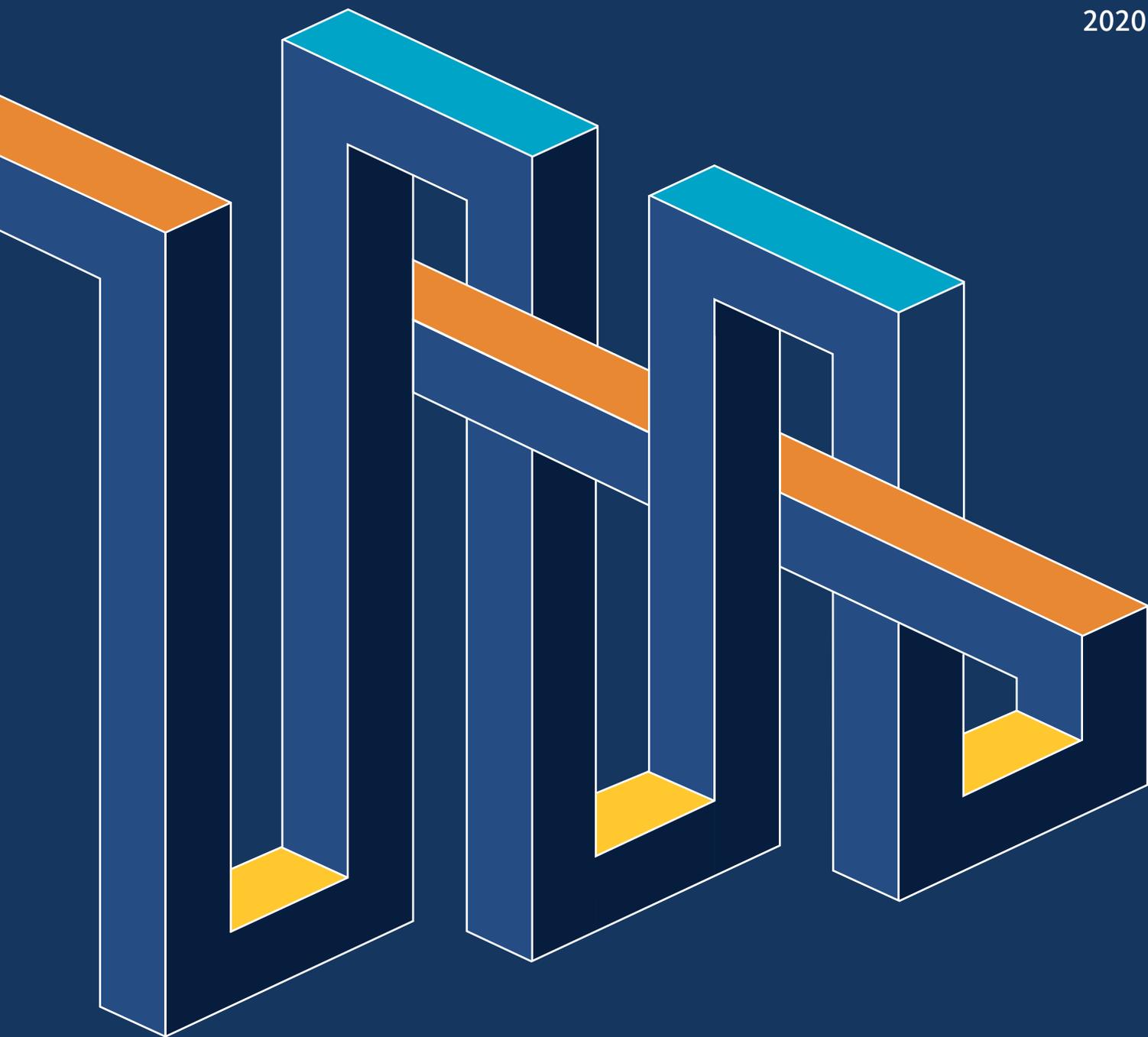


2020



# A BROKEN PIPELINE

Teacher Preparation's  
Diversity Problem

# INTRODUCTION

The United States needs more teachers of color. A growing body of research shows that all students benefit from having teachers of color, in the form of greater engagement, higher achievement, and cross-cultural interactions that can work against harmful stereotypes.<sup>1</sup> For students of color, the benefits are even more significant. Students with the same race as their teacher are more likely to complete high school and go to college, less likely to be suspended, and more likely to be referred to gifted and talented programs. For Black students, having just one Black teacher in elementary school can improve their lives far into adulthood.<sup>2</sup>

Yet across the country, teachers don't look like the students they serve. While 53% of students in the United States identify as people of color<sup>3</sup>, 80% of teachers are white.<sup>4</sup> And 40% of public schools don't have a single teacher of color.<sup>5</sup> This is a massive challenge: to get to a point where teacher demographics mirror current student demographics, we'd need an additional one million teachers of color.

There's never been a more important moment to tackle this challenge. Our national reckoning with racial injustice has sparked long-overdue conversations about how our education and other systems have historically failed people of color, along with urgent calls to improve them. Closing the teacher diversity gap is one of the most important steps we could take to make public education more equitable.

It's a complex problem with many causes, from certification rules that prioritize test scores over teaching ability, to latent bias in district recruitment and hiring processes, to school cultures that too often fail to help teachers of color build long careers in the classroom. But one cause has largely escaped scrutiny: the diversity—or lack thereof—in teacher preparation programs.

More than 400,000 prospective teachers attend more than 25,000 teacher preparation programs across the country. Of those, the vast majority are white. These programs

quite literally build our current and future teaching workforce—and decide what it will look like. Their recruitment practices determine which people consider the teaching profession. Their admissions offices pick which people will—and will not—have the opportunity to become educators. Their institutional cultures affect which students graduate, and which do not. And on balance, these programs are nearly as white as the teaching workforce overall.

In short, the diversity gap between teachers and students will persist until we close the teacher prep diversity gap. While this is a national challenge, the scope and potential solutions vary considerably across states. Understanding the scale of the teacher prep diversity gap locally is the first and most important step toward addressing it—and it's what we hope to shed light on in this analysis.

Using publicly available data, we compared the percentage of enrollees of color in teacher preparation programs to the percentage of students of color in the public K-12 system for each state. We used that to calculate the size of each state's teacher prep diversity gap, allowing us to see the scope of the problem at the state level and identify national and regional trends. We also highlight individual teacher preparation programs that are—and are not—recruiting teacher candidates of color. Finally, we provide a series of recommendations for programs, districts, and state governments.

It's worth emphasizing that we are not suggesting that teacher preparation programs are solely responsible for creating or solving the lack of diversity in the teaching profession. State governments, school districts, and even individual schools all have important roles to play in bringing more teachers of color into the classroom and ensuring they stay. But because schools can only choose from the teachers preparation programs give them, there's no substitute for more of those programs making diversity a top priority.

<sup>1</sup> For a summary of recent research, see Bristol, Travis J., Javier Martin-Fernandez. (2019). *The Added Value of Latinx and Black Teachers for Latinx and Black Students: Implications for the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.* (EdWorkingPaper: 19-93). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: <https://doi.org/10.26300/czw4-4v11>; Carner-Thomas, D. (2018). *Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute

<sup>2</sup> Gershenson, Seth et al. (2018). *The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers.* NBER Working Papers 25254. National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). Table 203.50: Enrollment and percentage distribution of enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity and region: Selected years, fall 1995 through fall 2028. In U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education

Statistics (Ed.), *Digest of Education Statistics* (2017 ed.). Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18\\_203.50.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_203.50.asp?current=yes).

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). Table 209.10: Number and percentage distribution of teachers in public and private elementary and secondary schools, by selected teacher characteristics: Selected years, 1987-88 through 2015-16.

In U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (Ed.), *Digest of Education Statistics* (2017 ed.). Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17\\_209.10.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_209.10.asp?current=yes)

<sup>5</sup> National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force. (2004). *Assessment of diversity in America's teaching force: A call to action.* Washington, DC: National Education Association.

# METHODOLOGY

## DEFINING THE TEACHER PREP DIVERSITY GAP

Each year, the U.S. Department of Education compiles data on the total number of teacher preparation enrollees by state and program, disaggregated by race. We analyzed data from 2017-18 school year, the most recent year available as of publication.

We used the data to compare the demographics of teacher preparation program enrollees with the demographics of public school students in each state—because we believe the teacher workforce should ultimately mirror the racial demographics of the students it serves. This allowed us to calculate the “teacher prep diversity gap” in each state: the difference between the percentage of students who identified as white and the percentage of teacher prep enrollees who identified as white during the 2017-18 school year.

We inferred diversity from white program enrollees and students instead of those who affirmatively identified as people of color because some program enrollees elected not to identify their race—meaning the data may slightly underestimate the number of teachers of color in some programs/states. Focusing on the percentage who identified as white allows us to confidently say that teacher prep diversity gaps are at least a certain size.

We used states as the unit of analysis (instead of regions or individual school systems) for two reasons. First, state policy plays a critical role in creating and addressing the diversity gaps we analyzed—and we believe policymakers should work toward achieving demographic parity between teachers and students across their states. Second, it would be extremely difficult to make a fair comparison between individual programs and the population of students they serve, since programs often partner with multiple districts. Comparing a state’s teacher preparation enrollment to its public school enrollment is the fairest comparison.

## FINDINGS

We found a large teacher prep diversity gap in almost every state. Below the surface of those statewide trends, we also found pockets of notably extreme racial homogeneity—programs where more than 90 percent of enrollees identify as white.

These findings raise as many questions as they answer, so we encourage education leaders and policymakers to analyze the data for their states and find out what’s fueling the teacher prep diversity gap locally.

It’s worth repeating that the responsibility for these gaps does not rest entirely with teacher preparation programs. But too often, higher education leaders seek to absolve themselves of responsibility for their programs’ lack of diversity instead of acknowledging their power to change it. For example, demographics of the undergraduate population at a university certainly influence the demographics of its education school.

But in many cases, education schools are even less diverse than their universities overall. More importantly, they have the power to focus recruitment, financial aid, and other aspects of their programs on the goal of greater diversity regardless. Our findings suggest many preparation programs either don’t understand the extent of their racial homogeneity or don’t view it as a serious problem—and we’re not going to make significant progress on diversifying the teacher workforce until that changes.



1

### Teacher preparation programs are significantly whiter, on average, than the public school population.

In the 50 states and Washington, D.C., enrollees at teacher preparation programs are nearly 64% white, while public school students are 47% white.

2

### Teacher prep diversity gaps exist in almost every state.

Out of the 50 states and Washington, D.C., 48 have higher percentages of white teacher preparation program enrollees than white public school students. While gaps are larger in some states than others, this is a truly national issue, and warrants national attention.

3

### The gaps are large in most states.

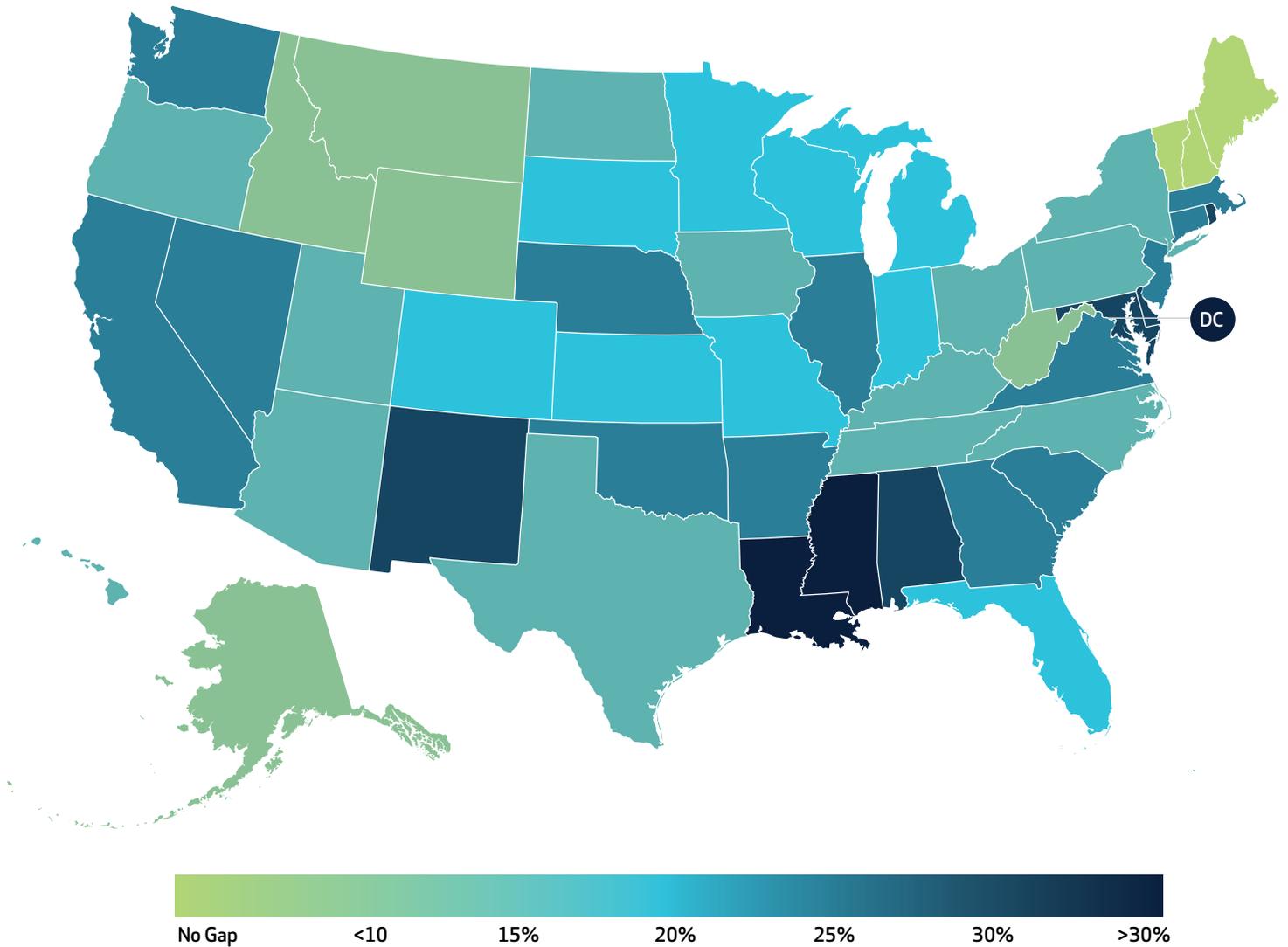
We found that:

**43 states** have a teacher prep diversity gap of 10 or more percentage points.

**21 states** have a gap of 20 or more percentage points.

**3 states**—Washington, D.C., Mississippi, and Louisiana—have a gap of 30 or more percentage points.

## FINDINGS



### 4

#### A significant percentage of programs—serving a significant number of future teachers—are more than 90 percent white.

Out of the programs that had enrollees in 2017-18, 455 are more than 90% white. They have 52,195 enrollees—11.4% of total teacher preparation enrollment. Many of these programs are large—in fact, there are 35 programs with enrollment of 400 or more that are at least 90% white.

State	Program	Total Enrollment	White Enrollment	% White
Virginia	James Madison University	1171	1055	90.1%
Utah	Western Governors University	1114	1027	92.2%
Michigan	Central Michigan University	958	868	90.6%
Ohio	Ohio University	930	849	91.3%
Ohio	Kent State University	892	827	92.7%
Wisconsin	University of Wisconsin - La Crosse	883	829	93.9%
Wisconsin	University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point	737	689	93.5%

## FINDINGS

State	Program	Total Enrollment	White Enrollment	% White
Wisconsin	University of Wisconsin - Stout	621	586	94.4%
Pennsylvania	Penn State University - University Park	614	553	90.1%
Wisconsin	University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh	601	551	91.7%
Ohio	Youngstown State University	588	540	91.8%
Utah	Utah State University	573	525	91.6%
Minnesota	Winona State University	566	515	91.0%
Ohio	Ashland University	551	496	90.0%
Indiana	Ball State University	532	484	91.0%
Maine	University of Maine Farmington	524	496	94.7%
Iowa	University of Iowa	505	459	90.9%
Tennessee	Tennessee Technological University	501	482	96.2%
Alabama	University of Alabama - Tuscaloosa	498	455	91.4%
West Virginia	West Virginia University - Morgantown	496	480	96.8%
Pennsylvania	Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania	487	446	91.6%
Kentucky	University of the Cumberlands	480	437	91.0%
Maine	University of Maine - Orono	468	431	92.1%
Minnesota	Martin Luther College	463	425	91.8%
South Carolina	Clemson University	458	420	91.7%
Kentucky	Eastern Kentucky University	447	407	91.1%
North Carolina	Western Carolina University	443	410	92.6%
Indiana	University of Southern Indiana	439	432	98.4%
Minnesota	Minnesota State - Moorhead	430	393	91.4%
Ohio	Shawnee State University	428	409	95.6%
Kansas	Fort Hays State University	428	388	90.7%
Alabama	Auburn University Auburn	421	389	92.4%
Utah	Weber State University	406	385	94.8%
Nebraska	University of Nebraska - Kearney	404	367	90.8%
Mississippi	Mississippi State University	402	368	91.5%

### 5

#### Alternative certification programs are significantly more diverse than traditional programs.

There are two general categories of teacher preparation programs. The vast majority of teachers are trained in “traditional” programs, which involve earning a bachelor’s or master’s degree from a college or university. “Alternative certification” programs—such as Relay Graduate School of Education, Teach for America, and TNTP Teaching Fellows—offer teaching credentials outside of the traditional model, and typically cost less and take less time. Alternative programs are significantly more diverse. Traditional programs are 69.6% white, while alternative certification programs are only 46.8% white. While differences in location, size, and other factors between alternative and traditional programs likely explains part of the gap, the data suggest that creating alternative pathways can be a useful tool for states interested in producing more teachers of color.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As we've discussed, the lack of diversity in teacher preparation programs is a complex problem that looks different in different states and districts. But there are several steps that any preparation program, school system, or state can take to start closing the teacher prep diversity gap. Many are rooted in our own research and two decades of experience running teacher preparation programs.



## TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

### 1 Set and prioritize goals around recruiting candidates of color.

The first and most important thing programs can do to improve diversity is something they can do tomorrow: commit to making diversity a top priority. Leaders of programs should be transparent with their entire institution about their goals, and reflect on structures and processes throughout the organization that are helping and hindering diversity. And if any institutions with large teacher prep diversity gaps don't publicly commit to diversity goals, their communities should ask why. For example, if University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa committed to increasing the percentage of enrollees of color to 20% in the next three years and 30% in the next six years, they would produce nearly 500 additional teachers of color. That is achievable—University of Alabama at Birmingham, which is just 55 miles away, has reached that percentage. Prioritize the issue, and the results will follow.

### 2 Develop recruiting strategies and admissions requirements that increase diversity.

Admissions requirements can help teacher preparation programs identify which candidates are likely to be successful teachers. But they also can be biased. Programs should analyze their admissions data to identify and eliminate any requirements—

such as standardized test scores or minimum GPA—that disproportionately exclude candidates of color and lack proven connection to success in the classroom.

Programs can also increase their diversity through intentional strategies that better connect their communities to education and career opportunities. They could build partnerships with local organizations to help recruit talent—for example, by working with high schools with high numbers of graduates of color to build a pipeline for recruitment.

### 3 Consider financial incentives.

In our work, we regularly hear that finances can be a barrier for prospective teachers of color. In addition to tuition, teacher candidates are responsible for paying for certification, testing, transportation to schools, and other costs. Financial incentives can help to make teaching a more viable career for candidates of color, especially when paired with mentoring and other support during the first year in the classroom. TNTP piloted a version of this called the Black Educator Excellence Cohort in several of our teacher preparation programs, and we are pleased with early results.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### DISTRICTS

#### 1 Create partnerships with local teacher preparation programs.

School districts and teacher preparation programs have a symbiotic relationship. Districts need to hire teachers; teacher preparation programs need student teaching placements and ultimately jobs for their candidates. Districts can work with local programs to set shared goals around teacher diversity, with programs committing to providing more candidates of color and districts committing to hiring them.

#### 2 Consider creating “grow your own” teacher preparation programs.

Many districts have started their own teacher preparation programs that can provide pathways to the classroom for candidates of color, including classroom assistants and other paraprofessional positions as opportunities that can support career advancement in teaching. These programs can be tailored to the specific context of the district, which can help new teachers be successful from their first day in the classroom. A recent evaluation of TNTP’s work to build in-house teacher preparation programs in three urban districts found that teachers trained through the programs were more racially diverse, at least as effective, and stayed in teaching as long as other first-year teachers.<sup>6</sup>

#### 3 Reform personnel policies that hurt teachers of color.

Some district personnel policies can have unintended detrimental effects on teachers of color. For example, using seniority as the primary or sole factor in determining which teachers are laid off due to budget constraints may disproportionately hurt teachers of color, since they often have less experience. This is especially relevant as districts prioritize hiring new teachers of color: without policy reform, budget cuts could reverse progress in diversifying the teacher workforce. Where state law allows, school districts should ensure that their layoff criteria and other policies won’t hurt their efforts to retain more teachers of color.

#### 4 Implement policies to help retain teachers of color.

Data show that teachers of color leave the classroom at higher rates than their white peers. Districts should prioritize creating school cultures that affirm the racial identity and humanity of teachers of color to help encourage them to stay. A recent report from Education Trust and Teach Plus outlines a number of specific strategies.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Kaufman, Julia et al. (2020) Growing Teachers from Within: Implementation, Impact, and Cost of an Alternative Teacher Preparation Program in Three Urban School Districts. RAND Corporation.

<sup>7</sup> Dixon, R.D., Griffin, A.R., & Teoh, M.B. (2019). “If you listen, we will stay: Why teachers of color leave and how to disrupt teacher turnover.”, The Education Trust & Teach Plus, Washington DC.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### STATES

#### 1 **Require that teacher preparation programs set diversity goals and report annual progress.**

Acknowledging the problem is the first step toward addressing it. States should require transparency from preparation programs about their diversity gaps and clear plans for addressing them. They should set a statewide goal for percentage of teachers (and school leaders) of color by a certain year, and then backwards map to that goal through annual benchmarks. Those annual benchmarks should serve as a baseline for teacher preparation programs.<sup>8</sup>

Beyond the total number of teachers of color they produce, programs should be required to track and report enrollment, matriculation, and completion rates, disaggregated by race and ethnicity. And once these teachers are hired, states should track and report on disaggregated teacher retention and turnover rates.

#### 2 **Allow for alternative certification programs.**

As described above, alternative certification programs are significantly more diverse than traditional programs—and produce teachers who are at least as effective.<sup>9</sup> Yet not all states allow alternative teacher certification. Creating that option and allowing for more high-quality, lower-cost certification pathways

can go a long way toward reducing diversity gaps. New pathways into teaching may become especially important as school systems continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic: as many students attend school remotely, the definition of “teacher” has expanded to include teachers, child care workers, and other community members. States should monitor their impact on students and explore creating flexible, affordable pathways to teacher certification for them.

#### 3 **Eliminate certification requirements that don't have a clear connection to classroom effectiveness.**

Teacher certification requirements exist to ensure that teachers have the skills they need to help students learn. Yet some certification requirements, such as standardized tests, disproportionately block candidates of color while not always indicating teaching ability.<sup>10</sup> Instead of relying so heavily on these tests, states should set clear expectations for what great teaching looks like and ground their certification requirements in whether teachers are actually meeting that bar—primarily using observations and evidence of student learning.

## CONCLUSION

Giving more students access to teachers of color requires changes and commitment across the public education system—but teacher preparation programs have a particularly important role to play. We hope this analysis will encourage education leaders to look into the diversity of teacher preparation programs in their communities and take steps to recruit and train more prospective teachers of color. If you have insights into the teacher prep diversity gap or best practices for closing it from your community, please share them with us.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the role of state policy in promoting teacher diversity, see our recent publication: <https://tntp.org/publications/view/a-strong-foundation>

<sup>9</sup> Whitford, D.K., Zhang, D. & Katsiyannis, A. Traditional vs. Alternative Teacher Preparation Programs: A Meta-Analysis. *J Child Fam Stud* 27, 671–685 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-017-0932-0>

<sup>10</sup> Aaronson, D., Barrow, L., & Sander, W. (2007). Teachers and student achievement in the Chicago public high schools. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 25(1), 95–135; Clotfelter, C. T., Ladd, H. F., & Vigdor, J. L. (2006). Teacher-student matching and the assessment of teacher effectiveness. *Journal of Human Resources*, 41(4), 778–820; Clotfelter, C. T., Ladd, H. F., & Vigdor, J. L. (2007). How and why do teacher credentials matter for student

achievement? (NBER Working Paper No. 12828); Goldhaber, D. (2007). Everyone's doing it, but what does teacher testing tell us about teacher effectiveness? *Journal of Human Resources*, 42(4), 765–794; Goldhaber, D. & Brewer, D. J. (2000). Does teacher certification matter? High school teacher certification status and student achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 22(2), 129–145.

## APPENDIX

### The State Teacher Prep Diversity Gap: Percent Difference Between White Enrollees of Teacher Prep Programs And White Public School Students

State	Percent White Students	Percent White Enrollees	Difference
District of Columbia	11.1%	44.7%	-33.5%
Mississippi	44.2%	75.9%	-31.7%
Louisiana	44.7%	75.4%	-30.7%
Delaware	44.2%	72.3%	-28.1%
Alabama	54.5%	82.1%	-27.6%
Rhode Island	57.7%	84.8%	-27.1%
New Mexico	23.2%	49.8%	-26.6%
Maryland	37.3%	63.2%	-25.9%
New Jersey	43.6%	67.2%	-23.5%
Oklahoma	48.9%	72.2%	-23.3%
Illinois	48.0%	71.3%	-23.3%
California	22.9%	45.9%	-23.0%
Georgia	39.7%	62.5%	-22.9%
South Carolina	50.8%	72.7%	-21.9%
Virginia	48.9%	70.6%	-21.7%
Connecticut	53.6%	75.1%	-21.6%
Nebraska	66.5%	87.3%	-20.8%
Washington	54.4%	74.8%	-20.4%
Massachusetts	60.2%	80.5%	-20.3%
Nevada	32.5%	52.6%	-20.1%
Arkansas	60.8%	80.9%	-20.1%
Kansas	64.2%	82.8%	-18.6%
South Dakota	73.9%	92.2%	-18.4%
Colorado	53.4%	71.4%	-18.0%
Michigan	66.2%	83.8%	-17.6%
Wisconsin	69.9%	86.5%	-16.7%

State	Percent White Students	Percent White Enrollees	Difference
Florida	38.0%	54.6%	-16.5%
Minnesota	66.5%	82.8%	-16.4%
Indiana	67.9%	83.8%	-15.9%
Missouri	71.1%	86.2%	-15.1%
Ohio	69.9%	84.9%	-15.0%
Texas	27.9%	42.7%	-14.9%
Utah	74.4%	89.2%	-14.8%
Oregon	59.6%	74.1%	-14.5%
North Carolina	48.2%	62.7%	-14.5%
Pennsylvania	65.8%	80.2%	-14.4%
Tennessee	62.8%	77.0%	-14.2%
Iowa	75.9%	88.7%	-12.8%
New York	43.2%	55.9%	-12.8%
North Dakota	77.4%	89.8%	-12.4%
Arizona	38.2%	50.4%	-12.2%
Hawaii	12.2%	22.4%	-10.2%
Kentucky	76.8%	86.9%	-10.1%
Alaska	47.6%	55.7%	-8.1%
Montana	78.3%	85.9%	-7.7%
Idaho	75.4%	82.4%	-7.0%
West Virginia	90.1%	93.9%	-3.8%
Wyoming	77.9%	78.6%	-0.7%
Maine	89.3%	87.7%	1.6%
Vermont	90.2%	86.4%	3.8%
New Hampshire	85.5%	80.5%	4.9%