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## **A Vision and Guidance for a Diverse and Learner-Ready Teacher Workforce**

## THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, Bureau of Indian Education, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.

### **A Vision and Guidance for a Diverse and Learner-Ready Teacher Workforce**

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## Carissa Moffat Miller Executive Director, Council of Chief State School Officers



Imagine being a student who from kindergarten to graduation day never has a teacher with their shared experience – not their ethnicity, or their race, or their socioeconomic experience.

Too many of our students don't have to imagine. It's their reality.

Research tells us that students benefit from learning from someone they can relate to, socially and culturally. In 2017, state chiefs came together and made a commitment to advance equity in our education system, which means we must ensure every student, across every race, ethnicity, language, family background, and/or family income, has access to the educational resources and rigor they need at the right moment in their

education. To be successful in creating a more equitable education system, we must ensure a teacher workforce that is more diverse and culturally responsive.

Today, 10 states have joined the Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) Diverse and Learner-Ready Teacher's Initiative. Through this initiative, CCSSO convenes leaders in state education agencies, teacher preparation programs, school districts, and other key stakeholders to focus on strategies to diversify the future teaching workforce and to ensure *all* teachers, are prepared to use their students' racial and cultural identity as an asset in their learning. These state representatives are examining their current systems that have contributed to the lack of diversity in the teacher workforce and working with educators, policymakers and other stakeholders to create the necessary changes to achieve a more diverse teacher workforce.

This initiative, and the vision guidance outlined within this report, are not just about matching demographics, it's about confronting equity issues directly that will create real change for students. In order to address these challenges, identify the real issues and set measurable goals, we all must be willing to have the difficult conversations – about race, poverty and the systemic barriers that have plagued our education system – and take action.

I am proud of the work these states are leading, and I look forward to the results that will come from challenging the traditional structures that have inhibited progress in the past. Thank you for your attention to this important effort and I ask that you continue to support state education chiefs and their agencies as they work together to deliver a high-quality education to our nation's students.

## **Lamont Repollet** New Jersey Commissioner of Education



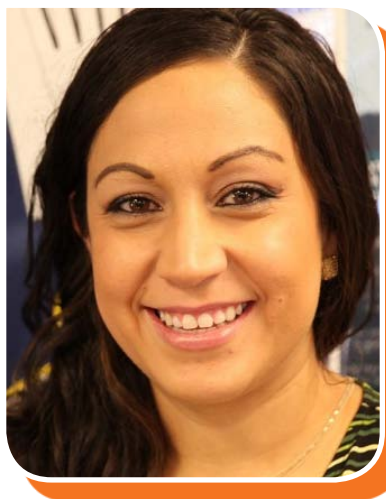
"We often talk about the how, but we rarely talked about the why. Research tells us that a diverse teaching workforce benefits all students. Teachers of color foster positive perceptions among children, which helps prepare them for success in a diverse society. It's our obligation to open doors that encourage diversity among New Jersey educators. We owe it not only to aspiring teachers, but to the children we serve."

## **Tony Smith** Illinois Superintendent of Education



"We have to think differently about diversifying the teacher workforce. Our true opportunities lie beyond quotas and matching demographics. We have a chance to transform systems for deeper belonging and inclusion for all of us. This effort is about every single child benefitting from diverse educators working in communities across race and across class, forming relationships to help students understand different ways of being. This effort is about transformation."

## Christina Randle 2018 Colorado State Teacher of the Year



"As I was going through my education preparation program, I served as a tutor to at-risk youth. One young lady, pregnant and 14 years young, was reading well-below a second grade level. After a few sessions with her, focusing first on understanding her story and then on some basic phonics skills, I remember her quietly staring at me; finally, with a sense of amazement and relief, almost, she said, "I've never had a teacher that looks like me before." This left me with a range of emotions: surprise and wonder, pride and confusion. The DLRT team is my chance to be part of the solution to this problem. We need to be more thoughtful and intentional about diversifying our field...our students are increasingly diverse, so why aren't our educators? Our classrooms should reflect the beautiful, diverse world we

live in! The DLRT provides states the support and space to be bold, ask questions, generate ideas, and be inspired by colleagues across the nation who value and are passionate about recruiting and retaining a diverse teacher workforce."

## Virginia Forcucci 2018 Delaware State Teacher of the Year



"About a decade ago, an exceptional sophomore in my English classroom decided to research Latinx drop-out rates. Inspired by her Mexican heritage, Alexis wanted to share her findings with her primarily white classmates, but a quick visit to one of her favorite teacher's classroom quickly halted her ambition. While waiting to pick up a letter of recommendation, she heard a peer call her a "dirty Mexican" and then she painfully watched as her teacher turned a deaf ear. Feeling betrayed and devastated, Alexis asked to switch research topics, to avoid additional discomfort; however, after discussing the power of her voice as well as the power of knowledge and facts, my student proudly delivered one of the most impressive and heartfelt presentations I've ever witnessed.

Alexis concluded by sharing the story of her parents' sacrifices in coming to this nation and found herself in tears. She also found herself embraced by a number of her classmates who arose from their seats and wrapped her in their empathetic arms. But one notable student remained seated. The young person who'd hurled the ethnic slur at Alexis sat in the back of my room that day, and I just knew that her hostility and ignorance would overshadow the compassion and respect most of my kiddos so willingly offered. As Alexis packed up her presentation materials, I saw the student who'd been so hurtful stand up and walk to the front of the room. She stood before Alexis, before her peers, before me, and she apologized for her behavior.

It is Alexis's courage, along with the stories and experiences of many other students, who inspire my advocacy for culturally responsive practices—practices that prompt awareness, community, and progress. Let us embrace her fearlessness when we confront and disrupt the implicit biases that support systemic racism, that breed pervasive inequity. Let us consider the act of contrition she stirred as we work to ensure that children of color feel heard and treasured and challenged, that they see themselves in their educators. Reward Alexis's strength by acknowledging *your* power, by using *your* voice."

### **Kimberly Eckert** 2018 Louisiana State Teacher of the Year



"I literally dropped everything and dashed at the chance to be a part of the DLRT team. As someone who had markedly odd interactions when I advocated for initial and ongoing support for culturally responsive teaching, I finally realized that receiving responses like, 'There is only good teaching,' 'The only problem with race is that people won't stop talking about it,' and 'People are either good teachers or they're not,' was wholly representative of both society's reluctance to face uncomfortable conversations and our failure to hold each other to higher humane expectations. I once had to pose a counter scenario to an administrator to prove that culturally responsive, learner-ready practices could and should be taught. As a biracial/African American teacher, I was faced with a group of white students

whose parents would prefer them not be taught by someone of color. I pointed out that through my dynamic, learned skill-set, I was able to endear myself and worth to the students, celebrate their culture of hunting (different than my own), set and support rigorous expectations, present a welcoming classroom atmosphere, while successfully developing communication with their parents. Until I had to point this out to administration, I never stopped to assume how often the burden of learning, proving, and adapting is placed tremendously on teachers of color but excused in Caucasian counterparts. ALL teachers have the power and presence to hone our abilities, and this is vital to assuring that we create learning experiences that are rigorous, celebratory, and inviting for ALL students regardless of background. The work of DLRT is vital to ensuring we never stop looking to assure all students receive access to diverse teachers who are psychologically and emotionally READY to teach them on day one."

## ENSURING A DIVERSE AND LEARNER-READY TEACHER WORKFORCE: VISION AND GUIDANCE PAPER

### A DIVERSE AND LEARNER-READY TEACHER WORKFORCE: A CRITICAL EQUITY ISSUE OF OUR TIME

Racial diversity benefits every workforce,<sup>1</sup> and our nation's schools and classrooms are no exception. Research shows that all students benefit from having a diverse group of teachers that come from a variety of backgrounds as they prepare to enter an increasingly global society.<sup>2</sup> Regular exposure to and interactions with individuals from a variety of races and ethnic groups, especially during childhood, can help to combat stereotypes, strengthen students' abilities to become comfortable with peers from different backgrounds, reduce unconscious implicit biases inside and outside the classroom, and lead to innovative and greater social-cohesion.<sup>3</sup> Students benefit from mirrors and windows; the mirror representing the story that reflects their own culture and helps them build their own identity, and the window that offers them a view into someone else's experience. Simply stated, diversity makes us smarter. Research demonstrates that students' exposure to people who are different from themselves, and the ideas and challenges that such exposure brings, leads to improved cognitive skills, including critical thinking and problem solving.<sup>4</sup>

#### Students need "mirrors and windows"

*It's really important that students have people who reflect back to them their language, their culture, their ethnicity, their religion. It doesn't mean all the people in their lives have to do that mirroring, but they should have some. And we know that in the teaching profession, there really are not enough mirrors.*

Sarah Leibel, Lecturer on Education and Master Teacher in Residence in the Harvard Teacher Fellows Program

While a diverse teacher workforce is valuable for all students in a pluralistic society, a racially diverse teacher workforce is a necessary step to advance educational equity. In 2017, the Council of Chief State Schools Officers (CCSSO) partnered with the Aspen

Institute Education & Society Program to develop [Leading for Equity: Opportunities for State Education Chiefs](#), ten actions state chiefs can take to create a more equitable education system in their state. **Commitment #8, Focus on Teachers and Leaders**, affirms that in order to ensure equitable access to effective teaching, states chiefs must ensure educators are prepared to teach our increasingly diverse student population. In addition to assuring classroom teachers are effective in practice, state chiefs recognize that the race and culture of teachers also matters, particularly for students of color.<sup>5</sup> Research demonstrates that teachers of color serve as role models, set high expectations, and support the academic growth of students of color.<sup>6</sup> Students of color are also less likely to be disciplined or expelled by teachers of color, when they are typically disciplined at disproportionately higher rates;<sup>7</sup> and they are more likely to be identified for gifted programs, when they are disproportionately under-identified today.<sup>8</sup> **An effective teacher workforce is one that represents the racial diversity of students in PK12 schools.**

The lack of a racially diverse teacher workforce is one of the most critical equity issues of our time. If we are to ensure every student, across every race, ethnicity, language, family background, and/or family income, has access to the educational resources and rigor they need at the right moment in their education,<sup>9</sup> we must meaningfully and significantly increase racial diversity in the teacher workforce. CCSSO is working with state education agency leaders to do just this, with the goal that by 2025 at least 15 states will have evidence of increased racial diversity in their teacher workforce and proof-points that all teachers demonstrate culturally responsive practice.

Change has begun in many states where critical stakeholders in policy and practice arenas have been galvanized into action. As the diversity of students in our nation's schools increases exponentially, the current pace of change in the teacher workforce lags too far behind. This report is a call to action by state chiefs, and leaders from educator preparation providers (EPPs), local education agencies (LEAs), legislatures, unions, and civic and community groups. Leading for equity requires we prioritize our commitment to students and ensure they have access to diverse and learner-ready teachers.

We can and must do better.

## OUR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY CHALLENGE

While most students in our schools now are children of color, this is not the case among teachers and principals. Despite the fundamental value of a racially diverse teacher workforce, there exists a vast diversity gap between teachers and students. In America, 50% of our students identify as being a person of color compared to only 20% of their teachers and with only 2% being black men.<sup>10</sup> The underrepresentation of teachers of color is particularly egregious in certain locales. For example, in 17 states, more than 95% of teachers are white (compared to an average of 82% of students being white in those states).<sup>11</sup> Indeed, 40% of public schools do not have a single teacher of color.<sup>12</sup>

While we have taken initial steps towards diversifying the teacher workforce, we recognize we have a long way to go. In fact, achieving a diverse and learner-ready teacher workforce will require a sustained and robust effort for many years, perhaps decades, before we witness marked differences.<sup>13</sup> This is not surprising since the root cause of these disparities lies within systems and structures dating back to the early 20th century, designed to segregate people in public spaces based on race. Today, more than six decades since the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that decreed separate but equal is inherently unequal when it comes to public education, and despite national and state legislative efforts to support school desegregation since then, segregated communities and schools still exist where teachers are often even more segregated than students.<sup>14</sup> These systems have not only separated students and teachers spatially, they have contributed to the cultural divides that often



exists between teachers and their students. Increasing the racial diversity of the teacher workforce must be accompanied by deliberate attention to build current as well as future teachers' capacity to enact pedagogies and practices that recognize and embrace students' cultures as assets in the classroom. Dismantling these systems and structures to address current realities and create the conditions necessary to recruit, prepare, support, and retain a diverse and learner-ready teacher workforce may take time, but is a necessary endeavor in which we must engage.

Teachers are less likely to hold high expectations and asset-based views of students in predominantly low-income African American schools, largely as a result of negative preconceptions of these students.<sup>15</sup> Such implicit or explicit bias and lack of recognition of the central role that race and racism play in the PK12 educational system can reduce the self-image and performance of students of color.<sup>16</sup> Preparing teachers to demonstrate culturally responsive practice can help reverse such trends. Teachers must be able to support their students in developing cultural awareness and sensitivity. This is critical for supporting equitable learning outcomes for each student.

Research and evidence linking culturally responsive teaching to positive student outcomes continue to emerge.<sup>17</sup> For instance, positive early student-teacher relationships are associated with better academic and behavioral student outcomes. Furthermore, building on students' prior knowledge and experiences when introducing new content can increase students' motivation for learning and effective information processing.<sup>18</sup>

To be truly "learner-ready," all teachers must be prepared and receive ongoing support to respond to the needs of each student, especially since student demographics, and associated needs, will continue to shift. Successfully sustaining a "learner-ready" workforce requires a strong and supportive state environment.

In the following section, we describe a foundation for change in states, followed by a vision for what success looks like in relation to the teaching and learning experiences of teachers and students if we achieve our aspirations. The final section offers policy and practice guidance to achieve the aspiration. The guidance is designed to identify specific policy levers state education agencies (SEAs) have authority over that can be activated to achieve the vision described, as well as highlight distinct responsibilities of SEAs where they have a moral imperative to lead for equity. Additionally, the guidance offered makes salient the ways in which SEAs can and must collaborate with relevant stakeholder groups to achieve our goals.

## Learner-ready teachers

The learner-ready teacher is one who is ready on day one of his or her career to model and develop in students the knowledge and skills they need to succeed today including the ability to think critically and creatively, to apply content to solving real world problems, to be literate across the curriculum, to collaborate and work in teams, and to take ownership of their own continuous learning. More specifically, learner-ready teachers have deep knowledge of their content and how to teach it; they understand the differing needs of their students, hold them to high expectations, and personalize learning to ensure each learner is challenged; they care about, motivate, and actively engage students in learning; they collect, interpret, and use student assessment data to monitor progress and adjust instruction; they systematically reflect, continuously improve, and collaboratively problem solve; and they demonstrate leadership and shared responsibility for the learning of all students. (Our Responsibility, Our Promise, 2012, pp. iii-iv)

## PROVIDING A FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE

Research provides compelling evidence of the importance of a teacher workforce which reflects the ethno-racial diversity of students.<sup>19</sup> Further, it makes clear that we must invest in all teachers to ensure they engage in culturally responsive practice. As a result, there is a growing movement among educational leaders at the national, state, and local levels to both make the necessary changes to address the critical need for a more diverse and culturally responsive workforce and to do so in collaboration. In fact, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) encourages and supports states to work in partnership with local education agencies (LEAs), educator preparation providers (EPPs), and other stakeholders to take action.<sup>20</sup>

CCSSO has worked with state chiefs over the past five years to transform how educators are prepared, anchored in the foundational report [Our Responsibility, Our Promise](#).<sup>21</sup> Working in collaboration and partnership with EPPs, states have made significant progress to strengthen educator preparation, guided by the aspiration that all teachers will be learner-ready on their first day in the classroom.



States in [CCSSOs Network for Transforming Educator Preparation](#) (NTEP)<sup>22</sup> pioneered efforts to achieve this aspiration, and today the majority of states have made tremendous strides towards teacher-readiness on day one by leveraging three key policy levers over which they have authority: teacher preparation program approval; licensure; and data collection, analysis, and reporting.<sup>23</sup> By creating meaningful and robust standards for the approval of programs that prepare teachers, ensuring licensure is tied to valid and reliable measures of readiness, and ensuring all key stakeholders receive the necessary data to continuously improve, states are better able to ensure that each child in our nation's schools is taught by a learner-ready teacher. Despite this progress, NTEP states recognized that if we are truly going to fulfill our promise to assure educational equity for all students, teachers need better preparation, development, and support that more directly addresses the specific knowledge and skills necessary to teach *each* learner. In an increasingly diverse society, this requires that states prioritize the ethno-racial diversity of the teacher workforce and teachers' ability to be culturally responsive in practice.

[Leading for Equity: Opportunities for State Education Chiefs](#) codified conversations and commitments of state chiefs, civil rights and advocacy groups, and educators regarding the ways in which SEAs may address inequities. Among the actions included in *Leading for Equity* is a focus on ensuring all students have equitable access to effective teaching. More specifically, that teachers reflect the changing demographics of students in our schools, most of whom are children of color, and that they have the knowledge and skills to meet the demands of teaching diverse student populations.<sup>24</sup> Where the focus for NTEP sat squarely in the teacher preparation or preservice space, achieving these goals will require states to take an approach that promotes learner-readiness across the career continuum.

Building and sustaining a teacher workforce that is both diverse and learner-ready necessitates intentional examination of the teacher career continuum, from recruitment and preparation to professional learning and advancement. Educational leaders need to understand both the affordances and constraints of the system across the teacher workforce to achieve this goal. Building on opportunities highlighted in [Our Responsibility, Our Promise](#), urgency is now centered on reframing the discourse of the learner-ready teacher. Our responsibility is to ensure each student is taught by teachers who engage in culturally responsive practice.

## LEARNER-READY TEACHERS ARE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE IN PRACTICE

While the definition of learner-ready teachers includes characterizations consistent with what it means to be a culturally responsive teacher, it does not explicitly include the term *culturally responsive*. In order to establish widespread consensus on what it means to be a learner-ready and culturally responsive teacher, a working group of members of NTEP reviewed research literature and consulted with experts in the field to further refine the definition:

*Teachers who engage in culturally responsive practice use strategies in the classroom that incorporate “the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them”.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, teachers who are culturally responsive in practice “empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes”.<sup>26</sup> Studies have shown that when teachers of all races and cultural backgrounds engage in culturally responsive practice all students benefit academically and socially. Worth noting is that being a culturally responsive teacher requires engagement in a continuum of ongoing reflection, practice, and insight into the educational and social needs of each learner.<sup>27</sup>*

As NTEP formally came to an end, SEAs continued to invest in strengthening educator preparation and prioritized goals for building a pipeline of ethno-racially diverse and culturally responsive teachers. A number of them joined together to achieve this aspiration in a new aligned action network focused on these two goals.

## CCSSO’S DIVERSE AND LEARNER-READY TEACHERS INITIATIVE

CCSSO launched the *Diverse and Learner-Ready Teachers Initiative* (DLRT) in March 2018. This network of ten states<sup>28</sup> and over 30 national collaborating organizations<sup>29</sup> focuses on systems-level changes to increase the ethno-racial diversity of the teacher workforce, and supports future and current educators to effectively teach a diverse population of students. Because this work is critical to our mission of assuring educational equity, states are also focused on addressing a potential unintended consequence of focusing on these two goals exclusively. As previously noted, even if we begin aggressively recruiting and successfully retaining teachers of color now,

achieving racial parity between teachers and students is not likely to happen within the next few decades. If it were possible, simply matching the ethno-racial diversity of teachers in a state, district, or school to that of students does not assure that students of color have opportunities to learn in classrooms led by same-race teachers. It also does not assure white students have opportunities to learn in classrooms led by teachers of color. For these reasons, states recognize that to be successful in this work they need to work towards a future where all students, regardless of race, experience teaching and learning with teachers of color during their PK12 schooling experience. This requires that states work in partnership with local education agencies (LEAs) and educator preparation providers (EPPs) through an equity lens to effectively address diversity gaps.

Achieving these aspirations may be difficult for many educational leaders; they will be required to first interrogate their own beliefs, values, and perceptions about people who are ethnically, racially, and culturally different than themselves. This work also calls on these leaders to engage in open, honest, and candid conversations about race and equity, within their agencies and organizations across the system. We cannot embrace diversity if we do not first commit to collaborating around our differences. Responding to this call to action will require additional or reallocated resources to ensure enduring systemic change. The way we invest our resources speaks volumes about what matters most. If educational leaders are committed to ensuring a diverse and learner-ready teacher workforce, a critical equity issue of our time, they will need to demonstrate fidelity to lead for equity.



## VISION CASTING

A clear vision for change is critical to success. This vision must answer two fundamental questions: If we had a diverse and learner-ready workforce,

- 1) How would each student in PK12 schools experience teaching and learning?
- 2) How would each teacher in PK12 schools experience teaching and learning?

## WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE: THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

If we had a diverse and learner-ready teacher workforce, each student would experience teaching and learning in classrooms led by teachers from diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds. White students would have opportunities to learn from teachers of color and students of color would have opportunities to learn from teachers who reflect their ethno-racial identity throughout their PK12 schooling experiences.

If we had a diverse and learner-ready teacher workforce, students would experience;

- Access to highly trained and qualified teachers who hold them to high expectations, support their self-esteem, challenge them in ways that motivate and inspire them to learn independently and seek new knowledge, and believe in their success.
- Teaching and learning as an opportunity to become their best selves as learners, teachers of others, and informed citizens and consumers.
- Meaningful access to grade-level content, advanced courses and programs, and curriculum and materials that reflect cultures and histories of all different kinds of people and helps them build a stronger sense of belonging to both their school and wider community.
- Open-ended discussions, facilitated by multiple points of views and unique experiences.
- Feeling seen, heard, valued, safe, respected, cared for, and accepted regardless of their race, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, mental/physical ability.
- Teachers, principals, and other educational professionals that reflect different cultures, histories, and identities and who model cultural awareness and inclusion.
- Teachers who support their social and emotional learning.<sup>30</sup>
- Learning opportunities that connect their experiences and backgrounds to content in ways that value their cultures and create safe spaces for them to engage in healthy dialogue about diversity.
- Opportunities to participate in extracurricular programs, including school clubs, student council, band/music, sports, and more as equal members of the whole school community.
- Restorative disciplinary practices that give them opportunities to work with teachers and school leaders to learn from mistakes and develop social and emotional skills.

In sum, students would experience teaching and learning that is culturally responsive, with a deliberate focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. These holistic experiences would foster academic success and personal well-being for each student.

### **Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the remix** **Gloria Ladson-Billings**

"...if we ever get to a place of complete certainty and assuredness about our practice, we will stop growing. If we stop growing, we will die, and, more importantly, our students will wither and die in our presence. Both teachers and students can be vulnerable to a sort of classroom death. Death in the classroom refers to teachers who stop trying to reach each and every student or teachers who succumb to rules and regulations that are dehumanizing and result in de-skilling (Apple, 1993, p.77)."

## WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE: THE TEACHER EXPERIENCE

If we had a diverse and learner-ready teacher workforce, each teacher would enter the profession having demonstrated the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to practice and deliver culturally responsive instruction to each student. Teachers would be empowered to improve outcomes for all students, regardless of their background. Throughout the course of their teaching career, each teacher would have access to meaningful professional learning opportunities to develop and grow their culturally responsive practice. Teachers would be teaching and learning in schools where their colleagues (teachers, principals, and professional staff) come from ethnically, culturally, and racially diverse backgrounds and reflect the diversity of students in their school, district, and state. With a more diverse, equitable, and supportive environment, and with greater access to tools necessary to be successful, more teachers would be retained in the profession and continue to develop their careers.

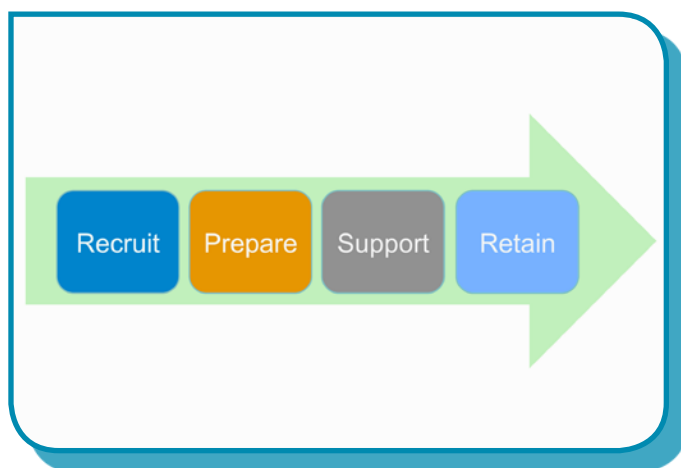
If we had a diverse and learner-ready teacher workforce, teachers would experience;

- A diverse educator workforce (teachers, school, and district leaders) that include peers who share similar background and life experiences.
- A diverse group of teachers within each school working as members of a team, sharing their knowledge and skills, and contributing to the ongoing development of an inclusive school culture that is responsive to each student.
- An inclusive school culture where each teacher feels included, supported, and valued regardless of race and ethnicity.
- Ownership and agency in identifying, developing, using, and sharing curricula and pedagogy that resonates with their perspectives, background, and vision for educating students.
- A community of professionals who work together to plan instructional programs that promote continuity and support equitable learning experiences for all students.
- An environment where teachers observe one another in the classroom, engage in pedagogical discussions, and collaborate to improve their teaching methods and explore new instructional strategies, particularly with an aim of strengthening culturally responsive practices.
- A safe work environment where their diverse perspectives, skill sets, and passions are welcomed.
- Equitable working conditions where teachers are not expected to do more or less just because of their race or ethnicity.
- A career that offers a professional salary comparable to that of other professions requiring a college degree or similar, complex skill set.
- Greater opportunities to advance and grow through a rewarding career in education.

- A system that provides them with the tools to be effective and drive outcomes for a diverse group of students, including students from different races and ethnicities.
- A drive to address implicit bias in the classroom and recognize the potential in every student.
- A variety of meaningful professional learning opportunities, specifically those that:
  - Encourage and support exploration of their own biases and how they surface in their teaching practice;
  - Develop their skills and capacity for choosing and using culturally responsive curriculum and material; and
  - Grow their skills and practice for supporting their students' social and emotional learning.

## A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH ACROSS THE CAREER CONTINUUM

Ensuring a diverse and learner-ready teacher workforce will require a comprehensive systems approach. Investing in random acts of improvement by implementing strategies that target discrete parts of the teacher career continuum may contribute to short-term gains but will likely not lead to enduring change. Real systems change requires collaboration between education leaders from across the system. To this end, if we are going to realize the vision for educational equity that reflects excellent teaching and learning experiences for every student and teacher in our nation's PK12 schools, we must also address these questions:



- What are the actions **state education agencies (SEAs)** need to take?
- In what ways should SEAs collaborate with **educator preparation providers (EPPs)**?
- In what ways should SEAs collaborate with **local education agencies (LEAs)**?

The following section offers policy and practice guidance for education leaders and is organized into two subsections: the preservice and in-service parts of the teacher workforce continuum. The guidance identifies actions for SEA leaders and identifies within each action the requisite collaboration with stakeholders that is critical to achieve a diverse and learner-ready teacher workforce.

## PRESERVICE: ATTRACTING, PREPARING, AND PLACING DIVERSE AND LEARNER-READY TEACHERS

Many of the policy and practice recommendations in [Our Responsibility, Our Promise](#) continue to serve as strong guidance in the preservice space for states committed to building a diverse and learner-ready teacher workforce. Additionally, the guidance offered in [Transforming Educator Preparation: Lessons Learned from Leading States](#); [Preparing “Learner-Ready Teachers”](#); and [Leading for Equity](#) provides evidence-based models of emerging best practices and policies. Building on the recommendations and guidance from these foundational reports, specific actions for attracting, preparing, and placing diverse and learner-ready teachers in the workforce are described below.

- 1) **Revise and enforce licensure standards and accompanying assessments to ensure a culturally responsive teacher workforce.** Culturally responsive practice is best assessed in a nuanced way, through performance-based measures. Licensure requirements should include evidence that teachers demonstrate culturally responsive practice when teaching to college and career-ready standards. Working in partnership with stakeholders—particularly EPPs and LEAs, but also community-based organizations—states should consider updating or revising definitions for learner-ready teachers to so that the characteristics of culturally responsive practice are clear and integral in building coherent entry systems both within and across states. The next step is to work in partnership with stakeholders to translate those definitions into specific expectations and embed them into standards that will drive development of licensure assessments and preparation program curricula.
- 2) **Analyze and monitor teacher licensure requirements.** SEAs should monitor state licensure policies that may have a disproportionate impact on teacher candidates of color, particularly men of color. Research shows there are tradeoffs in raising cut scores for teacher licensure exams and that scores on these exams are not necessarily predictive of performance in the classroom and student achievement.<sup>31</sup> SEAs should regularly review the impact of licensure policies and examine whether a more selective program has the desired impact on the overall quality and ethno-racial diversity of the teacher workforce.
- 3) **Invest in multiple pathways into teaching to increase ethno-racial diversity of the teacher workforce and retain teachers of color.** High-quality teacher preparation is critical for ensuring a diverse and learner-ready teacher workforce. Among the reasons people of color are not entering the teaching profession is the high cost of completing a traditional teacher preparation program, and the subsequent debt burden they face upon completion. As a result, many teachers of color are more likely to begin teaching without having completed comprehensive preparation, which in turn contributes to high turnover rates among them. SEAs should invest in high-retention, supportive pathways into teaching. These include increasing access to comprehensive preservice preparation

through service scholarship and loan forgiveness programs, teacher residencies, and Grow Your Own programs.<sup>32</sup> SEAs can partner with LEAs to support residency models and district-led initiatives designed to retain teachers and expand their capacity to be culturally responsive over their career continuum. SEAs can also work together with legislatures to invest in college scholarships and/or loan forgiveness programs designed to attract people of color to the profession.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, one lesson learned from NTEP was that incongruence between state licensure requirements can create barriers that may dissuade excellent teachers who move from one state to another from staying in the profession. States are encouraged to continue to align licensure policies as one way to reduce those barriers.

- 4) **Adopt and implement rigorous program approval standards to assure that teacher preparation programs recruit candidates from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds and produce quality candidates of all backgrounds capable of demonstrating culturally responsive practice.** One important purpose of program approval is to ensure that educator preparation programs are high-quality, effective, and provide education and experiences consistent with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of an educator to serve the needs of the diverse population in today's public schools. In most states, SEAs have a statutory responsibility for adopting program approval standards that specify the levels of quality the state deems acceptable for quality assurance. The adoption and implementation of approval standards should be done in partnership with EPPs and address:
  - Holistic candidate selection criteria (beyond GPA and test score) and processes that include measures more closely aligned with in-service teaching effectiveness.
  - Learning experiences designed to intentionally support candidate learning, practice, and reflection on culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy.
  - Training and professional learning for teacher education faculty, mentor teachers, and other professional staff involved in the preparation of candidates to be culturally responsive teachers (in other words, train the trainers).
  - The ethno-racial diversity of teacher education faculty, mentor teachers, and other professional staff involved in the preparation of candidates.
- 5) **Adopt and implement policies and practices to assure teacher educator effectiveness.** Teacher educators play a critical role in preparing and supporting the professional learning of teachers along their career continuum. This includes professionals working in EPPs and practicing teachers in schools who play a formal role in teaching teachers how to teach.<sup>34</sup> SEA leaders should partner with EPPs and LEAs to increase the racial diversity of teacher educators and ensure teacher candidates are learning from teacher educators who demonstrate and model culturally responsive practice.<sup>35</sup>

## IN-SERVICE: SUPPORTING AND KEEPING DIVERSE AND LEARNER-READY TEACHERS

The following recommendations address working conditions and supports for teachers, particularly teachers of color. If our goal is that all students have access to teachers of color throughout their PK-12 experience, efforts to recruit excellent teachers of color are effective only if teachers of color remain in the classroom. The same is true of teachers who demonstrate culturally responsive practice. Drawing on the recommendations in *Leading for Equity* and the support of the national collaborators in the DLRT Initiative, the following represents a non-exhaustive set of best practices and policies to develop and maintain a diverse and learner-ready teacher workforce.



- 1) **Annually and publicly report on multiple indicators of the diversity of the teacher workforce.** SEAs should set data-informed goals to increase the ethno-racial diversity of the teacher workforce. SEAs should monitor the diversity of new teachers enrolled in educator preparation programs and collect and publicize data on teacher diversity at both the school and district levels. In partnership with EPPs and LEAs, SEAs can analyze the extent to which the state's educator workforce reflects student demographics and identify ways to be more intentional about recruiting and retaining a more representative workforce. This includes identifying areas that continue to be impacted by segregation, as evidenced by the racial make-up of students and teachers in schools, analyzing segregation measures (i.e., dissimilarity measure and exposure<sup>36</sup>), identifying the root causes, and acting to dismantle those institutions and systems to ensure equitable distribution of diverse and learner-ready teachers.
- 2) **Track and report on differential teacher retention and turnover rates.** SEAs should determine if any groups of teachers, particularly teachers of color, have disproportionately high turnover rates. States should work with LEAs to collect, analyze, and understand the school-level data and provide resources or supports for improving teacher retention. This includes interrogation and analysis of root causes of teacher turnover, including those identified by the research base (e.g., compensation, teacher preparation and support, working conditions, and effective school-based leadership).<sup>37</sup>
- 3) **Dedicate federal funding to workforce diversity initiatives.** SEAs should leverage allocated federal funding to support programs among EPPs and LEAs that have traditionally yielded more teachers of color. States can use funding from a wide range of federal sources to fund existing initiatives, and design competitive grants to encourage district innovation. In addition to diversity initiatives, states can invest in areas that positively impact the

recruitment, support, and retention of teachers of color, including, but not limited to: high-retention pathways into teaching,<sup>38</sup> the quality of school leaders, support for teachers to pursue National Board certification, and teacher leadership and development opportunities. Federal funding sources that can be leveraged to support pipeline initiatives include ESSA<sup>39</sup>, the Higher Education Act, Perkins Career Technical Education Act, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

- 4) **Convene key stakeholders to analyze data and address diversity gaps where they exist.** SEAs should work closely with local stakeholders, including EPPs, two-year post-secondary institutions (e.g., community colleges), LEAs, and teachers' unions to identify areas where there are shortages of teachers of color and convene the right stakeholders to create strategies to close those gaps. States have the resources and information to help LEAs identify the right strategies to diversify their teacher workforces. Collaborative mechanisms, such as the equity labs that states organized to address equity gaps, provide spaces to gather the right stakeholders and work in collaboration with other experts in the state. These mechanisms also provide opportunities for LEAs to work together and share best practices in the space and create communities of practice to ensure that promising strategies can be put into practice.
- 5) **Ensure that culturally responsive practice is one of multiple measures included on teacher evaluations, and that professional learning is required to improve practice.** SEAs can and should partner with EPPs and LEAs to adopt standards for culturally responsive practice. These standards, designed to support teacher professional learning and support systems, will ensure the workforce is learner-ready. To ensure teachers are well equipped with the knowledge and professional learning needed to be culturally responsive in practice, the state must commit resources to the training of the teachers. Investment in the professional learning of teacher educators, mentor teachers, and other professional staff supporting in-service teachers is necessary.



## CONCLUSION

Increasing the racial diversity of the teacher workforce and ensuring teachers are not only prepared to engage in culturally responsive practice but are supported in their growth as culturally responsive practitioners is necessary for ensuring that every student—but particularly students of color—have access to effective instruction. Positive exposure to individuals from a variety of races and ethnic groups, especially in childhood, helps to break stereotypes, allows students to grow more comfortable with differences, reduces unconscious or implicit biases, and leads to innovation and greater social-cohesion. Without the opportunity to be taught by teachers who share their race, ethnicity, and background, students of color are at a disadvantage. Diversity in the workforce benefits teachers, creating multicultural spaces for teachers to grow, learn, and become stronger practitioners over the course of their careers. Diversifying the teacher workforce is possible through aggressive partnerships between states, districts, and EPPs, and can lead to dramatic improvements in educational equity. By taking action—many highlighted in this report and others yet to be imagined—state leaders can make a real impact and create a new diverse and equitable environment for both students and teachers and improve our education system as a whole.

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Data Quality Campaign  
Deans for Impact  
Education Commission of the States  
Educational Testing Service  
PDK International  
Evaluation Systems of Pearson  
Learning Forward  
Learning Policy Institute  
Lessoncast  
National Association of Elementary School Principals  
National Association of Secondary School Principals  
National Association of State Boards of Education  
National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification  
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards  
National Council for Teacher Quality  
National Center for Teacher Residencies  
National Conference of State Legislatures  
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National Governors Association  
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## APPENDICES

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### ENSURING A DIVERSE AND LEARNER-READY TEACHER WORKFORCE: PRACTICE AND POLICY GUIDANCE

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#### State Best Practices

*Revise and enforce their licensure standards and accompanying assessments for teachers to ensure a culturally responsive teacher workforce.*

**Washington** revised teaching standards to include evidence of culturally responsive practices in the classroom. The *Pilot to Policy Grant: Advancing Systemic Equity* are two-year grants of up to \$10K for educator preparation programs that pilot work to inform policies and practices related to racial equity, community engagement, and cultural responsiveness.

*Analyze and monitor teacher licensure requirements and create new programs to increase ethno-racial diversity of the teacher workforce.*

**Connecticut** has implemented a pilot program in some of their largest districts where students of color in eleventh and twelfth grade can take education courses at four partner state universities that comprise the Connecticut State University system. Participating districts must provide a counselor to students in the program and guide them towards teacher shortage areas and the advanced placement program.

The **Illinois** Board of Higher Education has a statewide grant program for local Grow Your Own programs, which develops a pipeline of high-quality teachers to teach in hard-to-staff schools, with a specific focus on increasing the racial diversity of teachers across the state.

**Louisiana** is providing competitive grants to teacher preparation programs that are innovating around candidate recruitment and program design, including community-based teacher preparation programs that are currently operational and are designed to “recruit future teachers from within their own communities, starting with high school seniors.”

**Maryland** supports the Teacher Academy of Maryland to recruit high school students from diverse backgrounds using a new curriculum that can serve as a bridge to further education and a teaching career. Students take elective coursework in classroom management, curriculum delivery models, and learning theory while in high school. They eventually have the option of pursuing certification as an instructional assistant or moving on to a four-year degree.

*States should adopt and implement rigorous program approval standards to assure that teacher preparation programs recruit candidates from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds and produce quality candidates of all backgrounds capable of demonstrating culturally responsive practice.*

**Maryland's** program approval standards, *Institutional Performance Criteria*, requires programs "prepare professional educators to teach a diverse student population" (ethnicity, socio-economic status, English learners, giftedness, and inclusion of students with special needs in regular classroom). Institutions are expected to document how they prepare candidates to teach students from diverse communities, as well as identify how their performance assessment system measures candidates' ability to differentiate instruction within an inclusive classroom, implement learning experiences that address the varying needs of diverse students, and collaboratively plan and teach with specialized resource personnel for a diverse student population.

**Rhode Island's** program approval standards require programs to provide candidates with opportunities to reflect on their own biases, develop deeper awareness of their views and experiences of other cultures, and understand the impact of poverty on learning. It also expects programs to ensure graduating candidates are proficient in working with English learners and students from diverse communities.

*Track and report on differential teacher retention and turnover rates.*

**Colorado** developed the Minority Teacher Report to study and develop strategies to increase and improve the recruitment, preparation, development, and retention of high-quality teachers of color in elementary and secondary schools across the state. The report highlights the retention and turnover rates of teachers of color and makes recommendations for how each sector can address and improve disproportionalities.

*Dedicate federal funding to workforce diversity initiatives*

**Tennessee** has allocated \$100K from Title II, part A to fund *Diversity Innovation Implementation Grants* to support three districts in implementing comprehensive strategies to increase the representation of teachers of color in their local schools.

*Use their convening power to bring together key stakeholders to analyze data and address diversity gaps where they exist.*

**Connecticut, Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio** have led equity labs where they convened district leaders and stakeholders to share the purpose of their state equity plans, collect feedback on state-level strategies, facilitate LEA-level equity planning, and provide LEAs access to critical friends and a network of colleagues for planning and implementing strategies related to educational equity.

*Ensure that teachers are evaluated on and provided feedback for their use of culturally responsive practices and require professional development to be based on needs identified through these evaluations.*

**New Mexico's** teacher evaluation and support system reflects the expectation that all teachers demonstrate knowledge of content for and respond effectively to the needs of students from diverse communities; there is also a core competency in teacher licensure requirements tied to culturally responsive practice (teachers demonstrate sensitivity and responsiveness to, acknowledge and validate, and adjust practice based on the personal ideas, learning needs, interests, and feelings of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds).

**South Dakota's** WoLakota Mentoring Program focuses on providing mentorship to teachers new to the profession to help them better understand the culture of Native American students. Teachers in high-needs districts with large proportions of Native American students are supported, with the goal of retaining them at the same rates as teachers in other LEAs across the state. Trained mentors provide new teachers with support in embedding the Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings and Standards into everyday classroom practices and materials.

## **Additional Research**

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