

State Action: Strategies for Building the Teacher Pipeline



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, 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.

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The SEA Role in Tackling Teacher Pipeline Challenges

State education officials in Colorado went on a road trip during the summer of 2017. Starting in June, they criss-crossed the state to host 10 town halls with educators, parents, students, and community members. The agenda: Solving Colorado's teacher shortage. The state needs as many as 3,000 new educators to fill existing positions in schools, and teacher preparation programs aren't keeping up with demand. The number of newly-minted teachers has plunged nearly 25 percent in the past five years. Ideas generated at the town halls will inform an action plan, submitted to Colorado legislators later this year, to recruit and retain teachers. Until the state develops a clear action plan, some local districts are working to address shortages. In rural Custer County Schools, for example, administrators recognized the lack of affordable housing in the area and have recently converted an old school building into reasonably-priced apartments for teachers.

Colorado is not alone in facing classrooms full of students and a dearth of qualified teachers to prepare them for college and future careers. States across the country are staring down a similar crisis. One recent report estimates that, by 2020, the nation will need 300,000 new teachers every year.¹

It is quite a turnaround from a decade ago, when the economic recession of 2008 led to pink slips for many teachers. School budgets were slashed, class sizes grew, and many educators left the profession for work elsewhere. Even as the economy rebounded, state education spending did not. Research shows that most states still provide less funding per student than before 2008.² Despite the spending cuts, many local districts have forged ahead with reforms intended to improve student achievement, such as bringing back positions that were cut during the recession or reinstating smaller class sizes. Smaller classes require more teachers, which also means districts must reallocate resources from elsewhere to pay their salaries. More than ever, districts want to see a return on that investment. They want effective teachers leading every classroom so that each child leaves school ready for success in college, careers, and life.

That has proven to be a herculean task. In the last five years, enrollment in teacher preparation programs has dropped 35 percent nationwide.³ Some states, such as California, are grappling with even steeper declines. Despite a small uptick in 2015, enrollment in the state's teacher credentialing programs is down 40 percent since 2010.⁴ National programs are also attracting less interest. Applications for Teach for America are down 14 percent since 2013.


New research suggests that teacher shortages are not across the board, but rather most acute among certain geographies, schools, and particular subject areas and specializations, such as special education and teaching English learners. Rural, high-poverty, and high-minority schools face the greatest difficulties

1 Sutchter, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2016). *A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in the U.S.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute

2 Leachman, M., Albares, N., Masterson, K., & Wallace, M. (2016). *Most States Have Cut School Funding, and Some Continue Cutting.* Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

3 Sutchter, Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, *A Coming Crisis.*

4 California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. *Annual Report Card on California Teacher Preparation Programs for the Academic Year 2014-2015.*



in recruiting and retaining capable teachers. In New York, researchers found that 6.5 percent of classes were led by a teacher lacking certification. That figured doubled to 13 percent in schools with the highest concentration of black students.⁵

Shortages are also most pronounced for teachers with specific skills. Nearly every state has a shortage of special-education teachers, and almost as many need more math and science educators. More than 30 states report high shortages for teachers of English learners.⁶ To cope, states and districts have resorted to various band-aid solutions. They've issued emergency credentials, scrambled to hire substitutes, and filled vacancies with teachers coming from other professions or outside their certification area.

Even when a district successfully recruits new teachers, there is no guarantee that they'll still be in the classroom two years later. Nearly one out of four beginning teachers leave the profession within the first two years on the job. Roughly 41 percent are gone within five years.⁷ The schools with the highest turnover tend to be those with the greatest needs, calling into question the quality of education being delivered to the children who need it most as an ever-changing cast of teachers pick up where the last ones left off.

How We Got Here:

Exploring the Root Causes Constricting the Teacher Pipeline

The challenges facing the teaching profession appear to outweigh the benefits people associate with being a teacher. There isn't one reason why the nation faces a teacher crunch. Instead, state education chiefs point to several causes contributing to the current crisis.

First, being a teacher today is a shaky financial proposition. College tuition costs are skyrocketing, leaving many saddled with higher debt at graduation. Over the last decade, average student loan debt rose at more than twice the rate of inflation.⁸ The average first-year teacher salary, meanwhile, is a little over \$36,000 a year.⁹ Given student loans, housing, and other monthly costs, it's no surprise that potential educators turn to better-paying occupations instead.

Unlike other professions, teachers have not seen their fortunes rise with the economic recovery. In a long-term analysis, the Economic Policy Institute found that the gap between teachers' weekly pay and that of comparable workers with the same level of education and experience is greater than ever before, reaching 17 percent in 2015.¹⁰

5 Dee, T. & Goldhaber, D. (2017). *Understanding and Addressing Teacher Shortages in the United States*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution


6 Sutchter, Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, *A Coming Crisis*.

7 Ingersoll, R., Merrill, L., & Stuckey, D. (2014). *Seven trends: The transformation of the teaching force*. CPRE Research Report #RR-80. Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

8 The Institute for College Access & Success, "Student Debt and the Class of 2014," Oct. 2015.

9 National Education Association Collective Bargaining/Member Advocacy's Teacher Salary Database, based on affiliate reporting as of December 2013.

10 Allegretto, S. & Mishel, L. (2016). *The Teacher Pay Gap Is Wider Than Ever*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute



The pathways to becoming a teacher may also be problematic. Most prospective teachers enroll in traditional preparation programs, yet recent data shows that they're not specializing in areas with severe shortages: Only 6 percent of graduates from these programs are trained to teach English learners and only 7 percent are prepared to teach math.¹¹ Alternative training programs produce more teachers for hard-to-staff subjects and schools, yet there is wide variation in how much states actually rely on them as a source for new hires.

Less than 15 percent of teachers believe that their role will stay the same in the coming years as technology becomes more pervasive and they spend more time teaching online.¹² These advancements in instructional practice, however, are rarely part of the recruitment pitch to prospective teachers, many of whom grew up with technology.

The lack of mobility in the profession may deter potential teachers too. A teaching license in one state does not necessarily transfer to another. That can make it exceedingly difficult for an educator to cross state lines and transition into a new job. For example, teachers with spouses who serve in the military and move frequently face this problem all the time. People who become teachers later in life as a second career may not mind being rooted to a particular place. However, for college students picking a career and those individuals anticipating a mobile lifestyle, the licensure system could feel like an undesirable anchor.

Finally, education chiefs point to a lingering malaise that has gripped the profession. The erosion of tenure in some states, loss of job benefits, and rise of evaluation systems perceived as punitive have led many teachers to feel devalued by the public. They read news articles that appear to point fingers at teachers for failing test scores and underperforming schools. Given the current climate, the profession's most ardent recruiters now offer starkly different advice: In a 2015 Education Week poll, less than 20 percent of teachers said they would recommend teaching to young people.¹³

From a Discourse of Crisis to a Discourse of Possibility:

States Take Action on Six Pipeline Challenges

States recognize the challenges they face in building a robust, diverse teaching workforce for the 21st century. They also believe that the obstacles are not insurmountable and that there is a clear role for states to play. State education agency leaders see the current crisis as an opportunity to think inventively about ways to attract highly-qualified candidates to the profession. Their actions target six pipeline challenges, described here with examples of recent efforts:


1. Elevate the profession and paint a more uplifting picture of teachers.

Efforts at both the national and state level aim to reposition teaching from a profession under siege to one worthy of respect and support. The TeachStrong campaign is a national coalition of more than 60 leading

11 U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education (2015). Higher Education Act Title II Reporting System

12 PBS (2015). Learn More: The Impact of America's Largest Classroom on Learning

13 <https://www.jotform.com/report/50835181590052> (Education Week poll accessed Aug. 2, 2017)



education groups, including the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), focused on modernizing and elevating the teaching profession. The campaign calls for states to invest in and develop policies that better recruit, develop, support and compensate teachers throughout their careers. To that end, it released guidance for state policymakers on how to tap federal funds through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to implement programs and activities that can bolster the teacher pipeline. The message got through: A review of the first 17 states' ESSA plans found a wide range of proposed pipeline activities, such as collaborating with teacher preparation programs, promoting teacher leadership, and supporting new teachers better.

South Dakota has already launched one of the most aggressive efforts to attract more people to the profession. In 2016, the state followed the recommendations of a task force and passed a comprehensive education package, including the adoption of a statewide half-cent sales tax increase that was used to raise teacher salaries an average of \$8,000. The legislation created a mentoring program for new teachers and direct reciprocity among states to make it easier for out-of-state educators to teach in South Dakota. The package also addressed the imbalance between the state's high number of Native American students and relatively few Native American teachers. Through a new scholarship program, paraprofessionals at schools with high populations of Native American students can finish college and become certified teachers. "This 'grow your own' approach is a strong step in the right direction," noted South Dakota Secretary of Education Melody Schopp in an April 2017 newsletter to state educators.¹⁴


2. Make teaching a financially-appealing career.

People become teachers because of the intangible rewards that come from seeing a child master a new skill for the first time. However, the work is far less attractive when it means taking a second job to pay the rent. States and local districts are working to alleviate financial pressures on teachers and develop compensation packages to entice new candidates to the profession. Base salaries are going up, performance bonuses are on the rise, and some states may literally put a roof over teachers' heads: A bill in the California Assembly would provide \$25 million in grants to districts for teacher rental housing. Some states are eyeing retirement-plan reforms, such as offering teachers a 401k-style plan in addition to or in place of a traditional pension.

Dozens of states offer forgivable loans and tuition subsidies to cover the cost of pre-service training for teachers. They're being strategic with these programs, aligning their investments with district needs. Nevada, for instance, awards up to \$24,000 in tuition assistance to aspiring educators who commit to teaching for five consecutive years, including three in a high-needs school. The state may prioritize applicants who are veterans, from disadvantaged backgrounds, or who are pursuing a degree in a shortage area, such as special education.

If passed, California's Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act will boost teacher compensation through tax breaks. New public school teachers will get a tax credit to help pay the cost of earning their teaching credentials. In addition, teachers in high-poverty schools won't pay income tax on half their income in their sixth to tenth year of teaching.

¹⁴ <http://doe.sd.gov/pressroom/educationonline/2017/April/secretary.html> (accessed July 10, 2017).



Other states, meanwhile, are making it lucrative for experienced teachers to remain, or in some cases return, to the classroom. Louisiana and other states offer a Define Retirement Option Program to encourage teachers to delay retirement. Teachers can deposit their retirement benefits in a separate account while continuing to work and earn a full salary. In Oklahoma, a new law lets teachers who have been retired for at least a year collect their full pension while being paid to teach full or part time.

3. Expand innovative pathways to teaching to reach more high-quality candidates.

With enrollment down in credentialing programs, states recognize that they must do more to widen both the pool of potential candidates and the pathways that offer high-quality preparation. South Dakota, for instance, is making it possible for classroom aides in rural schools to take online classes and become teachers. Illinois has made it easier for out-of-state teachers to transfer their licenses and get to work. Virginia, meanwhile, is pursuing veterans, a large population segment in the state. It was one of 10 states to recently receive federal funds through Troops to Teachers, a national program that has helped more than 20,000 veterans become teachers since 1993. Virginia will use its \$400,000 grant to create a Troops to Teachers center at the College of William and Mary School of Education. The center will offer financial assistance, career counseling, and job placement services.

Other states see promising candidates sitting in high school classrooms. In New Mexico, for instance, many districts have partnered with Educators Rising, a national organization that is helping states nurture the next generation of teachers. Through internships and relevant coursework, students participating in Educators Rising explore teaching as a potential career. Launched in 2015, Educators Rising now has chapters in more than 2,000 schools across the country.

Colorado, meanwhile, awarded a \$2.2 million grant to the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) in part to incentivize more rural high school students into teaching. The university's new Center for Rural Education will develop and expand the Teacher Cadet program in rural districts. The program, which started in South Carolina in 1985 and has since spread across the country, lets high school students train to be teachers and earn college credit toward a degree. UNC will also provide annual scholarships to 40 teacher candidates who agree to work in a rural school for two years after graduation. Bottom line, states need more pathways that are grounded in the recommendations for high-quality preparation contained in CCSSO's task force report, "Our Responsibility, Our Promise: Transforming Educator Preparation and Entry into the Profession."¹⁵

4. Bring more diversity to the teaching workforce.


Eight out of 10 teachers today are white, a figure that has only slightly budged during the past 30 years.

¹⁶ And seven out of 10 are female.¹⁷ Improving diversity benefits all students. As noted in "Leading

¹⁵ See CCSSO's Our Responsibility, Our Promise online here http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2012/Our%20Responsibility%20Our%20Promise_2012.pdf.

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service, The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce, Washington, D.C. 2016.

¹⁷ Ingersoll, Merrill & Stuckey, Seven trends.



forEquity,” a report released in February 2017 by CCSSO and the Aspen Institute, recruiting, retaining, and supporting teachers of color is essential for creating an equitable education system. Teachers of color are positive role models and help prepare students to live in a multiracial society. Research suggests that they contribute to improved academic outcomes, particularly among minority students who are struggling.¹⁸ Despite their impact, teachers of color remain scarce even as the number of students of color has soared. Every state has a higher percentage of minority students than minority teachers. Nationally, 49 percent of public school students are racial or ethnic minorities while 18 percent of teachers are people of color.

States and districts are eyeing potential strategies to boost the diversity of their teacher pipelines. For example, the school district in Hopkins, MN, about 20 miles from St. Paul, is using state funds to partner with Metropolitan State University, a public university that prepares more minority teachers than any other in the state. The district will hire three students as paid interns to complete their required 12-week student teaching experience. Student teaching is usually unpaid and can be a financial barrier to program completion for many candidates. The district will also give priority to the university’s graduates for licensed teaching positions.

In Colorado, the Pathways2Teaching program aims to interest high school students of color into the teaching profession. Through classes and fieldwork, the program presents teaching as an act of social justice, a way to give back and help dispel educational inequities in local communities. Launched in 2010, the program is a collaboration between the University of Colorado Denver and several urban districts. Nearly 60 percent of its former or current students are Latino, 35 percent are African-American, and 42 percent are male. The program has also been adopted by three rural districts in eastern Oregon serving mostly Latino and Native American students.

5. Set reasonable expectations for retaining teachers in classroom practice.

Working at the same job for 25 to 30 years may have appealed to past generations aspiring to a “gold watch and pension” in retirement. It is not the dream or expectation of the Millennial generation, born between 1980 and 1996. In a recent Gallup survey, one out of five Millennials said they had quit their job in the last year to do something else, more than three times higher than that of other generations. Compared to other workers, Millennials are also much more likely to say that opportunities to learn, grow, and advance are extremely important when applying for a job.¹⁹

Given these trends, states are beginning to assess how long they can reasonably expect teachers to remain in the classroom. Many are considering five to 10 years based on employee tenure data,²⁰ which has broad implications for investments in teacher support, development, and compensation. It also means rethinking roles in education to retain top talent to support student learning and achievement. For instance, some states are evaluating the usefulness of tiered licensure systems that encourage teachers

18 Egalite, A., Kisida B., & Winters, M. “Representation in the Classroom: The Effect of Own-Race Teachers on Student Achievement,” *Economics of Education Review*, 45, (April 2015) 44–52.

19 Rigoni, B. & Adkins, A., “What Millennials Want From a New Job,” *Harvard Business Review*, May 2016

20 U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (Sept. 22, 2016) USDL-16-1867. News Release on Employee Tenure 2016, Washington, D.C.

to advance and develop a continuum of expertise over an extended career. These systems may not be in sync with the career mobility that characterizes the 21st century worker. Reevaluating licensure systems is a new area of work for states, one that will require perspectives and guidance from various sources.

6. Use data to target strategies where shortages exist.

Teacher shortages are not statewide, nor is every district scrambling to fill the same positions. Rather, states must analyze data to determine where their pipeline needs are most critical, in terms of subject area, grade level, and geographic location. When the Arkansas State Department of Education asked some local districts how they determine future teacher shortages, none had a systematic approach to projecting vacancies beyond the upcoming school year.²¹ The state hopes to remedy that by developing a teacher shortage predictor tool. The tool will analyze data to predict teacher shortages in subject areas, grade levels, and geographic locations before they become a problem. Teacher preparation programs can use the tool to ensure they're training candidates in hard-to-staff subjects. Candidates can tap it to determine where jobs will be most plentiful, while the state and local districts can use it to target resources effectively.

Missouri created a similar forecasting tool in 2014, using enrollment figures, the supply of new teachers from pre-service training programs, and other data to predict future shortages in subject areas and geographic locations. Its analysis found that, given the current situation, the state would face a shortage of high school science teachers in certain regions in the coming years. Researchers then used the tool to assess how to prevent the shortage from occurring. They found that a single university producing a few more science teachers each year would help ease the shortage. If other colleges or universities joined in, they determined, the cumulative effect on the teacher supply could be considerable.²²

Stay Informed:

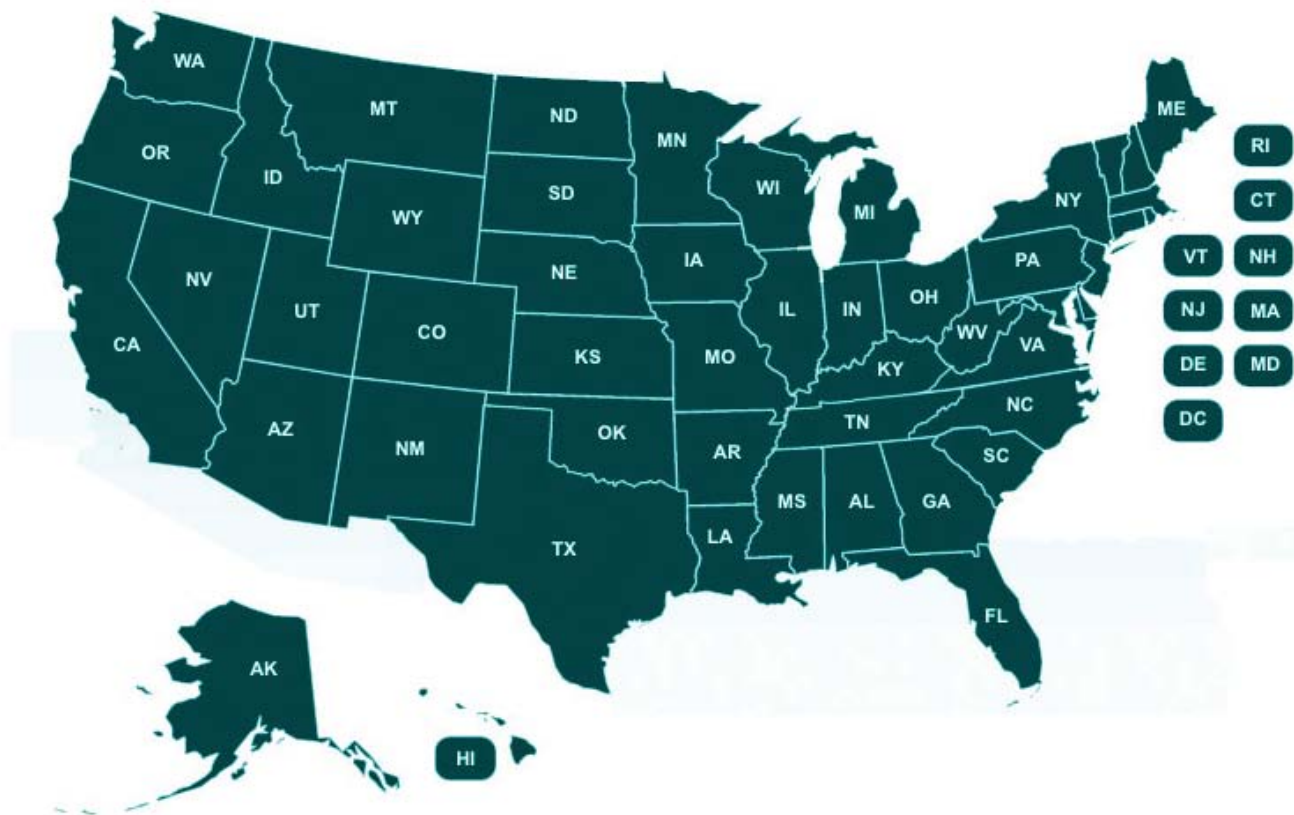
CCSSO's New Website Tracks Progress With Six Pipeline Challenges

This report describes only a handful of innovative policies and initiatives that states and local districts are pursuing to tackle the six pipeline challenges. There are many more, and new ideas continue to surface as states think creatively about building a diverse, sustainable teacher workforce. Many ideas can be replicated by other states facing similar staffing dilemmas. To aid in that knowledge transfer, CCSSO has launched <https://ccssoteacherpipeline.org/state-actions/>. The microsite describes how states are addressing their pipeline challenges and ensuring that a caring and effective teacher leads every classroom.

²¹ Arkansas Department of Education. "2016 Supplement to the Arkansas Department of Education Equitable Access to Effective Educators Plan," Nov. 2016.

²² Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. "Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Teachers," July 2015.

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