

Diversifying the Educator Workforce: Disrupting Inequities



House Bill 21-1010

DIVERSITY WORKING GROUP REPORT

Dear Fellow Coloradans,

A 2017 report from the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) noted that the teacher shortage facing the state was a function of declining interest in the profession, failure to retain existing teachers, and accelerated retirement of veteran educators. Fast forward five years, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenge of recruiting and retaining the diverse educator workforce needed to educate all of Colorado's kids for a promising future. The profession remains overwhelmingly white, in contrast to the composition of Colorado's public schools, whose enrollments are now comprised of nearly half students of color.

Research demonstrates that students of color are more likely to succeed by having even just one teacher of similar race or ethnicity during their schooling, while all students benefit from a diverse educator workforce. For schools to create a positive, safe, and welcoming environment for all students, it is imperative to have an educator workforce that reflects the racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse communities they serve. Given the significant benefit to students, it's not difficult to understand why schools and organizations across the nation are calling for a more diverse teacher workforce.

In a similar vein, House Bill 21-1010 tasked CDHE and CDE to convene a workgroup dedicated to identifying obstacles to increasing the diversity of our state's educator workforce and to develop recommendations for meeting the challenge. This report is a result of the workgroup's effort. The report's recommendations build on those from 2017's [Colorado's Teacher Shortages](#) strategic plan, and the 2014 report [Keeping Up With the Kids](#). Recommended strategies include investing in "grow your own" strategies and addressing long-standing concerns about compensation; providing mentorship opportunities for aspiring teachers and investing in preparation programs at colleges and universities serving students of color and supporting districts to implement culturally relevant and sustainable practices to address implicit bias and microaggressions in the classroom and workplace.

This report continues to underscore the importance of clear and focused support on recruiting, preparing, and retaining a diverse educator workforce. There is no single, statewide solution to the challenge. Instead, there are multiple possible solutions tailored to fit the assets and needs of different communities and different parts of the state. It is the shared belief of workgroup members that all Colorado students will benefit from being served by educators that resemble the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of our community.

Sincerely,

House Bill 21-1010 Diversity Workgroup



Table of Contents

5	Introduction
7	Background/Methodology
8	Barriers
11	Recommended Strategies
19	Endnotes



Diversifying the Educator Workforce: Disrupting Inequities

Despite changing demographics across the state, far too many Hispanic or Latinx, African American or Black, Asian, and American Indian or Alaska Native students in Colorado go through their entire academic career without seeing an educator who shares their race, ethnicity, gender, language, or background. Colorado educators have a critical role to play in validating their students' lived experiences, as well as increasing students' graduation and college-going rates. Diverse educators offer new and valuable perspectives for children of all backgrounds. Simply stated, all Colorado students benefit from a diverse educator workforce.

Introduction

Excellent educators engage learners, inspire minds, and leave their mark on students well past the time they spend together in a classroom. Educators develop lifelong learners, prepare students for the future, and ensure a quality education for all. And all means all. Yet countless studies continue to show persistent academic gaps – the result of structural barriers and historic inequities that have only been exacerbated by the pandemic.

During the trying years of the COVID-19 pandemic, historically underserved children and families were disproportionately impacted by disruptions to childcare and school. During the 2020-21 school year, Colorado families of color were less likely to have jobs that enabled them to work from home; similarly, these families were also less likely to access childcare options.¹

In 2021, while enrollment in preschool and kindergarten recovered from declines seen in 2020, they remained below pre-pandemic levels. Meanwhile, though 2022 state test scores show improvements over 2021, students have yet to reach achievement levels obtained in 2019 in almost every area tested.² What's more, while English language learners' scores are ticking back up toward pre-COVID levels, these students had larger declines to overcome.

In 2021, Colorado's high school graduation rate was 81.7% – only a 0.2% drop from the previous year, but the first decline in a decade.³

The four-year graduation rate was 76% for students of color, a decrease of 1.0 percentage point from the previous year. The rate was 86.6% for White students, a 0.6% increase from 2020. The college-going rate for every race and ethnic group has also dipped. The drop was most severe for American Indian or Alaska Native students, whose rate of entering college decreased by 23%. As Colorado is home to two sovereign Native American nations – the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe who were promised educational opportunities, this disparity has both economic and sociopolitical implications. During the same time, the college-going rate fell 14% for Hispanic students and 5% for white students.⁴ Given the fact that 97% of Colorado's top jobs require a postsecondary credential, these outcomes have a substantial effect on students' wage potential.

Disparities for students of color have been compounded by COVID-19. The public health emergency – coupled with the concurrent economic, political, and racial justice crises – has merely amplified alarm bells. It's time to answer the call. For schools to create a positive, safe, and welcoming environment for all students, it is imperative to have an educator workforce that reflects the racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse communities they serve.

Given the significant benefit to students, schools and organizations across the nation are calling for a more diverse teacher workforce. Research suggests that diversifying the workforce leads to more equitable student academic; behavioral; and social-emotional outcomes.⁵ Studies show that students feel more cared for, are more motivated by, and learn more from educators who share their same race.⁶ What's more, research suggests that all students benefit from having at least one teacher of color, and students of color that have had at least one same-race teacher in grades 3-5 were nearly 40% less likely to drop out of high school than those who had not had a teacher of color.⁷

A 2016 study analyzed data from the Measures for Effective Teaching (MET) longitudinal database regarding 6th--to 9th-grade students' perceptions of their African American or Black, Hispanic or Latinx, and White teachers.⁸ The survey assesses seven domains including how well the teacher motivated students to perform, and how cared for students felt. Students rated Hispanic or Latinx teachers higher than White teachers across all measures, and African American or Black teachers were rated more favorably than White teachers on five of seven measures. The researchers suggest that teachers of color are more

multiculturally aware than White teachers and that such awareness translates into deeper connections with all students. Teachers of color enable White students to interact with and learn from individuals whose races and cultures are different than their own. One expert argues, "Exposure to peers and adults with different experiences and worldviews helps all children develop empathy for others and assess their own humanity." (p. 30)⁹

Yet Colorado's educator workforce remains overwhelmingly White. Despite recent attempts, efforts at diversifying the teaching profession have fallen short. Among 2020-21 Colorado teachers, 1.6% are African American or Black, and 8.8% are Hispanic or Latinx, yet 4.5% of Colorado students are African American or Black, and 34.5% are Hispanic or Latinx (the fastest growing demographic in the state).¹⁰ Colorado is the eighth-fastest growing state in the nation. The population is projected to grow 55% by 2050, resulting largely from people moving to the state.¹¹ By 2050, people of color are predicted to make up about 46% of Colorado's population. The Hispanic or Latinx population is expected to increase to make up 35% of the state's total population. The need for educators from diverse racial backgrounds only becomes more urgent as Colorado schools welcome more students of color.

“Exposure to peers and adults with different experiences and worldviews helps all children develop empathy for others and assess their own humanity.”

Background/ Methodology

In 2021, with bipartisan support, the governor signed House Bill 21-1010: Diverse K-12 Educator Workforce. The bill tasked CDHE and CDE with convening a workgroup dedicated to identifying the obstacles to a diverse educator workforce in Colorado. As described in the law, the workgroup was charged with investigating barriers to the recruitment, preparation, and retention of a diverse educator workforce. Additionally, the workgroup was required to consider and develop recommendations to increase the diversity of Colorado’s educator workforce.



To fulfill the requirements outlined in the bill, CDHE and CDE solicited stakeholder volunteers and then asked current participants to help recruit additional subjects. The workgroup members included at least one or more of the following persons or organizations: representatives from CDHE and CDE; deans, university faculty, directors, and graduates of educator preparation programs; representatives from community colleges and occupational education; teachers, principals, and other school leaders who have a diverse educator workforce; researchers; and nonprofit or community organizations with expertise in diversifying the educator workforce. CDHE and CDE ensured that at least 50% of the workgroup was composed of persons from historically underrepresented groups as determined and/or confirmed by the member’s self-identification. CDHE and CDE utilized a subset of the workgroup as a “steering committee” to provide direction for the work. The steering committee also met the same membership requirements.

The workgroup held four virtual meetings to learn about and discuss the barriers to the recruitment, preparation, and retention of a diverse educator workforce and possible solutions. The workgroup initially met on Dec. 15, 2021, to discuss the task at hand and look at existing demographic data of Colorado teachers and students. The workgroup met again on April 12, 2022, to examine barriers to the field; on June 6, 2022 to discuss strategies for addressing those barriers; and on Aug. 22, 2022 to discuss the drafted recommendations. Additional meetings were intermittently conducted with the steering committee to provide members with an opportunity to seek more information and provide direction. Typically, school districts, state agencies, and policymakers address teacher shortages by recruiting new educators and by better retaining experienced educators. To diversify the Colorado teaching workforce, it is important to identify the barriers that keep people of color from entering the education profession and staying in the classroom.

Barriers

Salary

Aspiring educators enter the field for far greater rewards than financial compensation, but salary matters. According to one study, Colorado ranks 48th in the nation for average starting pay (\$35,724) and 26th for average teacher salary (\$58,183) – one of only six states that pay teachers below the state’s average salary for workers.¹² In Colorado that means teachers earn nearly 36% less than workers in other professions that require the same level of education.

In 1996, the national average weekly wages of public-school teachers and the wages of other college graduates were quite similar. Teachers earned about \$1,319 per week (adjusted for inflation) while similarly educated workers earned \$1,564 a week. A quarter of a century later, teacher wages have remained flat, with teachers earning approximately 2.2% more yielding \$1,348 per week, and non-teacher college graduates’ salaries jumping 28.5% to \$2,009 per week.¹³ Below-median wage outcomes are concerning when paired with the rising costs of college and increased loan debt.



Below-median wage outcomes are concerning when paired with the rising costs of college and increased loan debt.



Paying for Preparation

Tuition at public colleges and universities in Colorado has increased more than 65% over the last 10 years as institutions struggled to offset decreases in state appropriations.¹⁴ Many families are forced to pay for college through student loans. In 2020, 50% of Colorado students graduated with loan debt – for those obtaining a bachelor’s degree, that debt averaged \$25,700 per graduate.¹⁵ Though education students are likely to have the same loan debt as their peers earning non-education degrees, educators’ debt is even more burdensome considering the discrepancy in wage outcomes. Educators of color face higher rates of student loan debt than their White peers.

More than 60% of undergraduate education students are considered financially dependent on their parents; however, the median parental income of white students’ parents (\$94,983) is more than twice that of African American or Black students’ parents (\$43,493) or Hispanic or Latinx student’s parents (\$37,782).¹⁶ That discrepancy may explain why a 2019 study found that African American or Black and Hispanic or Latinx students pursuing undergraduate and graduate education degrees are more likely to accrue student loan debt than White students who are also preparing to teach. Data show that 91% of African American

or Black students and 82% of Hispanic or Latinx students who trained to teach borrowed federal student loans compared with 76% of White students.¹⁷ African American or Black students who prepared to teach had higher median federal student loan debt in 2012 (\$26,405) than they had in 2008 (\$22,699) suggesting they may struggle to repay student loans.

Aspiring educators do not take out loans just to cover the cost of tuition. One study found that more than 50% of students took out loans to cover living expenses during their clinical practice.¹⁸ Students preparing to become teachers in Colorado spend a minimum of 800 hours working in schools alongside an experienced mentor teacher to practice their skills and receive feedback – much like a medical residency. Strong preparation programs offer extended clinical experiences, but for practicing educators, that work often goes unpaid. Education students must often take out loans or take on night and weekend work scheduled around their time in school with students. Roughly 60% of clinical residents surveyed reported they had to work outside of school and about 46% indicated they work 20 or more hours a week.¹⁹ Meeting clinical requirements without financial support means education students may not be able to fully engage in their learning opportunities.

Educator Licensing

H.B. 21-1010 charges the workgroup with examining teacher licensure as a barrier to cultivating a diverse educator workforce. In 2021, the National Council for Teacher Quality reported that between 2015 and 2018, the first try pass rate for Colorado elementary candidates was 46%. The Colorado Department of Education's more recent data notes improvements between 2018 and 2021 with a 57.1% first try pass rate. In both reports, the pass rates continue to be lower for teacher candidates of color, and vary widely by type of institution, location, and socioeconomic factors. Additionally, success rates dramatically increase when best try pass rate is considered. Every state requires an exam of some type to demonstrate competency for earning a teaching certificate or license. Most education professionals agree that teachers should have mastery of the content they are teaching before they enter the classroom. Many states use nationally standardized tests to act as guardrails to ensure that prospective educators can demonstrate their knowledge to obtain a teaching license. Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) that are sufficiently preparing educators have higher overall pass rates than less effective programs. EPPs can then use their candidates' licensure test data to identify areas for improvement and bolster their programs.

However, African American or Black and Hispanic or Latinx students pass these exams at lower rates than White students, which results in fewer teachers of color. In some content areas, a high-stakes licensure test is the only way to demonstrate preparedness for the field. Unfortunately, two in five Colorado education students who do not pass the elementary content teacher licensure exam on the first try walk away from the profession.²⁰ Whether it be the financial strains of additional test preparation and retaking the exam, or the demoralizing effect of not passing the test, it is alarming that 40% of our Colorado elementary education candidates do not persist. It is for this reason, some researchers argue, that standardized tests may perpetuate the lack of talented and diverse teacher candidates, regardless of the test's intended purpose.²¹



Teachers have long cited working conditions as one of the top reasons for leaving the profession.

Working Conditions

Teachers of color leave the field at the same rates as White teachers, but often for different reasons. Teachers have long cited working conditions as one of the top reasons for leaving the profession. These conditions include school leadership, opportunities for professional development, and time to collaborate with peers. Schools that do have multiple teachers of color are often concentrated in schools with high poverty and high student of color populations with the fewest resources.²² Teachers of color report feeling isolated as they are often the only – or one of just a few – teachers of color in their school. Teachers of color - especially males of color - are often sought out in their schools to communicate with misbehaving students²³ Justifiably, these educators felt that they were expected to be disciplinarians, even at the expense of the students in their classrooms.

Recommended Strategies

There is no single strategy that will serve as a magic wand to diversify Colorado’s educator workforce. However, the following strategies have the greatest potential to make substantive differences in the recruitment, preparation, and retention of a diverse educator workforce. Addressing the challenge requires effort on the part of policymakers, district and school leaders, government officials, and concerned members of communities across the state.

Recruitment Strategies



- Make teaching financially appealing by providing a competitive salary and other incentives such as bonuses and loan forgiveness.
- Continue to invest in “grow your own” programs for high school students, paraprofessionals, and local community members that focus on justice and equity. E.g., Pathways2Teaching
- Provide funding and support to districts for incentives for recruitment and accountability measures to track progress.
- Invest in a media campaign about teaching as a profession that elevates the voices of current educators of color as ambassadors of the profession.
- Provide support and resources to implement culturally relevant and sustaining practices and to understand and address implicit bias and microaggressions in school districts.

Preparation Strategies



- Provide paid student teaching/residencies during clinical experiences.
- Ensure multiple approved measures of competency can be used to demonstrate preparedness for licensure.
- Provide mentorship opportunities for aspiring teachers and support and compensation for mentor teachers.
- Invest in preparation programs at institutions and fund statewide, regional, and/or local cohorts of candidates of color.
- Ensure that preparation programs include culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy for all aspiring educators (including principals and administrators).

Retention Strategies



- Provide support and resources to schools and districts to implement culturally relevant and sustaining practices and to understand and address implicit bias and microaggressions in the classroom and workplace.
- Provide consistent, ongoing, timely, and issue-specific development opportunities for principals and school leaders.
- Provide induction, mentoring, and professional development opportunities for teachers of color that respond to their unique needs.
- Support social-emotional wellness for teachers of color through racial alliance groups at the school and district levels.

Alignment of Recommended Recruitment, Preparation, and Retention Strategies for Diverse Educators in Colorado 2014-2022

This report continues to underscore the importance of clear and focused support on recruiting, preparing, and retaining a diverse educator workforce. There is no single, statewide solution to the challenge of recruiting and retaining diverse teachers. Instead, there are multiple possible solutions tailored to fit the assets and needs of different communities and different parts of the state. The role of the state is to help communities organize and build capacity to recruit and retain teachers of color, and to evaluate recruitment and retention efforts to learn from successes and challenges.



To accomplish these goals of organization, capacity-building, and continued evaluation, this report and the reports from 2017 [Colorado's Teacher Shortages](#) strategic plan, and the 2014 report [Keeping Up With the Kids](#) highlight similar recommendations over the years, including:

- Making teaching financially appealing by providing a living wage to all educators whether beginning teachers or experienced teachers;
- Focusing on “grow your own” programs that highlight the cultural values of the communities in which educators serve;
- Supporting debt-free pathways to learn to teach and obtain a teacher license;
- Ensuring educator preparation programs focus on culturally-relevant and sustaining pedagogy
- Investing in institutions that serve students of color;
- Supporting induction, mentoring and professional development for teachers of color; and
- Creating strong communities within the school and district for teachers of color.

There is no single, statewide solution to the challenge of recruiting and retaining diverse teachers.

TABLE 1: Alignment of Recommended Recruitment, Preparation, and Retention Strategies for Diverse Educators in Colorado 2014-2022

Recruitment Strategies

★ Denotes strategies that have been or are currently being implemented

2022 Report

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make teaching financially appealing by providing a competitive salary and other incentives such as bonuses and loan forgiveness for aspiring and returning educators. • Invest in a media campaign about teaching as a profession that elevates the voices of current educators of color as ambassadors of the profession. ★ • Invest in “grow your own” programs for high school students, paraprofessionals and local | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> community members that focus on justice and equity. E.g., Pathways2Teaching ★ • Provide funding and support to districts for incentives for recruitment and accountability measures to track progress. ★ • Provide support and resources to implement culturally relevant and sustaining practices and to understand and address implicit bias and microaggressions in school districts. |
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2017 Report

Colorado’s Teacher Shortages

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the value of the teaching profession and encourage all others to do so ★ • Provide financial support for teacher compensation, retention and progression in the field prioritizing shortage areas like early childhood education and care, science, mathematics, special education, world languages, art/music/drama, and critical rural areas ★ • Extend house bill 17-1176, Concerning an Extension of the Employment after | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retirement Limitations for Retirees of the Public Employee’s Retirement Association (PERA) Employed by a Rural School District After Retirement, to allow retired teachers to re-enter the profession in rural, suburban, and urban districts ★ • Explore the Possibility of Minimum Teacher and Early Child Care Provider Salaries • Offer Student Loan Forgiveness ★ • Offer Housing Incentives |
|---|--|

2014 Report

Keeping Up With the Kids

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Regional Minority Teacher Recruitment Alliances, responsible for developing minority teacher recruitment plans for their respective member districts. ★ • Develop financial incentives, such as bonuses or loan forgiveness, for minority teachers. ★ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and grow Teacher Cadet programs focused on minority students. ★ • Create financial supports for paraprofessionals attaining their teaching licenses. ★ • Provide additional funding for mid-career recruitment programs focused on attracting minorities into the classroom. ★ |
|---|--|



Preparation Strategies

★ Denotes strategies that have been or are currently being implemented

2022 Report

- Provide paid student teaching/residencies. ★
- Ensure multiple approved measures of competency can be used to demonstrate preparedness for licensure. ★
- Provide mentorship opportunities for aspiring teachers and support and compensation for mentor teachers. ★
- Invest in preparation programs at institutions and fund statewide, regional, and/or local cohorts of candidates of color.
- Ensure that preparation programs include culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy for all aspiring educators (*to include principals and administrators*). ★

2017 Report

Colorado's Teacher Shortages

- Support proven strategies to increase the number of educators going into the profession by supporting grow your own programs, expanding teacher residency programs, and loan forgiveness ★
- Provide Financial Support to Teacher Candidates through Student Teaching Stipends ★

2014 Report

Keeping Up With the Kids

- Forge partnerships between Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and local districts in Colorado to enhance the minority teacher pipeline. ★
- Support centers within teacher preparation programs to assist with minority teacher recruitment, advocacy, and support.

Retention Strategies

★ Denotes strategies that have been or are currently being implemented

2022 Report

- Provide support and resources to districts and schools to implement culturally relevant and sustaining practices and to understand and address implicit bias and microaggressions in the classroom and workplace. ★
- Provide consistent, ongoing, timely, and issue-specific development opportunities for principals and school leaders.
- Support the development of induction, mentoring, and professional development opportunities for teachers of color that respond to their unique needs.
- Support social-emotional wellness for teachers of color through racial alliance groups at the school and district levels. ★

2017 Report

Colorado's Teacher Shortages

- Provide Improved Educational Leadership Preparation and Professional Development to Assist Principals in Creating Positive School Climate and Culture ★
- Provide Reduced Teaching Loads for Mentor Teachers to Work more Strategically with Novice Teachers
- Create and Provide Funding for Districts to Provide Teacher Induction Programs for Initial Licensed Teachers ★
- Develop and Fund Statewide Competitive Grant Programs to Support Professional Development and Recognition for Educators ★
- Increase the Number of Teachers Trained through Traditional and Alternative Educator Preparation Programs that include Teacher Residencies and Grow Your Own Programs ★
- Align Educator Preparation Program Content and Endorsements with the Needs and Expectations of School Districts ★
- Prepare Teacher Candidates for Teaching and Living in Geographically Diverse Areas, e.g., Rural, Remote Rural, Urban, and Suburban
- Support Teacher National Board Certification to Encourage Remaining in the Classroom, Professional Recognition, Career and Leadership Advancement, and Increased Salary and Compensation ★

2014 Report

Keeping Up With the Kids

- Create minority teacher induction programs between districts and teacher preparation programs.
- Provide principal, school staff and district administrator training and support on cultural competence and minority teacher recruitment and retention. ★



The workgroup believes that all Colorado students benefit from being served by educators that resemble the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of our community.

Like much of the nation, Colorado's educator workforce lacks the diversity that matches the state's demographic breakdown. Though different strategies have and are being implemented, greater steps need to be taken to diversify the workforce, and in turn, disrupt long-standing inequities. The workgroup identified the greatest barriers to meeting that goal and provided recommendations for strategies. The workgroup believes that all Colorado students benefit from being served by educators that resemble the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of our community.

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Continued on next page

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Endnotes

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**This report was prepared by the
Colorado Department of Education,
Colorado Department of Higher Education
and the House Bill 21-1010 Diversity Workgroup**

September 2022

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