moreover, it appears that trend number 5—instability—has already increased. All indications are that teacher turnover is rising and will continue to do so. With the pent-up stress teachers accumulated during the pandemic and as the economy improves, teachers will be able and willing to increasingly seek other employment options. It will be most tempting for teachers in low-income schools, with their added stresses, to explore those options. Hence, state education leaders’ efforts to address teacher turnover will be more important than ever.

2Information about the Schools and Staffing Survey/National Teacher Principal Survey, including methodology and results, is available at https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/ and https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntss/.

cont’d from page 23...A Data-Driven Approach to Staffing Schools

16Kaitlin Pennington McVey and Justin Trinidad, “Nuance in the Noise: The Complex Reality of Teacher Shortages” (Bellwether Education Partners, January 2019).
19For example, Texas has a centralized application to institutions of higher education that asks students about their interest in teaching. Researchers have used this data to determine what proportion of those students interested in teaching enroll in preparation programs. Brendan Bartanen and Andrew Kwok, “From Interest to Entry: The Teacher Pipeline from College Application to Initial Employment,” EdWorking Paper No. 21-397 (Annenberg Brown University, 2022).
20The nine are Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Massachusetts, and Nebraska.
22NCTQ interviewed leaders of several preparation

All indications are that teacher turnover is rising and will continue to do so.
programs and shared their insights in a set of case studies.


Goldhaber et al., "Teacher Staffing Challenges in California.


For examples, see Putman, "Digging Deeper."


Hannah Putman et al., "High Hopes and Harsh Realities: The Real Challenges to Building a Diverse Workforce" report (Washington, DC: Brown Center on Education Policy, Brookings, August 2016).

Three of these institutions are spotlighted in more detail.


Chad Aldeman, "What Does It Mean to ‘Raise the Bar’ for Entry into the Teaching Profession?" Education Next blog, August 29, 2016.


NCTQ, "Driven by Data."


1 Jacob Pansy, "Fewer Americans are Majoring in Education, but Will Students Pay the Price?" MarketWatch, February 14, 2016.


5 Chad Aldeman, "What Does It Mean to ‘Raise the Bar’ for Entry into the Teaching Profession?" Education Next blog, August 29, 2016.


11 NCTQ, "Driven by Data."


learn and grow. With a willingness to follow the evidence and embrace innovative approaches, state policymakers can create licensure rules that set a high bar for the teaching profession while strengthening efforts to build the talented, diverse teacher workforce students need.
Changing the Narrative

When nearly every school shut its doors and went virtual at the start of the pandemic, parents and policymakers alike saw firsthand how hard teachers work to ensure that students learn, regardless of the conditions. “Pay teachers a million dollars!” we declared. Fast forward to 2022 and teachers are tired, stressed, sometimes under attack for what they teach, sometimes blamed for missteps in the system. What happened to the love?

At NASBE’s 2022 Legislative Conference, Illinois state board member and NASBE Chair-Elect Christine Benson asked, “How do we get people interested in becoming a teacher? We don’t talk about it enough. We don’t celebrate it and sometimes don’t encourage it.” Chris is onto something. Supporting and celebrating teachers starts with changing the narrative about teaching so prospective educators can see it as a worthy, rewarding profession.

Empower Teachers. At least 14 states have a teacher member on their state board of education; others convene teachers in an advisory capacity. Yet only 23 percent of educators say state leaders reach out to them regularly on policy decisions, according to a 2020 Educators for Excellence survey. In their 2022 survey, only 1 in 10 teachers reported being consulted about the use of federal stimulus funds.

State boards should hear from current teachers. They can invite educators to present at meetings, serve on task forces, or provide input through focus groups and surveys. To help inform their strategic plan, the Maryland State Board of Education hosted a roundtable with early-career educators. They provided great insight on teacher preparation programs and support for early-career educators. In North Carolina, an advisory committee of principals provided feedback to the state board and legislators on education legislation during the pandemic, and it continues to inform the board on leadership issues.

Support Teachers. The authors in this issue highlight strategies for retaining and supporting teachers. That support must take job-related stress into account. According to RAND, 73 percent of teachers and 85 percent of principals said they experienced acute job-related stress this past spring—levels twice as high as that for all working adults. In a recent policy update, NASBE’s Celina Pierrottet urged embedding trauma-informed practices in mandated teacher training, while ensuring that policies balance teachers’ time in training with time for self-care. State boards should also ask educators about how best to alleviate these stresses.

Celebrate Teachers. People Magazine featured National Teacher of the Year Juliana Urtubey as one of its 2021 People of the Year. She and fellow finalists were chosen to represent teachers across the country “who have persevered during these unprecedented times.” What if all 50 state teachers of the year got a cover story above the fold of their state’s newspaper of record? But celebrating teachers is about more than awards or National Teacher Appreciation Week. It even goes beyond advocacy for better compensation. It is about highlighting the difference they make every day. State boards can use their forums to show how rewarding and impactful teaching can be. By doing so, they can encourage young people or career changers to enter a profession where they are valued.
There is no profession with a greater impact on our collective future than teaching. It is at once a creative pursuit and an awesome responsibility. The relationship between teacher and student can be deep and profound. A teacher’s pride is in lives touched, nurtured, changed, and loved, as celebrated in films like *Mr. Holland’s Opus*, *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, and *Freedom Writers*. Few of us nonteachers can claim such a legacy.

When I was state superintendent in Ohio, I loved interacting with teachers and celebrating them. One of my greatest joys was announcing the State Teacher of the Year. In my final months in that post, a history teacher at Oberlin High School, Kurt Russell, earned that title. He went on to become the 2022 National Teacher of the Year. In recognizing him, I believe that we pay homage to the thousands of teachers who give of themselves each day to help each child succeed. Kurt’s application was stellar, but talking with his students gave me the best sense of what makes him great. They spoke of his passion for history, care for their learning and well-being, dedication, enthusiasm, ability to connect classroom learning to the real world, and attention to student engagement.

I hope some of Kurt’s students are inspired to become teachers themselves. I lament every time a teacher says, “I don’t encourage my students to become teachers.” It’s a sad statement about the conditions we have created around the profession. We all have teachers to thank for who we have become, so we owe it to them to respect their professionalism, commitment, intentions, and service. We should all commit ourselves to celebrating and honoring them.

Teaching is a complex pursuit. What works for one student may not work for another. An approach one teacher uses may fall flat for another. And as the authors herein attest, education leaders have neither perfected nor aligned ways in which they recruit, develop, support, and reward teachers to reach optimum results.

In the best of all possible worlds, the following would all align:

- evidence-based teaching practices and the science of learning and development;
- state standards that specify what teachers should know and be able to do;
- accreditation and program approval requirements for teacher preparation programs;
- what is actually taught in teacher preparation programs;
- knowledge and skills that new teachers actually acquire during preparation;
- requirements for licensure and certification; and
- supports, coaching, and mentoring for teacher induction, success, and continued growth.

That is a tall order, but there is enough evidence to point us to better ways of ensuring that every student has a great educational experience every day.

At a particular meeting in Ohio I will never forget, teachers gave me and my agency some pretty harsh feedback. As they got up to leave, they said, “Even though you heard a lot of complaints, it’s still the greatest job ever.” Join me in extending gratitude and in committing to making that statement true for every teacher.
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