



State Education

Special Issue • July 2025

Standard

The Journal of the National Association of State Boards of Education

**The Educators Students Deserve:
*Four State Policy Approaches***

State Education

Standard

Volume 25, No. 3 • July 2025 • Special Issue

Guest Editors

Conra D. Gist
Travis J. Bristol

NASBE Staff

President and CEO: Paolo DeMaria
Editorial Director: Valerie Norville
Communications Director: Renée Rybak Lang
Editor: Joseph Hedger

Officers

Chair: Keven Ellis, *Texas*
Chair-Elect: Byron Ernest, *Indiana*
Past Chair: Sarah Moore, *Arkansas*
Secretary-Treasurer: Fern Desjardins, *Maine*

Area Directors

Central: Steven Isoye, *Illinois*
Northeastern: Erin Benham, *Connecticut*
Southern: Matt W. Donaldson, *Georgia*
Western: Matt Hymas, *Utah*
New Member Representative: Elizabeth
Tegtmeier, *Nebraska*

Ex Officio Members

National Council of State Board of Education
Executives (NCSBEE) President: McCall Flynn,
Montana
National Council of State Education Attorneys
(NCOSEA) President: Rachel Bosovich, *Iowa*

Reviewers

Ann Mah, *Kansas*
Lu Young, *Kentucky*

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.

Table of Contents

- 3 **Valuing Teachers and Their Educational Impact**
All students need effective teachers, and all aspiring teachers need equal opportunities to become effective.
CONRA D. GIST & TRAVIS J. BRISTOL
- 8 **Modernizing Educator Preparation in Texas**
Robust in-school clinical experiences and integrated coursework are key.
NATALIE BROWN, JUDITH CRUZ, JONATHAN FEINSTEIN,
NATHAN KRIHA, & SANDRA RODRIGUEZ
- 12 **Seeking a Shared Vision for Teacher Diversity in California**
Statewide leadership can create a cohesive whole of disparate local initiatives.
JOSÉ MAGAÑA, JEREMY T. MARTIN, BRYAN MONROY,
JACQUELYN OLLISON, & TRAVIS BRISTOL
- 16 **Overcoming Barriers for Colorado’s Educator Workforce**
Supportive school cultures and mentorship can help turn the tide.
MARGARITA BIANCO, ROBIN BRANDEHOFF, MARVIN LYNN,
MADHAVI TANDON, & ANTWAN JEFFERSON
- 21 **Recruitment and Retention Strategies to Diversify New York’s Pipeline**
Financial barriers get in the way of attracting new teachers, and lack of advancement opportunities dissuade veterans from staying.
ARLEN BENJAMIN-GOMEZ, CHRISTINA COLLINS,
& MARIELYS DIVANNE
- 27 **Making Educator Diversity a Kitchen Table Issue**
A nonpartisan path to a stronger, more effective workforce.
JARVIS LUNDY



Art Credit: all imagery was AI-generated via Gamma.app

Publisher's Note

From NASBE

As states seek to broaden their teacher pipelines, they confront added difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers reflective of the student population and the community's demographics.

State boards of education have been increasingly concerned about recruiting and retaining effective teachers because of both the outsized impact that quality educators have on student learning and the recent staff shortages in many content areas and hard-to-staff districts. State boards and their fellow state leaders have been casting about for what the research says and what other states are doing to attract new teachers, prepare them well, and increase the effectiveness of existing teachers so they will want to stay in teaching.

For that reason, when approached by longtime research collaborators Conra Gist, professor at the University of Houston, College of Education, and Travis Bristol, associate professor at the University of California–Berkeley School of Education, NASBE welcomed the opportunity to collaborate on this special issue. It is a natural extension into the state policy space of their research on the topic and a natural extension of NASBE's work to inform state boards on key areas under their purview.

A key strand of the broad research on teacher effectiveness points to the impact on students of having teachers that look like them. Yet the mismatch between the race, gender, and ethnicity of teachers and students remains wide, both nationally and in many states. Even more significant is the research that shows that all students benefit when their teachers reflect a wide variety of demographic characteristics, backgrounds, and circumstances.

As states seek to broaden their teacher pipelines, they confront added difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers reflective of the student population and the community's demographics. Some

state boards have set goals for increasing teacher diversity and adopted programs geared toward meeting those goals. Others have set goals for increasing the number of teacher candidates generally and for increasing the effectiveness of new teachers and removing barriers to enter the profession generally. Yet many of the programs that states adopt to remove barriers for all candidates—such as grow-your-own programs and apprenticeship programs—have nonetheless succeeded in broadening and deepening the educator workforce in ways that are more reflective of the community makeup.

Gist and Bristol convened teams from four states to examine state data and contexts. The teams consulted education stakeholders within each state before arriving at a set of policy prescriptions appropriate to the context of their respective states for strengthening the teacher workforce. While there are some common concerns and approaches, the briefs from California, Colorado, New York, and Texas differ, too. They do not attempt to solve a national problem but only the state challenge in front of them, respectful of their own state values, priorities, and contexts. Our hope in partnering with the guest editors on this special issue of the Standard is that each state, as it seeks for itself to improve its teacher pipelines and develop the talent it has and needs, is inspired by at least one of the states included in this report.

We thank the state teams, the guest editors, and the state board members who served as reviewers to the overview and state briefs for their efforts to bring policy legs to the important research on teacher effectiveness and diversity.



Valuing Teachers and Their Educational Impact

To prepare future generations to serve their nation and lead its advancement, it is vital that their educators are well prepared and can teach diverse student populations effectively. Precisely because of the critical importance of highly prepared educators, equal opportunity to enter the US educator workforce remains a key issue.

There is robust research evidence to buttress a commitment to effective educators for all students, including students of color and Indigenous students, who make up a majority of the US school population.¹

All students need effective teachers, and all aspiring teachers need equal opportunities to become effective.

Conra D. Gist & Travis J. Bristol

Ethnoracially diverse educators have been found to improve students' academic outcomes,² socioemotional development,³ attendance and extracurricular activities,⁴ and sense of belonging.⁵

The history of educator development reveals that this country has not always afforded equal opportunity to all. For example, there were massive layoffs of Black educators during desegregation in the late 1960s and 1970s.⁶ People of color continued to have limited representation in the profession in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s.⁷ Biased hiring and evaluation practices and

There is a democratic imperative to provide *all* students with equal access to quality educators, and states that advance equal opportunity in educator development systems address this need.

persistent disparities in the outcomes of certification testing plagued the profession in the first quarter of the 21st century.⁸

Given the evidence of obstacles that ethnoracially diverse educators in particular have faced,⁹ educational leaders, scholars, and policy groups have launched concerted efforts to expand representation over the past few decades. Strategies have included tailored educator preparation designs such as grow-your-own programs to draw local talent to the profession,¹⁰ scholarships and fee waivers,¹¹ recruitment campaigns,¹² and other state and national policy efforts.¹³

There is a democratic imperative to provide *all* students with equal access to quality educators, and states that advance equal opportunity in educator development systems address this need.

The Handbook Project

To help practitioners and education researchers understand this research on the impacts on students of effective educators as well as the research on the academic and professional trajectory of educators along the teacher development continuum, we co-edited the *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* in 2022.¹⁴

With our contributors, we mapped 11 domains of inquiry: recruitment, program design, mentorship, induction and human resource support, professional development, educational impact, minority-serving institutions, intersectionality, pedagogical and leadership practices, retention, and policy. We provided an overview of what researchers know and do not know about these domains as they relate to ethnoracially diverse educators. An important outcome of this project was the creation of a research agenda, clearly anchoring the foundation of work in the current knowledge base, and outlining research topics, questions, and studies for each of the 11 domains.¹⁵

There were common themes across domains:

- the important, positive impact of ethnoracially diverse educators on academic and nonacademic development of students;
- the absence and need for holistic,

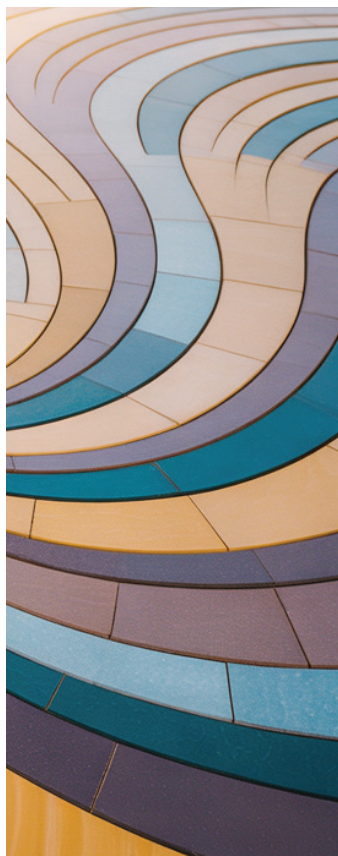
humanistic support for teachers;

- the significant within-group and across-group variation among ethnoracially diverse teachers; and
- the salience of the structural and social implications of race and racism as a perennial challenge for teachers.

We wanted to extend the discussion beyond the academy and researchers, so we developed additional resources geared toward educator audiences. Drawing from the *Handbook's* evidence base, a special report with *Kappan* features educator testimonies and research briefs with key findings and recommendations tailored for practitioners.¹⁶ And because we were interested in exploring the implications for policy, we created a special issue with *Educational Policy Analysis and Archives* that paired educational policy intermediaries with researchers and scholars.¹⁷ Most recently, we partnered with four states to develop state-specific policies based on research from the *Handbook*. These state briefs are the focus of this special issue of the *State Education Standard*.

State Policy Convening

Before discussing the specific learnings from the states we engaged in this project, it is important to note that our efforts were informed by previous efforts aimed at developing the capacity of states to design policy prescriptions aimed at recruiting, developing, and retaining an ethnoracially diverse educator workforce. One such effort was the Diverse Learner-Ready Teachers Initiative, organized by the Council of Chief State School Officers. This 10-state effort included state and local education policymakers from across the country working alongside university faculty and education nonprofit leaders. Subsequently, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education developed inSPIRED, an affinity group for educators of color centered on professional development opportunities and networking.¹⁸ The Illinois State Board of Education focused on supporting institutions of higher education in implementing culturally responsive teacher standards into its teacher



preparation program standards.¹⁹

For this project, we engaged teams from four states to consider the implications of the research to their state contexts: Texas, New York, California, and Colorado. Each team developed a policy brief dedicated to state-specific educator development challenges and generated research-based recommendations tailored to state educational needs. To do this, we coupled the *Handbook* research and collective knowledge systems of cross-sections of education partners (i.e., advocates, researchers, students, teachers, school and district leaders, parents) and education policy intermediary organizations (i.e., Teach Plus, Education Trust, Learning Policy Institute, Latinos for Education, and Scholars Strategy Network). At each state convening, researchers, students, teachers, school and district leaders, parents, and policy intermediaries considered the research we presented in the *Handbook* and applied their own knowledge and experience to contextualizing it for their state.

We cannot negate the current sociopolitical climate in which commitments to research on ethnoracially diverse educators is situated. Since the *Handbook* was published and the state convenings took place, the political context changed. With the election of the 47th president of the United States, his administration renewed a commitment to ensure education entities uphold the Supreme Court's 2023 ruling in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*.²⁰ The decision held that admissions processes that took race into account were done in a manner that violated the Constitution's equal protection clause.

In early 2025, the President signed Executive Order 14151. It directs the Office of Civil Rights at the US Department of Education to ensure the nondiscriminatory obligations of schools and educational entities in keeping with the *Students for Fair Admissions* decision. In a follow-up to the Dear Colleague letter on February 14, 2025, the department articulated the guideline further: "If an educational institution treats a person of one race differently than it treats another person because

of that person's race, the educational institution violates the law. Federal law thus prohibits covered entities from using race as the primary factor in decisions pertaining to admissions, hiring, promotion, compensation, financial aid, scholarships, prizes, administrative support, discipline, housing, graduation ceremonies, and all other aspects of student and academic and campus life."²¹

That said, the ruling also indicates that classifying students based on race is lawful as long as it satisfies strict scrutiny that is narrowly tailored, and not overbroad or underinclusive, to achieve a compelling (governmental) interest. Further, the accompanying FAQ spotlights one compelling interest for the use of race-based preferences, which is "remediating specific, identified instances of past discrimination that violated the Constitution or a statute committed by the specific educational institution in question."²² Such instances must be measurable, permissible to judicial review, and timebound. This language matters for states where there is evidence of violations to equal opportunity to the educator workforce and there is a need to develop state-based policies that provide access to high-quality educators for children.

The goal of this special issue is to provide evidence-based state policy solutions, which must be not only grounded in research but viable and permissible in the current and rapidly evolving education policy context. Given that US Secretary of Education Linda McMahon has pledged to send "education back to the states where it so rightfully belongs,"²³ there is a current policy context for states to become even more central in setting education agendas that are responsive to their K–12 students. States should consequently feel emboldened to develop research-informed policies around the educator workforce. A few states, however, have more specific parameters in which they must operate, and those should be carefully considered on a state-by-state basis. Nonetheless, ensuring the production of nonpartisan education data, statistics, and research remains critically important for advancing evidence-based education policies, especially related to the US educator

Each team developed a policy brief dedicated to state-specific educator development challenges and generated research-based recommendations tailored to state educational needs.

workforce. Thus, we consider research evidence in tandem with the policy environment and recent federal mandates as we describe the policy solutions that emerged across the four states.

Common State Themes

Several common challenges to fortifying the educator workforce emerged in each of the four states. First, all states saw the need to address teacher shortages. Such shortages typically vary based on schools' locations in rural, urban, and suburban communities; disciplines such as STEM and English language arts; and the ethnoracial and linguistic diversity of educators.²⁴ Teacher attrition was also a common theme. Several challenges contribute to it: hostile school working environments; meager pay coupled with a high cost of living; certification hurdles such as required master's degrees, exam fees, and bias resulting in lawsuits; lack of responsive school leadership; and limited career advancement opportunities.

Authors of the New York and Colorado briefs frame recruitment and retention as interrelated domains and essential policy areas for strengthening the educator workforce. The absence of a clear shared state vision for the educator workforce was also noted as a barrier, as was the need to more clearly define diversity to facilitate a shared language for advancing policy.

Common recommendations also emerged. To address financial burdens related to recruitment, several state teams recommended financial incentives such as scholarships and stipends, salary increases, debt relief, housing stipends, waiving certification exam fees, and loan forgiveness. As it relates to teacher quality, several preparation models and potential teacher pools were recommended, many of which are grounded in grow-your-own models. These models include teacher residencies, community-based programs, and apprenticeship programs that encompass community college transfers, education aides, school paraprofessionals, and other community members.

State teams also produced common recommendations to support teacher quality, and by extension, to improve teacher retention. They suggested promoting National Board Certification, providing targeted affinity programs, and offering culturally responsive professional development and mentorship. The recommendations also included training for leadership related to school culture and/or equity; offering teachers online safe-space groups and mental health and wraparound support; providing technical assistance where racial state-mandated equity plans, legal rulings, or civil rights findings of biases were apparent or reported; strengthening data reporting and collection from state, regional, district, and local school systems; and standing up statewide task forces to study and address unequal opportunities to students' access to the teaching profession along the full continuum of educator development systems, and students' access to quality and effective teachers.

State Policy Considerations

Given the current sociopolitical context, policies to ensure students' access to effective teachers in the present—and to the teaching profession in the future—will benefit from a critical educational policy lens.²⁵ State and district officials should feel empowered—now more than ever—to develop state-specific educator workforce policies. Moreover, given Secretary McMahon's policy pronouncements to send education back to the states, state and district officials should not fear retaliation from the federal government but should feel empowered—now more than ever—to develop state-specific educator workforce policies. A critical educational policy lens can assist with this process and ought to include the following:

Examination of policy history. Such an examination explores taken-for-granted assumptions and invites opportunities for questioning and critique. Further, it provides an opportunity for understanding the genesis of policies, the problems they attempted to solve, and the reason the policies have persisted.

Establishment of integrated data systems. Integration of state-level data systems to encompass student, district, educator preparation, workforce development, and certification data would aid in understanding the state of the educator workforce along the teacher development continuum. Access to this data would enable policy analysts to answer important questions related to past and current policies before implementing new ones.

Investigation of policy impact. With the data infrastructure in place, the impact of policies to expand access to the profession and students' access to effective teachers can be better understood. This investigation can engage all 11 domains of inquiry in relation to equal opportunity and shift attention from policy rhetoric to the results of the policy enactment.

Policy development process. As state policymakers consider data, outcomes, and next steps, they should engage and seek multiple perspectives, particularly from those most directly impacted such as teachers, students, parents, and school leaders as well as those from ethnoracially and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

With this framework for anchoring policy development for the US educator workforce in mind, analysts and policymakers can select an aspect of educator development to investigate related to ethnoracially diverse educators. We suggest they consider the 11 domains of inquiry we identified in the *Handbook* as a starting point. They represent an integrated, dynamic system and continuum of support for educators. They can also be grouped into three broad categories:

- **preparation:** recruitment, program design, and minority serving institutions;
- **placement:** human resource development and induction, intersectionality, mentorship, and professional development; and
- **productivity:** retention, educational impact, pedagogical and leadership practices, and policy.²⁶

The *Handbook's* review of the research agenda also may be helpful, as it covers topics, research questions, and needed studies in each domain.²⁷

Ultimately, each state must determine what is most pressing relative to teacher quality and effectiveness in their contexts. There is not one set of policies that will guarantee equal opportunity in educator development systems in all states. Yet all states desire the same thing: ensuring all students have equal access

to quality educators. The policy briefs and commentary herein show what this may look like and how to realize states' commitment to this goal.

Conra D. Gist is a professor of teaching and teacher education in the College of Education at the University of Houston, and Travis J. Bristol is an associate professor of teacher education and education policy at the University of California-Berkeley School of Education.

Notes

1 David Blazar, "Teachers of Color, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Student Outcomes: Experimental Evidence from the Random Assignment of Teachers to Classes," *EdWorkingPaper* No. 21-501 (Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, 2021).

2 Seth Gershenson et al., "The Long-Run Impacts of Same Race Teachers," IZA DP No. 10630 (IZA Institute of Labor Economics, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2940620>.

3 Donald Easton-Brooks, *Ethnic Matching: Academic Success of Students of Color* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

4 Daman Chhikara, "The Effects of Student-Teacher Ethnoracial Matching on Chronic Absenteeism: Exploring the Role of Relational Dynamics in Early Education," *Early Education and Development* (2025): 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2025.2484852>; Christopher Redding, "A Teacher Like Me: A Review of the Effect of Student-Teacher Racial/Ethnic Matching on Teacher Perceptions of Students and Student Academic and Behavioral Outcomes," *Review of Educational Research* 89, no. 4 (2019): 499–535, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654319853545>.

5 Jemimah L. Young and Donald Easton-Brooks, "The Impact of Teachers of Color on School Belonging: A Conceptual Framework," in Conra D. Gist and Travis J. Bristol, eds., *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* (American Educational Research Association, 2022), 637–44.

6 Michael Fultz, "The Displacement of Black Educators Post-Brown: An Overview and Analysis," *History of Education Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (2004): 11–45.

7 Richard Ingersoll, "The Demographic Transformation of the Teaching Force in the United States," *Education Sciences* 11, no. 5 (2021): 234; Richard Ingersoll and Lisa Merrill, "A Quarter Century of Changes in the Elementary and Secondary Teaching Force: From 1987 to 2012," Statistical Analysis Report, NCES 2017-092 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

8 Diana D'Amico et al., "Where Are All the Black Teachers? Discrimination in the Teacher Labor Market," *Harvard Educational Review* 87, no. 1 (2017): 26–49; Leslie Fenwick, "The History,

Current Use, and Impact of Entrance and Licensure Examinations Cut Scores on the Teacher-of-Color Pipeline: A Structural Racism Analysis," white paper (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2021); Dan Goldhaber and Michael Hansen, "Race, Gender, and Teacher Testing: How Informative a Tool Is Teacher Licensure Testing?" *American Educational Research Journal* 47, no. 1 (2010): 218–51.

9 Travis J. Bristol et al., "Mixed Messages and Diversity Management: Misalignment between District Intention and Action Aimed at Hiring Teachers of Color," *American Journal of Education* 130, no. 3 (2024): 339–62.

10 Conra D. Gist, Margarita Bianco, and Marvin Lynn, "Examining Grow Your Own Programs across the Teacher Development Continuum: Mining Research on Teachers of Color and Non-traditional Educator Pipelines," *Journal of Teacher Education* 70, no. 1 (2019): 13–25.

11 Desiree Carver-Thomas, "Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color," report (Learning Policy Institute, April 19, 2018).

12 One Million Teachers of Color, website.

13 Latinos for Education, "Massachusetts Legislature Passes Landmark Educator Diversity Legislation," press release, November 20, 2024; Javaid Siddiqi and Jarvis Lundy, "The Case for Educator Diversity: A Nationwide Campaign, the Intersection blog (Hunt Institute, July 17, 2024); Travis J. Bristol and Desiree Carver-Thomas, "Facing the Rising Sun: Black Teachers' Positive Impact Post-Brown," report (Spencer Foundation, Learning Policy Institute, and California Association of African American Superintendents and Administrators, May 2024).

14 Conra D. Gist and Travis J. Bristol, eds., *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* (American Educational Research Association, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2xqngb9>.

15 Conra D. Gist, "Handbook Research Agenda: Building the Evidence Base for Educational Equity: A Research Agenda for Strengthening Educator Ethnoracial Diversity in the United States," in Conra D. Gist and Travis J. Bristol, eds., *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* (American Educational Research Association, 2022).

State teams also produced common recommendations to support teacher quality, and by extension, to improve teacher retention

16 Conra D. Gist and Travis J. Bristol, "Learning from the Voices of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Educators: Charting New Directions for Research, Policy, and Practice," *Phi Delta Kappan* 103, no. 2 (2021): 4–7.

17 Conra D. Gist and Travis J. Bristol, and Saili Kulkarni, "Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers: Developing and Fortifying Policies That Diversify the Educator Workforce," *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 32, no. 52 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.32.8826>.

18 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, "INSPIRED Initiative," web page, updated July 15, 2024;

19 Illinois State Board of Education, "Supporting Educators: Diverse and Learner Ready Teachers," web page.

20 *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*, 600 U.S. 181 (2023).

21 US Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Acting Assistant Secretary, Dear Colleague Letter, p. 2, February 14, 2025.

22 US Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Frequently Asked Questions about Racial Preferences and Stereotypes under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, p. 3.

23 Linda McMahon, US Department of Education, Office of Communications and Outreach, Statement on President Trump's Executive Order to Return Power over Education to States and Local Communities, March 20, 2025.

24 Dan Goldhaber and Roddy Theobald, "Teacher Attrition and Mobility over Time," *Educational Researcher* 51, no. 3 (2021): 235–37, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X211060840>.

25 Erica O. Turner, Dominique J. Baker, and Huriya Jabbar, "Improving Researchers' Capacity to Address Injustice: An Introduction to the Special Issue," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 46, no. 2 (2024): 175–91, <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737241239982>.

26 Conra D. Gist et al., "Motivating Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers to Stay in the Field," *Phi Delta Kappan* 103, no. 2 (2021): 61–65.

27 Gist, "Handbook Research Agenda."



Modernizing Educator Preparation in Texas

Robust in-school clinical experiences and integrated coursework are key.

Natalie Brown, Judith Cruz, Jonathan Feinstein, Nathan Kriha, & Sandra Rodriguez

Texas has by far the largest teacher workforce of any state, with over 380,000 teachers employed during the 2024–25 school year. The state also accounts for just under one-fifth of the nearly 590,000 aspiring teachers enrolled in teacher preparation programs across the nation.¹ Yet Texas schools, as in every state, face shortages of qualified and diverse teachers. These shortages are particularly acute in high-need subject areas such as STEM, special education, and multilingual education and in rural and low-income communities.²

Ensuring that classrooms are adequately staffed has also been a longstanding and growing challenge in Texas. Teacher attrition rose to 12.9 percent in 2024–25, significantly higher than national rates, and coincided

with a decrease in certifications of new teachers.³ Between 2017 and 2022, Texas experienced a 20.4 percent decline in the number of completers of educator preparation programs.⁴ In response to the shortage of certified teachers and increased teacher turnover, districts across Texas—particularly in rural communities—have increasingly hired uncertified teachers, with detrimental impacts on student learning. More than half of all first-time, full-time new teachers hired in 2023–24 were uncertified. Of these, 72 percent had no prior classroom experience, resulting in an estimated loss of three to four months of learning in reading and math for their students.⁵

The state's teacher workforce is also less racially and linguistically diverse than the student population. However,



Black and Latino teachers in Texas are significantly more likely to stay in the profession than their White counterparts.⁶ In 2022, teachers of color made up 47 percent of Texas's educator workforce; students of color represented around 73 percent of the population.⁷ According to the Texas Education Agency, one-fifth of current Texas students are multilingual learners, and the shortage of teachers of English as a second language is leading to less individualized support.⁸ Students of color constitute a sizable percentage of Texas's student population, and their access to effective educators is crucial to the effectiveness of the state's public education system and future workforce.

To produce and retain more effective, diverse, and multilingual educators, Texas policymakers must expand aspiring teachers' access to pathways that meet local needs and offer robust in-school clinical experience and integrated coursework. The following recommendations were developed by EdTrust, Teach Plus, and Latinos for Education based on knowledge gained from educators across the state, findings produced by the governor-established Teacher Vacancy Task Force,⁹ and insights gathered while producing a 50-state scan of registered teacher apprenticeship programs (RTAPs).¹⁰

Investing in Paid Residencies

By 2023, the Texas Education Agency had used approximately \$90 million of federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds to provide grants and technical assistance to 85 districts that partnered with 37 vetted teacher residency programs, all of which paired teacher candidates with experienced mentors for a full year of in-school clinical training.¹¹ Residents received stipends during this year.

An evaluation by researchers at the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina found that nearly nine in ten candidates completing these yearlong residency programs remain in Texas classrooms into their third year, and they are more likely to work in high-need schools.¹² Additionally, first-year teachers who completed a paid residency program were as effective as fifth-year teachers in reading instruction.¹³

Informed by these results, the Texas State Board of Education recently approved a distinct "enhanced certification" for candidates who complete a high-quality residency.¹⁴ State legislators can sustain and scale access to this proven model by establishing a teacher residency allotment in the school finance formula to cover stipends for resident teachers, mentor teachers, and the educator preparation programs that support them. This allotment should be weighted

toward aspiring teachers entering high-need subject areas and schools.

Supporting Transfer Candidates

To grow the pipeline of aspiring educators entering high-quality preparation programs, Texas must also support teacher candidates who begin at community colleges.¹⁵ Compared with peers entering four-year institutions right after high school, transfer candidates tend to have more extensive work experience and place greater value on credit transfer, course availability, job placement, and the ability to stay close to home when choosing a college.¹⁶ They also face greater financial barriers to staying enrolled. For this reason, strong support services and paid clinical opportunities are particularly important for these aspiring educators.

Notably, 70 percent of students enrolled in the state's community colleges are people of color.¹⁷ Thus, community colleges can play a significant role in strengthening and diversifying the teacher pipeline. Texas legislators should increase access to financial aid for students transferring from community colleges and enforce transparency and accountability to ensure transfer students can apply credit hours for lower-division courses toward their bachelor's programs.

Scaling High-Quality Teacher Apprenticeship Programs

RTAPs have garnered significant federal and state-level attention in recent years. Teacher apprentices earn salaries while gaining hands-on training under mentor teachers as they work toward licensure and, when necessary, completion of bachelor's degrees.

Texas has long encouraged local education and workforce partnerships. RTAPs build on this tradition by providing aspiring teachers—especially those with some college credit but no degree—free or low-cost pathways into the profession while ensuring that schools are staffed with qualified individuals who are deeply rooted in their communities. Learning from innovative local models like those at Dallas College and Brazosport Independent School District, state agencies should provide clear guidelines and aligned resources to expand the application of best practices.

In coordination with the state's Higher Education Coordinating Board and Workforce Commission, the Texas Education Agency should first develop a state-level framework

State investments targeted toward [paraprofessionals] are more likely to diversify the workforce, increase the pipeline of new teachers, and increase teacher effectiveness.

and a structure for providing technical assistance to preparation programs and districts that partner to create RTAPs. The state agency, with input and oversight from the State Board for Educator Certification, should also create guidance to help districts, especially those in rural and underresourced communities, braid funding streams and align other grow-your-own and mentoring initiatives with apprenticeship programs that meet their local workforce needs.

Prioritizing Educational Aides and Paraprofessionals

RTAPs can serve candidates ranging from high school students to career changers but are typically tailored for nonteacher school staff. Many programs explicitly require apprentices to be employed as educational aides or paraprofessionals. Texas currently has 86,000 educational aides earning an average annual base pay of \$24,000. They are also far more diverse than traditional teacher candidates, yet state data shows only 6 percent obtain certification within 10 years.¹⁸ Because paraprofessionals often aspire to be teachers, have classroom experience, and are rooted in a school community, state investments targeted toward these staff are more likely to diversify the workforce, increase the pipeline of new teachers, and increase teacher effectiveness.

The Texas Education Agency, in partnership with the State Board for Educator Certification and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, can support paraprofessionals by ensuring the credentials earned through their apprenticeships are stackable and portable. Additionally, agency and state boards can clearly define pathways for aides to progress toward certification through increasing wage tiers based on coursework completion, on-the-job learning hours, and demonstrated competencies.

State legislators should also establish or expand tuition exemptions for paraprofessionals. By reducing the cost of higher education coursework for apprentices, expanded tuition exemptions can increase the viability and sustainability of apprenticeship programs.

Waiving Certification Fees and Consolidating Exams

Especially for those pursuing certification in bilingual education and special education, certification and exam fees pose a significant barrier, totaling up to \$1,000. These fees hit candidates from low-income backgrounds hardest, just as they near the end of their preparation. State legislators should alleviate this burden and make the profession more accessible by waiving certification and exam fees. Given the time, stress, and costs associated with certification exams, state boards should also consider opportunities to consolidate them while upholding rigorous, comprehensive standards.

Strengthening Data Collection and Reporting Practices

State agency staff, state board members, legislators, district leaders, and the public lack data indicating which educator preparation programs are most successful in producing teachers from underrepresented demographics. State agencies should collect and make public data disaggregated by race and ethnicity, gender, and family income status. Collecting better data on educator preparation programs and connecting that data with preK-20 data systems for students participating in pathway programs would help Texas leaders identify which program characteristics are most correlated with success. Better data would also help districts determine which programs are best suited to help them meet their local teacher workforce goals.

Natalie Brown is the Texas policy manager at Teach Plus. Judith Cruz is the Texas assistant director at EdTrust. Jonathan Feinstein is the Texas state director at EdTrust. Nathan Kriha is a P-12 policy analyst at EdTrust. Sandra Rodriguez is the Texas executive director at Latinos for Education.

Notes

- 1 Learning Policy Institute, “The State of the Teacher Workforce: A State-by-State Analysis of the Factors Influencing Teacher Shortages, Supply, Demand, and Equity,” web page (2024).
- 2 “Teacher Shortage Areas 2023–2024,” Texas Education Agency, web page.
- 3 Jeremy B. Landa, “Employed Teacher Attrition and New Hires 2011–12 through 2022–23,” web page (Texas Education Agency, March 2023).
- 4 LPI, “The State of the Teacher Workforce.”
- 5 Jacob Kirksey, “Amid Rising Number of Uncertified Teachers, Previous Classroom Experience Proves Vital in Texas,” policy brief (Texas Tech University, Center for Innovative Research in Change, Leadership, and Education, 2024).
- 6 John Fitzpatrick and Charles R. Martinez, “Texas Educator Preparation Pathways Study: Developing and Sustaining the Texas Educator Workforce,” report (Educate Texas, June 6, 2022).
- 7 US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, “EEO-5 (Elementary-Secondary Staff Information Report) Statistics,” web page.
- 8 Texas Education Agency, “SB 560: Emergent Bilingual Strategic Plan,” report (N.d.); Catherine Horn et al., “Texas Teacher Workforce Report: Prepared for Raise Your Hand Texas,” report (University of Houston College of Education, January 2021).
- 9 Teacher Vacancy Task Force, “Developing a Thriving Teacher Workforce in Texas,” report (Texas Education Agency, February 2023).
- 10 Nathan Kriha et al., “Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Programs: A 50-State Scan,” report (EdTrust and Pathways Alliance, January 10, 2025).

- 11 Texas Education Agency, “Statewide Texas Teacher Residency Programs and Practices,” Texas Education Agency, web page.
- 12 Kevin C. Bastian and Sarah Crittenden Fuller, “Assessing Teacher Candidate Characteristics, Clinical Placement Practices, and Employment Outcomes for the US PREP Transformed Model: Initial Results for Teacher Preparation Programs in Texas,” report (Education Policy Initiative at Carolina, January 2024).
- 13 Kevin C. Bastian, Sarah Crittenden Fuller, and Andrew Otte, “Paid Residency Programs in Texas: Initial Impacts on Student Achievement and Teacher Retention,” report (Education Policy Initiative at Carolina, November 2024).
- 14 EdTrust, “State Board of Education Approves New Teacher Preparation Standards,” press release, April 29, 2024.
- 15 Judith Cruz, “Transfer Students Are Key to Building a More Diverse, Better Prepared Teacher Workforce,” blog post (EdTrust, May 20, 2024).
- 16 Sarah Crittenden Fuller et al., “Transitions from Community College to Teacher Education: Motivations, Barriers, and Post-Secondary Experiences Among University of Houston Teacher Candidates,” report (Education Policy Initiative at Carolina, April 2024).
- 17 Juliana Clark, “Students of Color in Junior Colleges Are Set Up for Inequities,” report (PRISM, November 1, 2021).
- 18 Talia Richman, “Texas’ Teacher Recruitment and Retention Problem: See the Data Schools Face,” *Dallas Morning News*, May 1, 2025.



Seeking a Shared Vision for Teacher Diversity in California

Statewide leadership can create a cohesive whole of disparate local initiatives.

José Magaña, Jeremy T. Martin, Bryan Monroy, Jacquelyn Ollison, & Travis Bristol

Since 2021, California has invested over \$1 billion in recruiting, training, developing, and retaining an ethnoracially diverse educator workforce that reflects its student population.¹ However, recruitment rates have not kept pace with the increasing ethnoracial diversity of the student population, nor have these efforts curbed rising teacher turnover. Even with economic uncertainty and a potential budget shortfall, California must continue to prioritize a policy agenda that further diversifies its educator workforce because it is essential to ensuring the academic success of all its students.

Workforce Demographics

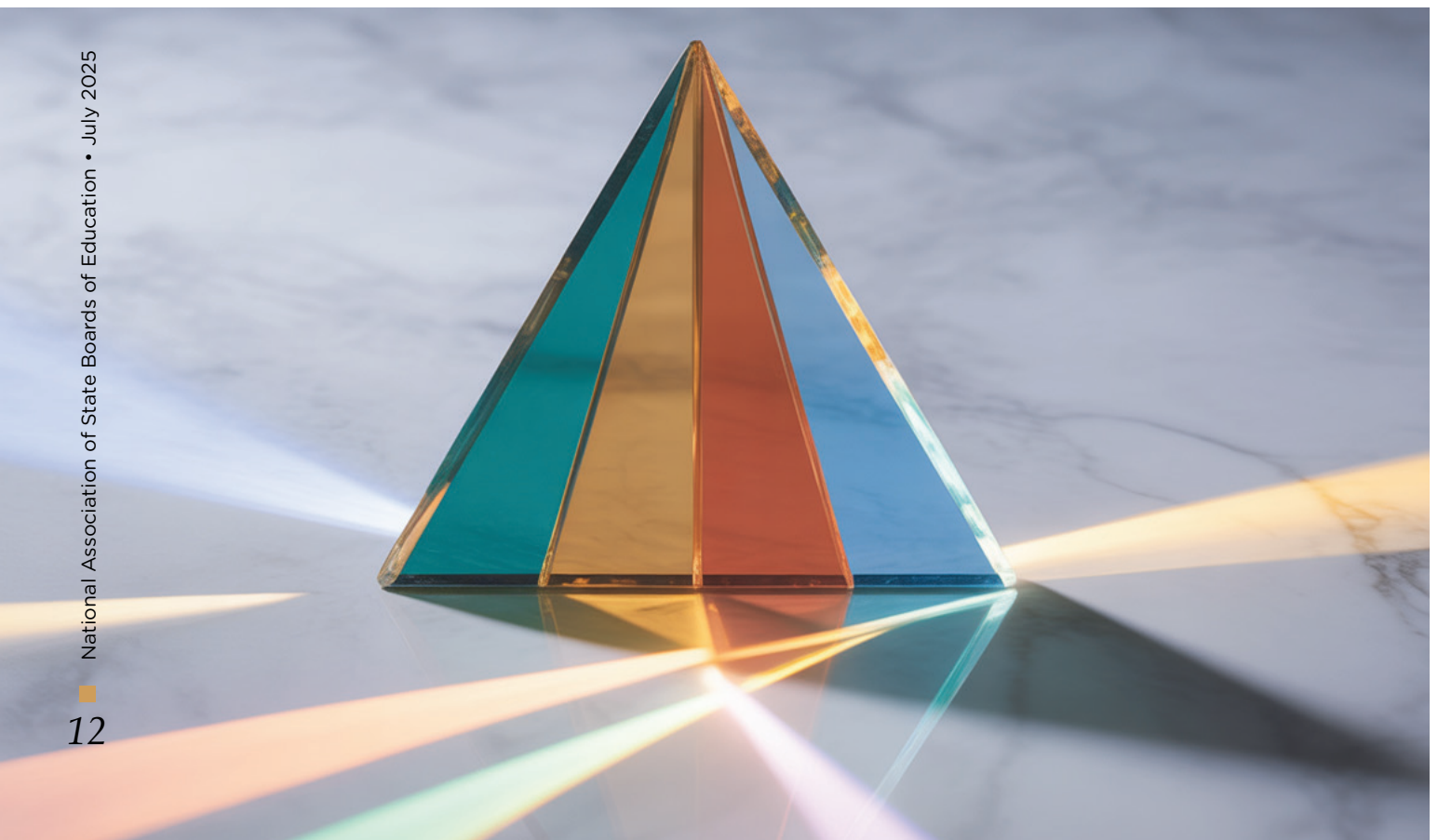
Teachers of color and Indigenous teachers (TOCIT) boost the test scores, graduation rates, and college aspirations of students of color.² Both students of color and White students view teachers of color positively, feeling supported and challenged.³ Furthermore, greater

teacher ethnoracial diversity may reduce isolation and burnout, helping retain teachers of color.⁴

California's educator workforce is predominantly White (55.5 percent).⁵ Latino educators constitute the second largest demographic (24.9 percent), followed by Asian educators (7.8 percent) and Black educators (3.8 percent). Yet 9.1 percent of schools do not employ any teachers of color. As of the 2022–23 school year, 36 percent of California's teaching population are teachers of color, while 74 percent of the student population are students of color, with 54 percent Latino and 23 percent White.⁶ Education leaders aim to address this disparity in representation through targeted workforce initiatives.⁷

Recruitment and Retention Initiatives

Several promising initiatives support educator ethnoracial diversity in California. Researchers at the



Learning Policy Institute highlight three that are focused primarily on recruiting and retaining an ethnoracially diverse teacher workforce:

- The Teacher Residency Grant Program supports residency programs in which educator preparation programs partner with local education agencies (LEAs) to train and support new teachers. The program offers stipends of at least \$20,000 and other financial support for residents who commit to teaching in the sponsoring LEA.
- The Golden State Teacher Grant Program provides \$10,000 to \$20,000 scholarships to teaching candidates enrolled in an educator prep program who commit to teaching in a priority school, where students who are low-income, English learner, or in foster care constitute more than 55 percent of the student body.
- The National Board Certified Teacher Incentive Program increases the supply of highly accomplished, effective teachers in high-need schools by offering a \$2,500 subsidy for teachers to pursue National Board certification and a \$5,000 annual salary incentive for board certified teachers who teach in priority schools for up to five years.⁸

California also emphasizes a grow-your-own approach, which helps school districts identify high school students for technical education programs leading to education careers. Another version focuses on transitioning paraprofessionals and afterschool staff into teaching roles. According to the California Department of Education, “This strategy has proven especially successful in filling two high-need teaching areas in California: special education and bilingual education.”⁹

While some data is available for the grant and incentive programs mentioned above, data about recipients’ backgrounds is not consistently available across all the programs. Because ongoing evaluation of program effectiveness is built in, the residency grant disaggregates data by ethnicity, gender, and subject matter and makes it publicly available.¹⁰ The program

boasts about 60 percent residents of color in shortage areas such as special education, bilingual education, computer science, and STEM.¹¹ The other two programs do incorporate evaluations, but disaggregated data by race and gender are not collected nor are made publicly available. Thus, it is unclear whether these strategies are helping achieve a more ethnoracially diverse teacher workforce, either as proof of concept or part of continuous improvement efforts.

Moreover, short-term, one-time funding limits the long-term impact of these grant programs. For example, the Golden State Teacher Grant began at \$20,000 per candidate and now offers \$10,000 per candidate, with continuing funding uncertain. To be effective in incentivizing new entrants to the profession, the grants need to instill confidence in candidates that consistent levels of resources will be there for them as they enter the profession.

Beyond the state-led efforts, other innovative programs are expanding opportunities for educators of color.

- Urban Ed Academy’s Man the Bay Program recruits male teacher candidates from colleges and universities nationwide and supports their journey into the educator workforce during the four-year program. Man the Bay “aims to give every Black student at least one Black male educator in their lifetime.”¹² The fellowship model provides coaching, professional development, and support services to candidates and houses them in the communities where they teach. To date, the program works in 14 school sites and reaches more than 2,000 students each year.
- Nonprofit Reach University offers affordable bachelor’s degrees, teaching credentials, and master’s for California-based school employees. Its programs are designed with the full-time working adult in mind, offering online coursework in the evenings. The cost for the undergraduate degree program is \$900 a year or \$75/month. Reach’s Intern Teacher Credential Program costs \$7,500/

California also emphasizes a grow-your-own approach, which helps school districts identify high school students for technical education programs leading to education careers.

year. This program supports district and charter school employees, such as paraprofessionals, in pursuing a bachelor’s degree and a California Preliminary Teaching Credential, and it offers the choice to earn a master of arts in teaching. Candidates can expect it to take two years, or 20 months, to complete. Interns who also receive the Golden State Teacher Grant can apply up to \$5,000 toward their costs of living in urban, rural, and low-income areas. Candidates may also be eligible for added grants to assist with a significant portion of the cost of the credential.¹³ Recipients thus receive a living wage while working as a teacher and engaging in graduate-level coursework they can immediately apply to their professional practice.

Addressing Persistent Challenges

Each of these programs and policies takes a different approach. They work at various entry points across the teacher career continuum—from preservice to in-service, and from recruitment, to professional development, to retention. Yet all work toward the broad goal of diversifying California’s educator workforce. However, the goal of diversifying the state’s educator workforce lacks a clear definition tied to meaningful measures of impact. As a result, these initiatives (and others like them) may be setting their own targets without a clear, unifying direction. This

absence presents an opportunity for California to provide more specificity about what diversifying the educator workforce means (e.g., in terms of ethnicity, gender, multilingualism, key strategies), and this definition could support more fruitful data collection, reporting, and evaluation.

Moreover, California needs more efforts, like the National Board Certified Teacher Incentive Program, to retain diverse educators. Known as the “gold standard” of teacher certification, National Board certification supports professional learning and stimulates changes in practice. It is also associated with better student academic outcomes when compared with teachers who are not certified. Board-certified teachers have reported improvements in their ability to deliver instruction, plan lessons, assess student learning, and grasp subject matter. They also find the associated professional learning community among peer Board-certified teachers to be quite impactful for their capabilities and sense of camaraderie.¹⁴

TOCITs leave the profession for a host of reasons. They have pointed to the importance of working in schools in which leaders prioritize creation of an affirming, culturally responsive learning environment.¹⁵ In addition to mentoring, culturally relevant professional development aimed at retention is warranted.

Recommendations

The work to recruit, train, develop, and retain an ethnoracially diverse and thriving teacher workforce is ongoing in California. A central concern that California community members expressed to us in discussions of educator diversity is the need for a shared vision, which acknowledges the role of local voices in linking research to responsive policymaking on educator recruitment and diversification. Many organizations are working at the state and local level to diversify teacher candidates. What is missing is statewide leadership that develops, promotes, and tracks educator workforce diversity initiatives and outcomes. Enduring, robust commitments from state leaders,

anchored in a plan with clearly defined educator workforce diversity goals and built-in accountability measures, could bring cohesion and continuous improvement to California’s teacher diversity efforts.

State and local education leaders must work along several critical, research-informed pathways to recruit, train, develop, and retain diverse teachers. Our recommendations are as follows:

- **Create a shared vision for education diversity.** Statewide leaders in the California Department of Education and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing should work with local education leaders to develop a shared vision for teacher diversity in California. This vision should include demographic characteristics such as race, gender, ethnicity, and multilingualism; set measurable goals; and outline the support structures, such as personnel and budgets, needed to achieve these goals.
- **Collect and share educator diversity data.** As California makes progress in tracking education data and making it publicly available through its Cradle to Career Data System, state education agency leaders should ensure it includes information on the demographic composition of the educator workforce aligned to the statewide definition. Data on the scope and impact of statewide teacher initiatives should also be incorporated.
- **Continue to fund and expand educator workforce initiatives.** Legislators should sustain ongoing funding for existing programs to solidify their status as key levers in California’s teacher workforce diversity strategy, and state education leaders should advocate for this funding.
- **Increase scholarship amounts.** Considering that the cost to become a teacher is higher for educators of color, particularly special education educators, state and local education leaders should advocate for increasing the Golden State Teacher Grants beyond \$20,000.
- **Renew, extend, and expand the National Board Certified Incentive Program.** The governor and the state legislature should extend the June 30, 2026, encumbrance date to fully use the \$250 million appropriated in 2021. Allocate ongoing funding to establish it as a permanent element in California’s educator diversity strategy. The state education agency should offer incentives to LEAs to leverage Board-certified teachers as mentors and in other leadership roles, especially at high-priority schools.
- **Advocate for more TOCIT to pursue such high-quality certification** in learning communities designed to support diverse educators, such as those provided by the Center for Research on Expanding Educational Opportunity (CREEO). Additionally, tapping Board-certified teachers to mentor newly recruited TOCIT in their schools would present a wonderful opportunity to strengthen induction and promote retention.
- **Prioritize culturally relevant professional development.** Schools and district leaders should invest in culturally responsive training and professional development tailored for TOCITs, school staff, and administrators. Programs like the Race Education and Community Healing Network underscore this need while also championing efforts like restorative justice to combat exclusionary discipline.¹⁶
- **Strengthen administrator training and support.** School and district leadership significantly affects educators’ experiences.¹⁷ Administrators should seek training and coaching to create supportive, caring learning and working environments for diverse educators.

José Magaña is the founding executive director of Latinos for Education in the Bay Area and the elected vice president of the San José Unified School District. Jeremy T. Martin is a researcher in the Center for Research on Expanding Educational Opportunity at the University of California–Berkeley School of Education. Bryan Monroy is the California policy manager for Teach Plus. Jacquelyn Ollison is the director of the Center for Research on Expanding Educational Opportunity at the University of California–Berkeley School of Education and an instructor in the Teacher Preparation Program at UC Merced Extension. Travis J. Bristol is an associate professor of teacher education and education policy at the University of California–Berkeley School of Education.



Notes

- 1 Travis J. Bristol et al., “How to Increase the Diversity of California’s Educator Workforce,” report (California Department of Education, March 2022); Desiree Carver-Thomas, Melanie Leung-Gagné, and Danielle Jeannite, “Tackling Teacher Shortages: What We Know about California’s Teacher Workforce Investments,” report (Learning Policy Institute, December 31, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.54300/137.196>.
- 2 Conra D. Gist and Travis J. Bristol, “Handbook Introduction: Charting the Landscape of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers in the United States,” in Conra D. Gist and Travis J. Bristol, eds., *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* (American Educational Research Association, 2022), 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2xqngb9.5>.
- 3 Travis J. Bristol and Desiree Carver-Thomas, “Facing the Rising Sun: Black Teachers’ Positive Impact Post-Brown,” white paper (Spencer Foundation, Learning Policy Institute, California Association of African-American Superintendents and Administrators, 2024).
- 4 Desiree Carver-Thomas, “Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color,” report (Learning Policy Institute, April 19, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.54300/559.310>; Conra D. Gist et al., “Motivating Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers to Stay in the Field,” Kappan Special Report (October 2021).
- 5 California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, “Teacher Supply in California, 2022–23: A Report to the Legislature” (April 2024).
- 6 Learning Policy Institute, “The State of the Teacher Workforce: A State-by-State Analysis of the Factors Influencing Teacher Shortages, Supply, Demand, and Equity,” interactive map (July 31, 2024).
- 7 Gist et al., “Motivating Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers to Stay in the Field.”
- 8 Carver-Thomas, Leung-Gagné, and Jeannite, “Tackling Teacher Shortages,” 3.
- 9 California Department of Education, “Recruiting Teachers of Color,” web page (last review June 12, 2024).
- 10 California Legislature, Assembly Bill No. 130, Chapter 44, AB-130 Education Finance: Education Omnibus Budget Trailer Bill (2021–22), sections 45–46; WestEd, “California Teacher Residency Grant Program Dashboard,” web page.
- 11 Susan Kemper Patrick, Linda Darling-Hammond, and Tara Kini, “Educating Teachers in California? What Matters for Teacher Preparedness?” report (Learning Policy Institute, May 9, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.54300/956.678>.
- 12 Urban Ed Academy, “Educator Fellowship,” web page.
- 13 Reach University, “Reach Cuts Tuition to Enable B.A. Holders to Teach,” press release, July 30, 2024.
- 14 Linda Darling-Hammond, *The Flat World and Education: How America’s Commitment to Equity Will Determine Our Future* (Teachers College Press, 2015).
- 15 Davis Dixon, Ashley Griffin, and Mark Teoh, “If You Listen, We Will Stay: Why Teachers of Color Leave and How to Disrupt Teacher Turnover” report (TeachPlus and Education Trust, September 2019).
- 16 Michael Corral et al., “California Race, Education, and Community Healing (REACH) Network Baseline Report,” report (UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools, October 7, 2024).
- 17 Bristol and Carver-Thomas, “Facing the Rising Sun.”



Overcoming Barriers for Colorado's Educator Workforce

Supportive school cultures and mentorship can help turn the tide.

Margarita Bianco, Robin Brandehoff, Marvin Lynn, Madhavi Tandon, & Antwan Jefferson

While half of public school students in Colorado identify as students of color, 85 percent of the state's teachers are White, predominantly monolingual English-speaking women. During the 2024–25 school year, approximately 70 out of 178 school districts had no teachers of color. Sixty-two percent of Colorado school districts do not employ a single Black male teacher, and 47 percent have no Latino male teachers. The student-teacher diversity gap is rampant in all demographic regions.

Many of Colorado's school districts serve a student body with a wide range of racial, linguistic, and ethnic

diversity. For example, the student population in Aurora Public Schools, a large district located close to Denver, is 86.7 percent non-White, yet nearly 77 percent of the district's teachers are White, female, and monolingual English speakers.¹ In Deer Trail 26J, a very small, rural district, 44 percent of the students are Latine, while the entire teaching staff is White.

In 2024, the Colorado Measures of Academic Success showed significant academic achievement gaps for students from historically marginalized communities when compared with their White peers.² This gap has been in place for decades. Increasing the

recruitment and retention of ethnically and racially diverse educators would improve student academic performance in Colorado. Access to teachers of color and Indigenous educators narrow achievement gaps, enhance student engagement and sense of belonging, and boost graduation rates.³

Given Colorado's shifting demographics and persistent academic disparities, state policymakers must meet student needs by increasing educator diversity and ensure that equity, representation, and cultural responsiveness are front of mind in education policymaking.

Challenges and Opportunities

Institutional racism and hostile work environments thwart Colorado's efforts to recruit, sustain, and retain a diverse educator workforce.⁴ The Office of Civil Rights has investigated racial, ethnic, and linguistic discrimination against students, families, and teachers in several districts.⁵ In a report by researcher Sharon Bailey, Black educators expressed concerns about hostile work environments in Denver Public Schools. One participant shared,

African-Americans in [Denver Public Schools] are invisible, silenced, and dehumanized, especially if you are passionate, vocal, and unapologetically black. We can't even be advocates for our kids. It feels a lot like being on a plantation ... there is a lot of fear and black folks are pitted against each other.

Black teachers also noted that White teachers held low academic expectations for Black students.⁶

Denver Public Schools has a limited number of Spanish-speaking bilingual educators, and Latine school leaders identified a "glass ceiling" due to hostile work environments, according to the Multicultural Leadership Center.⁷ This finding echoes a long pattern in the district and aligns with challenges faced by teachers of color nationwide.

Recent complaints reflect growing tensions between equity programs and civil rights interpretations. For example, Jeffco's 2022 affinity groups faced allegations of racial exclusion.⁸

Denver Public Schools' Black Excellence Resolution survived review by the Office of Civil Rights, but the review prompted program adjustments to avoid perceived racial preferences.⁹ In the current political climate, with attendant restrictions on diversity, equity, and inclusion language and policies, states and local districts in Colorado and throughout the country must remain vigilant in advocating for a diversified educator workforce with well thought-out strategies for recruiting, sustaining, and retaining educators who reflect and support their community and their needs.

Despite these challenges, Colorado advocates have shown commitment through legislative champions, some bipartisan support, and community-led efforts aimed at fostering teacher diversity. Further, Colorado's public and private education communities are working tirelessly to effect change.

The University of Colorado Denver's School of Education and Human Development recently convened Colorado legislators, school administrators, classroom teachers, research faculty, and community members to offer suggestions on ways to address recruitment, sustainment, and retention of teachers of color in the state. We developed recommendations for policies and practices to recruit and retain teachers of color based on that feedback as well as national research.¹⁰ Interestingly, stakeholder groups did not significantly differ in their recommendations based on their group identification.

Recruitment. A lack of enforcement (e.g., funding, measurement, and accountability) by the Colorado Department of Education plagues efforts to diversify the educator workforce. And while legislators and education leaders share widespread agreement that recruitment is vital to diversifying the educator workforce, this shared language has failed to produce a strategy to recruit more diverse educators across the state.

Additionally, Colorado's own recruitment recommendations lack alignment and cohesion. According to stakeholders, alignment and cohesion require better coordination between state-level policy implementation and district-level action, and the lack

Given Colorado's shifting demographics and persistent academic disparities, state policymakers must meet student needs by increasing educator diversity and ensure that equity, representation, and cultural responsiveness are front of mind in education policymaking.

Without structured programs that encourage teachers of color to enter the profession and provide space for professional growth, recruitment will continue to decline.

of policy enforcement via funding, measurement, and accountability fails to address the issue.

Retention. The Colorado convening invited stakeholders to consider retention strategies for educators of color. Their recommendations focused on five strategies:

- funding and financial support;
- effective and responsive leadership within a supportive school culture;
- individual mentorship and intentionally collectivist support systems;
- policy efforts informed by educators of color and accompanied by structural changes that reduce barriers to the profession; and
- intentional and embedded protections that simultaneously improve working conditions (e.g., advisory bodies and wraparound services).

State legislators should invest especially in mentoring and funding and financial support, which are likely to produce significant increases in the state's educator workforce.

Representation and Mentorship.

During the 2020–21 school year, 56.6 percent of Colorado educators remained at their same school, 11.8 percent planned to leave teaching, and 52.4 percent of Colorado schools had vacancies or hard-to-fill positions listed.¹¹ Colorado still struggles to fill these vacancies across the state. Colorado stakeholders highlighted the need for racial and cultural representation, coupled with critical mentorship, to build community, camaraderie, and ongoing learning in the workplace.¹²

Only 76.5 percent of Colorado educators reported mentorship opportunities available for early career teachers, which is less than the national average (81.4 percent).¹³ Additionally, only 61.9 percent of teachers received release time from teaching to attend professional development activities in general. Teachers of color, in particular, benefit from mentorship and community-building initiatives. Without structured programs that encourage teachers of color to enter the profession and provide space for professional growth, recruitment will continue to decline.

Colorado has passed a number of bills to retain a diverse educator workforce. House Bill 21-1010 identifies valuable retention strategies (i.e., culturally responsive pedagogy, focused professional learning for school leaders and teachers, and educator affinity groups—strategies consistent with the broader literature base).¹⁴ House Bill 18-1412 funds legislation to retain educators, and Senate Bill 19-190 created a teacher mentor grant program, which provides training and stipends for teachers who serve as mentors. In 2023, the governor signed legislation to establish a Teacher Degree Apprenticeship Program, which offers an educator pathway for high schoolers through local community college and school district partnerships.

Colorado stakeholders, however, elucidated that the unique needs of teachers of color should drive any financial support. According to the Learning Policy Institute, Colorado is among the least attractive states for becoming a teacher, regardless of demographic.¹⁵ The starting salary of educators is \$38,170, compared with the national average of \$44,530, with fewer school resources per pupil (\$11,840 per student per year versus \$14,300 nationwide) and a higher student-to-teacher ratio (16.3:1 versus 15.4:1 nationwide). The average cost of living in Colorado in 2024 was \$53,373 per year for one person, and buying a typical home cost \$529,219.¹⁶ Student loans also add to the burden. Around 60 percent of the nation's full-time public school teachers have taken out student loans, and those in the teaching profession are 30 percent more likely to have a second job compared with other workers.¹⁷

At the convening, stakeholders identified additional possibilities for policies that provide direct-to-educator funding to reduce student loan debts and offer healthy wage increases, supportive and adequate housing stipends, and state-sponsored loan forgiveness programs. Such policies would address two crucial features of failed retention efforts. First, high housing and living costs in Colorado (particularly in population-dense areas, such as metro Denver) are prohibitive for many educators of color, even after district wage increases over the past several years. Colorado educators,

on average, experienced a 1.1 percent wage increase in 2022–23, the lowest wage increase for educators across the nation, compared with a national average of 4.1 percent.¹⁸

Second, many educators of color accumulate a higher student loan debt. According to the Education Data Initiative, Black college graduates have much higher student loan debt than their White peers, while their salaries tend to be lower. Nationwide, multiracial students have higher average student loans, and Latine graduates are more likely to delay major life decisions (e.g., family planning) due to student loan debt.¹⁹ In Colorado, policy change must address the disincentives constructed by a lack of an educator funding prioritization by the state legislature.²⁰

In total, high living costs and insufficient teacher wages make the profession unattractive, especially for candidates from diverse backgrounds. Wage increases, debt relief, housing stipends, and incentives like loan forgiveness could make teaching a more viable career for an educator workforce that reflects the needs and demographics of the state's children and families.

Recommendations

Addressing the recruitment and retention of teachers of color in Colorado requires a multifaceted approach informed by community stakeholder input and national research. By focusing on school climate, economic incentives, policy alignment, mentorship, and leadership development, the following proposed solutions aim to dismantle systemic barriers and create a more inclusive, supportive educational environment.

- **Policy Implementation and Enforcement.** Inconsistent enforcement hinders the effectiveness of existing policies. The Colorado State Board of Education must work with local superintendents and school boards to ensure that policies can be enforced at the local level.
- **Accountability and Effectiveness.** The recruitment and retention of diverse educators can be tied to School Improvement Plans as well

as superintendent and principal evaluations. Strengthening these aspects ensures that policies achieve their intended outcomes.

- **Economic Barriers.** Colorado's state superintendent, in collaboration with local superintendents, can partner with members of the state legislature to advance policy initiatives that include wage increases, debt relief, housing stipends, and incentives like loan forgiveness to make teaching a viable career.
- **Grow-Your-Own Programs.** The state legislature can support the development of grow-your-own models, which would require teacher training programs to partner with community-based organizations to support high schoolers, community college students, and community members to become educators.
- **Alignment and Cohesion.** Working with the Colorado Department of Education, the State Superintendent's Office and local leaders can support strong coordination of policy implementation at the state and local levels, ensuring alignment and follow-up on initiatives.
- **Funding and Financial Support.** State policymakers can support long-term, sustainable funding for retention policies that do not rely on educators to secure grants; loan forgiveness programs specifically for teachers of color; and housing support, similar to military benefits, that subsidize apartments for early-career teachers to help them save and integrate into the community.
- **Leadership and School Culture.** School leaders play a crucial role in shaping culture and making teachers feel supported. Training programs should focus on developing culturally sustaining leadership practices for principals; accountability measures and anti-bias/implicit bias; and knowledge of diversity, equity, and inclusion practices. States can also develop support structures or teachers of color.
- **Mentorship and Support Systems.** Teachers of color need continuous support, including mentoring from induction throughout their



Addressing the recruitment and retention of teachers of color in Colorado requires a multifaceted approach informed by community stakeholder input and national research.

careers. State leaders can create cross-district support groups that can meet online for anonymity and broader reach, and principals should support teachers facing challenges from difficult or discriminatory interactions with families.

■ **Policy and Structural Changes.**

State leaders can explore waivers for fees related to transferring certifications or tests from other states and develop advisory panels to incorporate educator voices in policymaking and safe spaces, such as online groups, for teachers to seek advice, vent, and share job opportunities.

■ **Conditions and Protections.**

Teachers of color need wraparound services that address their needs, from housing to mental health, and advisory bodies to ensure continuous feedback loops.

Margarita Bianco, EdD, is an associate professor and program lead for the Education Foundations program in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver and founder of Pathways2Teaching®, a nationally recognized grow-your-own program. Robin Brandehoff, PhD, is an assistant professor of education foundations and oversees the justice, equity, and diverse identities doctoral program in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver. Marvin Lynn, PhD, is professor and dean of the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver. Madhavi Tandon, PhD, is a senior instructor in education foundations and teaches in the justice, equity, and diverse identities doctoral program in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver. Antwan Jefferson, PhD, is the associate dean and an associate teaching professor in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver.

Notes

1 Colorado Department of Education, “School/District Staff Statistics,” web page, updated April 21, 2025.

2 CMAS are the state’s common measurement of students’ progress at the end of the school year in English language arts, math, and science; Colorado Department of Education, “Spring 2024 CMAS Data and Results,” web page (2024).

3 Thomas S. Dee, “Teachers, Race, and Student Achievement in a Randomized Experiment,” *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 86, No. 1 (2004): 195–210, <https://doi.org/10.1162/003465304323023750>; Donald Easton-Brooks, *Ethnic Matching: Academic Success of Students of Color* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

4 Rita Kohli and Marcos Pizarro, “The Layered Toll of Racism in Teacher Education on Teacher Educators of Color,” *AERA Open* 8 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584221078538>.

5 E.g., US Department of Education, Adams County School District 14 Case No. 08-18-1145; Defending Education, “Dismissed OCR Complaint: Jeffco Public Schools,” web page, September 16, 2022.

6 Sharon R. Bailey, “An Examination of Student and Educator Experiences in Denver Public Schools through the Voices of African-American Teachers and Administrators: A Qualitative Research Study,” report (Denver Public Schools, 2016).

7 Michael Jackson, “Bilingual Education Litigation in Denver: The School District’s Perspective,” *La Raza LJ* 1, No. 250 (1983).

8 Nicole Neily, “Parents Defending Education,” Defending.org, September 16, 2022, https://defending.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/CASEL_The-School-District-of-Palm-Beach-County_2022-2023_2023-2024_FY22-23-Consultant-Agreement-CASEL.pdf.

9 Caroline Moore, “Parents Defending Education,” Defending.org, February 20, 2024, https://defending.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/OCR_DPS_Redacted.pdf.

10 Jessica Cardichon et al., “Handbook Policy Synthesis: Policies that Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers Need to Thrive in the Teaching Profession,” in *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers*, eds. Conra D. Gist and Travis J. Bristol (2022): 1085–90; Desiree Carver-Thomas et al., “Policies and Practices for Recruiting and Retaining Teachers of Color,” *Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* 32 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.32.8123>.

11 Emma García, Melanie Leung-Gagné, and Susan Kemper Patrick, “The State of the Teacher Workforce: A State-by-State Analysis of the Factors Influencing Teacher Shortages, Supply, Demand, and Equity,” report (Learning Policy Institute, July 2024).

12 Torie Weiston-Serdan and Bernadette Sánchez, *Critical Mentoring: A Practical Guide* (Routledge, 2017); Amanda R. Morales, Pedro Silva Espinoza, and Kristin Bunker Duke, “What Exists and ‘What I Need’: In Search of Critical, Empowering, and Race-Conscious Approaches to Mentoring from the Perspective of Latina/o/x Teachers,” in *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers*, eds. Conra D. Gist and Travis J. Bristol (2022): 441–58.

13 Emma García, Melanie Leung-Gagné, and Susan Kemper Patrick, “The State of the Teacher Workforce.”

14 Betty Achinstein et al., “Retaining Teachers of Color: A Pressing Problem and a Potential Strategy for ‘Hard-to-Staff’ Schools,” *Review of Educational Research* 80, No. 1 (2010): 71–107, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654309355994>; Ain A. Grooms, Duhita Mahatmya, and Eboneé T. Johnson, “The Retention of Educators of Color amidst Institutionalized Racism,” *Educational Policy* 35 No. 2 (2021): 180–212, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904820986765>.

15 Emma García, Melanie Leung-Gagné, and Susan Kemper Patrick, “The State of the Teacher Workforce.”

16 Jacqueline DeMarco, “Cost of Living in Colorado,” web post (Social Finances, 2024).

17 Emma García et al., “In Debt: Student Loan Burdens among Teachers,” report (Learning Policy Institute, 2023); Kelly Ragan, “1 in 5 Teachers Holds a Second Job to Make Ends Meet,” *Denver Post* (July 20, 2018).

18 National Education Association, “NEA 2022–2023 Teacher Salary Benchmark Report,” web post (April 2024).

19 Melanie Hanson, “Student Loan Debt by Race,” report (Education Data Initiative, 2024).

20 National Education Association, “NEA 2022–2023 Teacher Salary Benchmark Report.”

Recruitment and Retention Strategies to Diversify New York's Pipeline

Financial barriers get in the way of attracting new teachers, and lack of advancement opportunities dissuade veterans from staying.

Arlen Benjamin-Gomez, Christina Collins, & Marielys Divanne

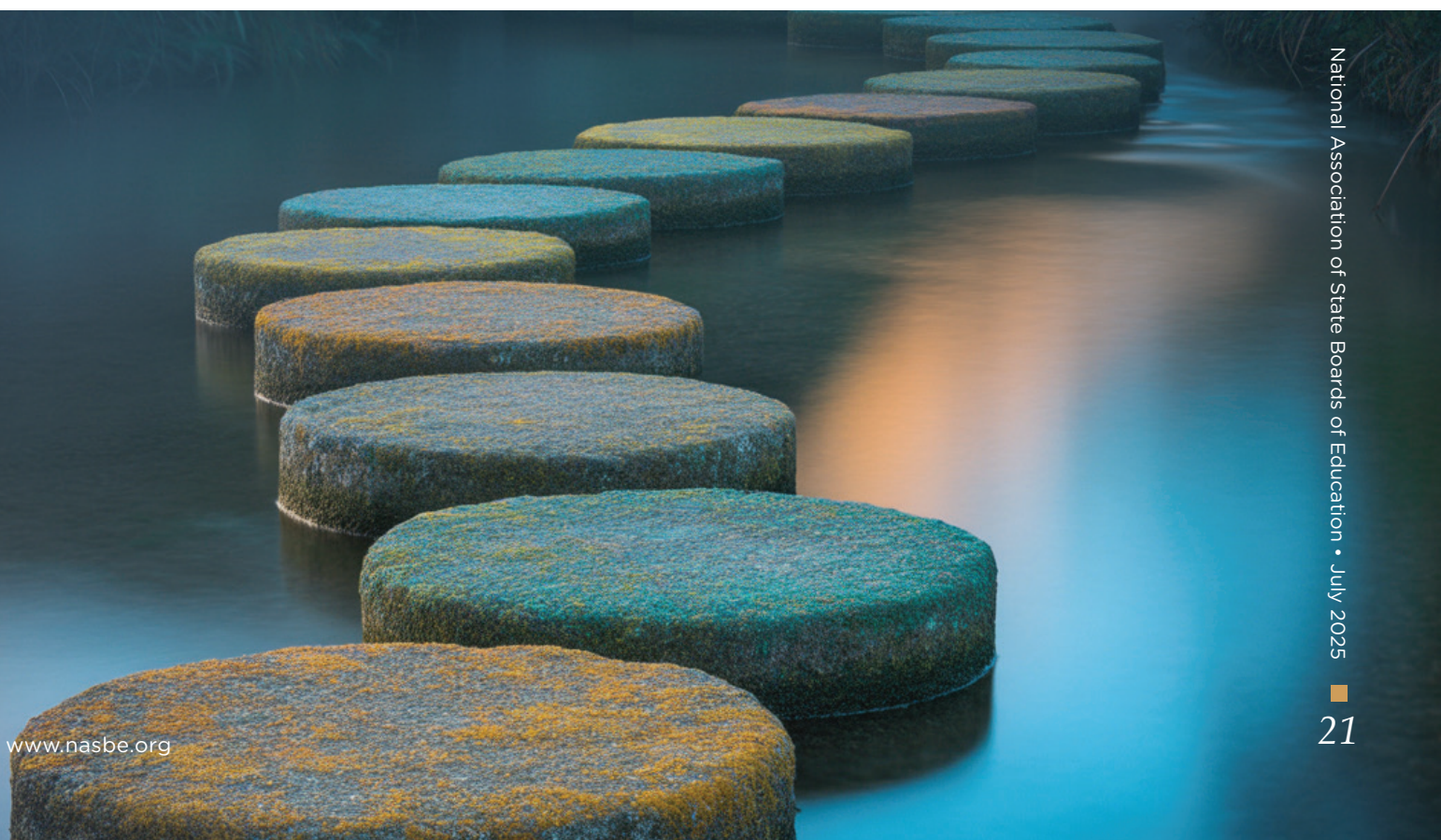
Access to teachers of color has a significant impact on student outcomes, including increased graduation and college enrollment and lower suspension and expulsion rates.¹ Yet New York schools struggle to recruit and retain a diverse educator workforce. More than one in five New York students—around 10 percent of Black and Latinx students, 20 percent of Asian students, 33 percent of White students, and 75 percent of Native American students—attend a school with no teachers of color on staff.²

Limited recruitment strategies, lack of targeted support systems, and challenges with career advancement and financial sustainability present barriers for underrepresented populations to enter and stay in the teaching workforce. By clarifying career pathways and improving recruitment and retention strategies, New York can better diversify its educator pipeline.

Recruitment

Challenges. Aspiring teachers of color must navigate structural and systemic barriers that limit access to and opportunities within the teaching profession. The cost of teacher preparation programs, licensure exam fees, and the high cost of living in New York—especially in New York City, where housing and transportation costs exceed the national average—create financial burdens for aspiring teachers. Additionally, many teacher preparation programs, schools, and districts lack effective recruitment programs that incentivize diverse candidates.

The high cost of New York's teacher licensure exams also creates burdens for low-income candidates and especially for those who might need to take the test more than once. Candidates of color, for instance, are less likely to pass New York's teacher licensure exams



Strengthening recruitment efforts and implementing intentional strategies can help bridge the diversity gap between teachers and their student populations.

on their first try.³ A 1996 lawsuit also found that culturally biased exams in New York City violated civil rights of Black and Latinx teaching candidates and contributed to lower pass rates among candidates of color.⁴

New York's institutions of higher education prepare more teachers for the classroom than any other state but Texas and also contribute to a more representative teaching workforce.⁵ The City University of New York's (CUNY's) education cohorts have increased in diversity over the past decade, with 63 percent of students enrolled in teacher preparation programs in 2022 identifying as people of color.⁶

While progress has been made, New York's educator workforce does not reflect the rich diversity of its student population, and institutions of higher education, teacher preparation programs, districts, and schools across the state must take further action to recruit and train more teachers of color. Strengthening recruitment efforts and implementing intentional strategies can help bridge the diversity gap between teachers and their student populations.

Promising Practices. Over the past few years, the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and its local unions, including New York City's United Federation of Teachers (UFT), have partnered with the Take a Look at Teaching project, which connects high schools with institutions of higher education to increase the number of students of color entering teaching careers. In New York City, this initiative has

- established partnerships between institutions of higher education and districts;
- launched Future Teachers Clubs in high schools in Staten Island and Queens;
- sponsored visits to CUNY campuses for students interested in pursuing teaching careers;
- held focus groups with paraprofessionals interested in becoming teachers;
- hosted gatherings of club participants, CUNY representatives, and union leadership to share experiences; and
- convened national teacher diversity experts to discuss building a more

diverse and sustainable educator pipeline.

The UFT also partners with New York City Public Schools and CUNY colleges to offer FutureReady NYC, a collaboration aimed at growing equitable career-connected learning. In recent years, they also collaborated on the Teacher Career Pathways program and NYC Men Teach and established the Teaching Academies, which provide support for new teachers.

NYC Men Teach aims to address workforce disparities among young Black and Latino men by supporting men of color to become public school teachers. Since 2015, it has recruited more than 3,000 men of color to teach. To boost recruitment, the program provides participants with monthly metro cards and free certification exam practice tests, pays for certification exams, connects participants with program managers who provide advice throughout the teacher certification process, and offers a semester-long seminar focused on culturally responsive education.

Alternative certification programs also support a more diverse teaching workforce. New York City's Teaching Fellows alternative certification program has been running for 22 years. As part of this program, candidates who complete an intensive seven-week summer training earn a provisional license and can begin teaching full-time in a high-need public school. They then earn a subsidized master's degree from a local higher education institution. The NYC Teaching Collaborative, which launched in 2012, also offers a five-month spring residency training program that leads to a transitional license and a subsidized master's degree. From 2018 to 2021, two-thirds of the new hires through the Teaching Fellows and Teaching Collaborative were people of color.⁷

In western New York, the Buffalo Urban Teacher Pipeline Residency offers a 16-month paid residency designed to prepare and retain effective teachers for the region. The program works through community-based recruitment, culturally responsive mentorships, and financial and professional support. In 2022, the US Department of Education recognized the program as a model for

others to follow. It trained 70 teachers, the majority of whom are people of color.⁸ However, the program is now in jeopardy due to funding cuts from the federal government, putting its future—and the pipeline of diverse educators it supports—at risk.⁹

Encouraging more classroom support professionals to pursue teaching opportunities also diversifies New York's educator pipeline. The majority of New York City's public school paraprofessionals are educators of color, and past UFT partnerships have sought to provide effective pathways for paraprofessionals to enter teaching.¹⁰ Currently, over 1,800 paraprofessionals are enrolled in coursework toward education degrees, and New York City hires about 500 teachers each year directly from the paraprofessional role, many of whom enter through programs like the NYC Teaching Fellows. In Suffolk County, SUNY's Old Westbury Teacher Diversity Pipeline program develops pathways for teacher aides and assistants to become certified teachers, aiming to increase diversity in high-need districts in Long Island.

In 2023, New York passed the Teachers and Educators Aiding the Communities They Call Home (TEACH) Act, requiring the state education agency to work with institutions of higher education to issue guidance for developing grow-your-own teacher preparation initiatives.¹¹ These initiatives recruit candidates from underrepresented groups into the teaching profession, begin teacher pipeline initiatives among secondary school students, motivate paraprofessionals and other school staff to become teachers, and use existing funding sources, including grant programs, to attract and retain teachers of color. Forty-three local teachers unions received Take a Look at Teaching grants in 2022–23 to develop grow-your-own programs.¹²

Apprenticeships also help reduce barriers to the workforce, particularly for candidates of color, by offering paid training, tuition assistance, immersive placements, and access to additional services. UFT, CUNY, and New York City Public Schools are currently working with state and local partners to expand

access to teaching apprenticeships across the state. With funding from a three-year federal apprenticeship grant, New York State United Teachers created the New York Educator Workforce Development HUB to develop educator and school leader apprenticeship programs statewide.¹³ These programs provide options for not only high school students to enter the profession but also for paraprofessionals and other adults who are interested in pursuing teaching but are concerned about the costs and time commitment of full-time study.

Retention

Challenges. More than four years after COVID-19 disrupted schools across New York State, the lingering impact of the pandemic continues to contribute to teacher burnout and dissatisfaction, exacerbating long-standing challenges in teacher retention. Even before the crisis, educators faced mounting pressures, but the pandemic intensified burnout, financial strain, and workforce instability.

In a RAND study from August 2024, 60 percent of teachers reported feeling burned out.¹⁴ Combined with persistently low pay, skyrocketing student loan debt, and an anemic educator pipeline, the state's ability to retain its teaching workforce has further deteriorated.

The New York City Independent Budget Office found that teacher retention in the city had been slightly improving before the pandemic.¹⁵ During the 2020–21 school year, retention remained relatively stable as the city's public schools offered hybrid instruction. However, teacher retention dropped sharply when schools returned to in-person learning in 2021–22, with an even steeper decline in the 2022–23 school year.

Between the 2018–19 and 2021–22 school years, teacher retention rates were highest (83 percent) in schools in low-need districts across New York, while schools in the biggest four districts (New York City, Buffalo, Syracuse, and Rochester) had some of the lowest retention rates (76 percent).¹⁶

Teachers of color face unique challenges, including isolation as racial minorities. An analysis by the New York Equity Coalition found that Black teachers had a 9 percentage-point

Apprenticeships also help reduce barriers to the workforce ... by offering paid training, tuition assistance, immersive placements, and access to additional services.

Statewide 4-Year Retention Rate by Race/Ethnicity					
All Teachers	American Indian/Na- tive Alaskan Teachers	Asian/Pacific Islander Teachers	Black or African American Teachers	Latinx or Hispanic Teachers	White Teachers
78%	73%	78%	70%	75%	79%

lower retention rate than their White colleagues between 2018 and 2022. During that same period, rural high-need districts experienced a 10 percentage-point retention gap for Black teachers compared with all teachers.¹⁷

Between 2018 and 2022, students of color and teachers of color were disproportionately concentrated in schools with the lowest overall teacher retention rates.¹⁸ Low teacher retention rates also hurt student achievement.¹⁹ Experienced teachers who remain in the same school are more familiar with their students' needs and community challenges and are better positioned to help students thrive. Low retention rates place increased recruitment, hiring, and training costs on districts. Replacing experienced teachers takes time, and new educators can need years to develop expertise comparable to those who leave the profession.

Limited pathways for career advancement and the inability to earn family-sustaining wages further contribute to teacher dissatisfaction, retention rates, and workforce instability in New York. A recent article on the challenge of retaining Black male teachers identified relatively low wages as a reason many Black men left teaching after their first few years. "We have the similar rings that we have to jump through, and yet time and again, we're not seeing salaries match that level of expertise and certification," one interviewee said.²⁰

Low teacher pay is a major factor in low retention rates overall, but teachers of color cite different incentives for staying in the classroom. While most teachers nationwide view higher salaries as the strongest incentive for remaining in the profession, a 2022 survey by EdTrust and Educators for Excellence found that teachers of color prioritize leadership opportunities, professional development, and greater support.²¹

Despite the critical role that school

leadership plays in shaping teacher retention and diversity, very few teachers transition into leadership positions each year, and those who do are disproportionately White. The underrepresentation of Black, Latinx, and Asian educators in leadership roles has significant consequences, as school leaders of color are more likely to hire and retain diverse teachers.²² Similarly, principals of color are more likely to encourage teachers of the same race to pursue leadership opportunities.²³

Yet teachers of color have limited opportunities for career advancement. For example, less than 0.5 percent of New York teachers transitioned to leadership roles between 2018 and 2020. Of that small sample, the vast majority (62 percent) were White teachers. Just 25 percent were Black, 9 percent Latinx, and 4 percent Asian.²⁴ Without intentional efforts to strengthen the leadership pipeline for educators of color, schools risk perpetuating inequities that impact both teachers and students alike.

Promising Practices. The NYC Men Teach program has recruited and retained over 3,000 men of color since 2015 by providing mentorship, professional development, and community-building opportunities.²⁵ In western New York, the New Teachers Project supports early-career teachers of color in Buffalo and Rochester through instructional coaching and personalized professional learning. The Buffalo Urban Teacher Pipeline Residency also offers program graduates with ongoing professional development when they are hired in Buffalo Public Schools. These early-career supports are designed to develop teachers' skills and retain them in the classroom.

Statewide, the New York State Master Teacher Program cultivates teacher leadership and retention through professional learning communities and mentorship. The program builds connections for more than 1,700 public

school teachers committed to enhancing STEM education across the state. In October 2024, Governor Kathy Hochul announced the addition of 144 STEM teachers to the program, expanding its reach to 83 school districts, including 40 high-need districts such as Albany, Buffalo, and New York City.²⁶

Investing in the recruitment of diverse teachers is a crucial strategy for retaining them, making New York's efforts in this area promising. However, these efforts alone are not enough; New York must improve school cultures, expand professional development and career growth opportunities, and address pay disparities to better retain teachers of color.

Recommendations for State Policymakers

Retention. States can increase retention of teachers of color by focusing on mentorship and support programs that provide coaching and collaborative planning time, investing in inclusive school leaders who actively seek and implement teacher feedback, and improving culturally responsive working conditions.²⁷ Financial incentives, such as competitive salaries and loan forgiveness programs also play a crucial role, as do culturally responsive professional development programs.²⁸

New York has taken a few promising first steps aligned to these best practices. To build on this momentum, state policymakers in New York can take the following recommendations.

The governor should

- convene charge a statewide taskforce to outline best practices in recruiting, training, and retaining teachers of color and ensure reporting requirements align with federal requirements.

The legislature should

- provide fund growth pathways so more teachers of color can move

into leadership positions, including through grow-your-own initiatives to create a fellowship program for educators who came out of those programs and want to move into leadership positions;

- develop strategies to ensure teacher salaries and benefits are competitive with similar college-educated professions, including additional cost-of-living benefits—such as housing subsidies, mortgage assistance programs, child care subsidies, transportation support, and expanded state-level loan forgiveness programs—to help offset the high cost of living in New York;
- evaluate the impact of New York’s teacher licensing requirements and assess whether current requirements create inequitable barriers for teachers of color without improving teacher effectiveness;
- consider additional investments in scholarship and loan forgiveness programs for teachers who commit to teach in high-need schools; and
- increase the Regional Cost Index measure of the Foundation Aid formula to reflect regional teacher wages.

The state education agency should

- adjust guidance for districts on effective mentorship programs for new teachers to emphasize the importance of matching them with mentors who share their racial or economic background;
- identify, develop, and promote principal training that equips school leaders to effectively use surveys and listening sessions to understand the needs of teachers of color and drive meaningful change to school environment and increase retention; and
- provide technical assistance and guidance that supports districts to invest in opportunities for teachers of color to move into school leadership positions, including by identifying high-quality professional development opportunities and investing in cohort models and continuing education opportunities that encourage teachers of color to consider future leadership.

Recruitment. To build a more diverse educator workforce, New York’s leaders must take intentional steps to improve data transparency, strengthen teacher pipeline programs, and support districts in advancing racial equity in hiring practices. The following recommendations outline key actions for state policymakers to build on promising practices and recruit a more inclusive and equitable teacher workforce that reflects the diversity of New York’s students:

New York’s governor and legislature should

- enact free community college for students pursuing high-demand fields, including teaching proposals already included in the Governor’s Executive Budget this year; and
- convene a statewide taskforce charged with elevating best practices in recruiting, training, and retaining teachers of color. The taskforce should align reporting requirements for their recommendations to federal requirements.

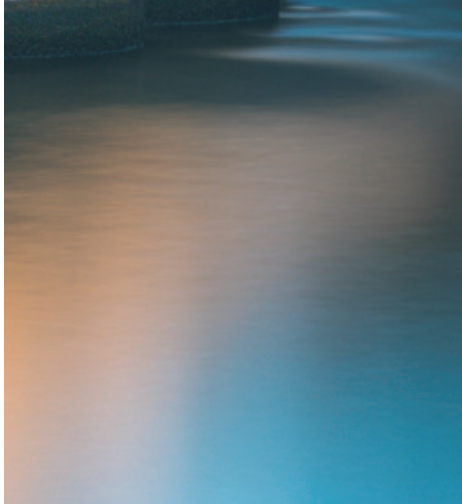
The state education agency should

- examine the impact of teacher certification requirements, exams, and other criteria on candidates of color and identify strategies to reduce barriers that disproportionately impact candidates of color, such as eliminating exam registration fees and providing licensure exam study support services to ensure more opportunities for candidates who face financial barriers;
- build on EdTrust-New York’s data tool that tracks how well school districts are representing the diversity of students and retaining teachers of color. New York’s Office of Higher Education should invest in a transparent data system that tracks the number and racial/ethnic makeup of students in institutions of higher education who are pursuing teaching certification;
- establish a registered apprenticeship program for teaching with multiple pathways, aligned with the governor’s proposal to make community college tuition-free for high-need professions;

The state education agency’s support should include best practices for expanding recruitment efforts, as well as identifying and addressing barriers to hiring

- work with districts to establish grow-your-own programs and partner with organizations like Take a Look at Teaching and the Kennedy Children’s Center, which have already implemented successful programs in the state;
- provide technical assistance and clear guidance to districts with disproportionately low shares of teachers of color, supporting them in developing racial equity plans with intentional and measurable goals for increasing educator diversity. The state education agency’s support should include best practices for expanding recruitment efforts, as well as identifying and addressing barriers to hiring;
- provide transparent reporting on teacher preparation program outcomes, including enrollment and completion rates, program costs, licensure exam pass rates, matriculation rates into teaching roles, and graduate retention rates; and
- explore flexibility for potential teachers to complete licensure exams and provide options for teacher candidates to have the cost of taking licensure exams subsidized. Teacher candidates should be able to use performance or portfolio measures to achieve licensing rather than traditional licensure exams.

Arlen Benjamin-Gomez is executive director of EdTrust-New York. Christina Collins is director of education policy at the United Federation of Teachers. Marielys Divanne is executive director of Educators for Excellence-New York.



Notes

- 1 Constance A. Lindsay and Cassandra M.D. Hart, "Exposure to Same-Race Teachers and Student Disciplinary Outcomes for Black Students in North Carolina," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 39, no. 3 (2017): 485–520; Seth Gershenson et al., "The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers," *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 14 no. 4 (2022): 300–42.
- 2 The Education Trust–New York, "Representation Matters: A Look at the State of Teacher Diversity in New York," report (2022).
- 3 New York: Learning from Institutional Pass Rates on Elementary Teacher Licensure Tests," National Council on Teacher Quality, web page, 2021.
- 4 Sara Randazzo, "Black, Latino Teachers Collecting \$835 Million in Discrimination Lawsuit," *Wall Street Journal* (July 14, 2022).
- 5 US Department of Education, "2024 Title II Report: Academic Year 2022–23 Data," web page.
- 6 Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, "Teacher Education at CUNY: Enrollment, Graduation, and Diversity Trends," report (City University of New York, June 2023).
- 7 Cara Matthews, "Who Will Teach the Kids? Nationwide Educator Shortage Grows More Acute," web page (United Federation of Teachers, September 8, 2022).
- 8 David J. Hill, "Preparing K–12 Teachers to Meet Today's Social Challenges," blog post (University at Buffalo Graduate School of Education, August 2020).
- 9 Mylien Lai, "UB Teacher Residency Program in Limbo after Federal Funding Cuts," *The Spectrum*, student publication (University at Buffalo, March 24, 2025).
- 10 Nick Juravich, "Union Advocacy for Paraprofessionals-to-Teacher Pathways," *American Educator* 46, no. 4 (American Federation of Teachers, 2022).
- 11 New York State Senate, *Teachers and Educators Aiding the Communities They Call Home (TEACH) Act*, S2140B, 2023–24 Legislative Session (2023).
- 12 New York State United Teachers, "Grow-Your-Own Programs in New York State," web page, 2021.
- 13 US Department of Labor, "US Department of Labor Awards \$121M in Apprenticeship Building America Grants to Expand, Diversify, Modernize Registered Apprenticeship Programs," press release (July 7, 2022).
- 14 New York State Educator Workforce Development HUB, "Partnering to Grow the Next Generation of Well-Prepared Educators," web page.
- 15 Julia Konrad and Joydeep Roy, "Roll Call: Recent Trends in Teacher Retention and Hiring in New York City Public Schools," report (New York City Independent Budget Office, 2023).
- 16 New York Equity Coalition, "Teacher Retention in New York State," report (The Education Trust–New York, July 2023).
- 17 New York Equity Coalition, "Teacher Retention in New York State."
- 18 New York Equity Coalition, "Teacher Retention in New York State."
- 19 Learning Policy Institute, "2024 Update: What's the Cost of Teacher Turnover?" interactive tool (September 17, 2024).
- 20 Amaya McDonald, "Why Are So Few Black Men Teachers in New York City?" *Chalkbeat New York* (March 8, 2023).
- 21 Educators for Excellence, "Voices from the Classroom: A Survey of America's Educators," report (2022).
- 22 Brenda Bartanen and Jason A. Grissom, "School Principal Race and the Hiring and Retention of Racially Diverse Teachers," working paper (Annenberg Institute at Brown University, 2019).
- 23 Jeannie Myung, Susanna Loeb, and Eileen Horng, "Tapping the Principal Pipeline: Identifying Talent for Future School Leadership in the Absence of Formal Succession Management Programs," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 47, no. 5 (2011).
- 24 New York Equity Coalition, "School Leader Diversity in New York State," report (September 2023).
- 25 Cara Matthews, "Who Will Teach the Kids?"
- 26 The State University of New York, "Governor Hochul Celebrates over 140 Exceptional Teachers and 26 Master Counselors Chosen to Support New York State's World Class Education System," press release (October 31, 2024).
- 27 The Education Trust–West and California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, "Recruiting and Retaining Educators of Color: Hiring Practices to Diversify Your Candidate Pool and Strategies to Support and Retain Educators," report (2020).
- 28 Hannah Putman, "From the Source: What Strategies Do Teachers of Color Believe Will Be Most Successful in Recruiting and Retaining Teachers of Color?" report (National Council on Teacher Quality, October 27, 2022); Stephanie Aragon, "Response to Information Request," report (September 28, 2016).



Making Educator Diversity a Kitchen Table Issue

*A nonpartisan path to a stronger,
more effective workforce.*

Jarvis Lundy

Programs that support all educators, such as housing stipends or expanded licensure pathways, often disproportionately benefit teachers of color and should be pursued as bipartisan solutions.

As a K-12 student, I had only two teachers of color, both in elementary school. Yet their influence was transformative. They saw me, believed in me, and expected my best. That early affirmation helped me persist through a system that did not always reflect or affirm who I was.

Years later, as a kindergarten teacher and then a school leader, I saw the impact of educator diversity from another perspective. I watched students academically and socially thrive when they saw themselves reflected in their classrooms and in the people leading them. I saw how families trusted schools more deeply when educators understood their experiences. I saw how school culture and academic achievement grew stronger when diverse voices were included in decision making. Those experiences fuel the work I do today at the intersection of education policy and practice.

As director of educator diversity at The Hunt Institute, I support policymakers across the country in understanding and implementing state-level strategies to recruit, prepare, and retain educators of color. I approach this work knowing that increasing educator diversity is not a symbolic gesture but a policy imperative with measurable academic, economic, and social impacts.

Despite evidence demonstrating the important and positive impact on student outcomes of diversifying the educator workforce, the demographics of the US educator workforce remain largely unchanged.¹ Over half of public school students are students of color, but only about 20 percent of their teachers share that background.² Closing this gap is not just about recruitment, it is about reimagining systems.

To achieve this, a cradle-to-career strategy is essential, one that ensures every step of the pipeline is designed to support and sustain a diverse educator workforce. There are several steps state and local leaders can take:

- introducing the teaching profession in middle and high school through grow-your-own programs and career exploration opportunities;
- creating affordable, accessible, community-centered preparation pathways like teacher residencies

and paraeducator pipelines; and

- addressing the professional isolation, limited advancement opportunities, and uncompetitive compensation relative to other fields that disproportionately push teachers of color out of the classroom.

From working with states across the country, we at the Hunt Institute have seen that advancing educator diversity in today's political climate requires a common-sense, multipronged approach that centers on local leadership, leverages strong data and evidence-based narratives, and builds bipartisan support for policies that strengthen the educator workforce for all students.

In Delaware, Delaware State University's partnership with a New York-based high school is aligning its education preparation programs to meet local workforce needs.³ Jackson State University's newly announced collaboration with Jackson Public Schools is not only aiming to increase the number of Black teachers but is also building a sustainable pipeline rooted in the community.⁴ In rural New York, Corning Inc. is investing in a local grow-your-own initiative aimed at diversifying the educator workforce, demonstrating how public-private partnerships can drive local change.⁵ These are not abstract pilot programs; they are targeted strategies with the potential to scale.

Additionally, retention strategies like mentorship, affinity groups, leadership opportunities, and improved working conditions must be prioritized. Programs that support all educators, such as housing stipends or expanded licensure pathways, often disproportionately benefit teachers of color and should be pursued as bipartisan solutions. In North Carolina, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' At Home in CMS teacher housing assistance initiative is a strong example of this approach in action.⁶

To ensure buy-in for policies and initiatives aimed at diversifying the educator workforce, there must be clear, transparent data that identifies the scope of the problem and demonstrates the viability of solutions. Yet many states lack the data infrastructure needed to drive meaningful change. Data transparency is a core challenge and opportunity. No

one can close educator diversity gaps they cannot see. Both the One Million Teachers of Color (1MTOC) Data Dashboard and The Education Trust's Teacher Diversity and Equity Policy Scan highlight where gaps exist and where progress is possible.⁷ These tools provide leaders with actionable insights, not just data points, to inform legislation, funding, and accountability systems. Data should not just live in reports; it must drive results.

As education leaders more effectively leverage data to make inroads in diversifying the educator workforce, they must shape stronger, data-informed narratives that connect with public priorities and policy goals. One of the most important issues for parents and likely voters, as revealed in The Hunt Institute's most recent Across the Aisle survey, is ensuring that students have access to highly effective educators.⁸ This concern is universally shared across political lines, reflecting a deep desire to see all students thrive academically. However, there remains a disconnect between this desire and the reluctance to view educator diversity as a key factor in achieving that goal. Too often, policymakers and the public treat educator effectiveness and diversity as separate concerns. The reality is that teacher effectiveness is intrinsically linked to the diversity of the educator workforce.

Increased access to highly effective educators should be viewed as directly connected to increasing access to a more diverse educator workforce. To truly meet the needs of all students, especially those from historically underserved communities, our focus must shift to include the recognition that a diverse teaching staff is not just a beneficial addition but a critical necessity. Diversity in the educator workforce brings unique perspectives, strengthens classroom engagement, and enhances cultural awareness. These factors contribute to the overall effectiveness of teaching and learning, creating better academic outcomes for all students, regardless of their background.

Policymakers and the public must begin to recognize that enhancing educator diversity and improving educator effectiveness are not separate

goals, but two sides of the same coin. Bridging this gap will require a concerted effort to reframe educator diversity as a fundamental aspect of educational quality and to prioritize policies that foster a teaching workforce that reflects our rapidly diversifying student population.

Jarvis Lundy is the director of educator diversity at the Hunt Institute.

Notes

1 Desiree Carver-Thomas, "Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color," report (Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, 2018).

2 Katherine Schaeffer, "Key Facts about Public School Teachers in the U.S.," Short Reads, Pew Research Center, September 24, 2024.

3 Danielle McLean, "NYC Public Schools Moves to Launch Early College Program with Delaware State," Higher Ed Dive, February 6, 2025.

4 William H. Kelly III, "Jackson State and Jackson Public Schools Launch Jackson Middle College Program," JSU Newsroom, August 1, 2023.

5 Corning Incorporated, "Corning Makes Good on Plan to Increase Teacher Diversity" (November 2024), <https://www.corning.com/worldwide/en/community-impact-and-investment/news/Corning-makes-good-on-plan-to-increase-teacher-diversity>.

6 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, "CMS Employee Housing," web page.

7 One Million Teachers of Color, Data Dashboard, web page; Education Trust, Teacher Diversity and Equity Policy Scan, data tool, February 23, 2023.

8 Celinda Lake et al., Findings from Quantitative and Qualitative Research Nationwide Among Voters, Parents, and Teachers, presentation to The Hunt Institute, November 2024.

Too often, policymakers and the public treat educator effectiveness and diversity as separate concerns.



State Education

Standard

Special Issue • July 2025