

Recommendations to Strengthen the Teacher Pipeline in Delaware

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Delaware, like the rest of the country, faces a challenge to ensure a highquality, diverse K–12 workforce that meets the needs of its schools and students. TeachDE was launched in 2017 to identify the challenges Delaware faces in strengthening its teacher pipeline and to develop recommendations creative address those challenges. TeachDE's advisory council is a coalition of teachers, local education agency leaders, representatives from institutions of higher education and teacher preparation programs, and other community stakeholders.

Introduction

TeachDE's advisory council identified four challenges to the strength of the Delaware teacher pipeline and created recommendations that span the K–12 landscape from the practices of local education agencies, the preparation at institutions of higher education, state-level policies, and to the profession at large. The TeachDE advisory council has created recommendations with the goal of creating a high-quality, diverse K–12 workforce that meets

the needs of Delaware's schools and its students. The recommendations are intended to increase enrollment in education preparation programs; decrease the number of emergency teacher certificates; lower teacher attrition rates; and increase the numbers of diverse educators enrolling in teacher preparation programs, entering the K–12 workforce, and advancing to leadership roles.

These recommendations are a

call to action. Local education agencies, institutions of higher education, policy making bodies, and K-12 stakeholders will need to work together to create the changes needed to ensure the high-quality, diverse workforce that Delaware's children deserve. The path forward is ultimately placed in the hands of the Delaware education community. The recommendations are not intended as an implementation plan, nor are they intended as a panacea to all the challenges of the education system. The hope is that by elucidating the challenges, creating recommendations, and highlighting best practices, we can continue to come together for the creation of innovative solutions necessary to address the systemic nature of the teacher pipeline challenge. The recommendations are a call to strengthen the Delaware teacher pipeline through collaborative efforts that reflect a shared and unwavering commitment to Delaware's students and teachers.

Challenge 1: Teacher Supply

Enrollment in traditional teacher preparation programs in Delaware has steadily declined over the past five years. Between academic year 2011–12 and 2015–16, Delaware's teacher preparation programs have seen a 47% decrease in education preparation program enrollment and a 25% decrease in degree completion. The steady decline of enrollment presents a clear challenge to Delaware's teacher pipeline, as half of all teachers licensed in Delaware annually are prepared in-state.¹ Also contributing to the challenge of a longterm teacher supply are the pervasively held, negative perceptions of the profession. While respondents to an incoming freshman survey overwhelmingly agreed that teaching was a valuable community service, respondents also agreed that it was a difficult, stressful, underpaid, and socially undervalued career.²

The teacher supply recommendations are intended to increase the attractiveness of the profession and in turn increase enrollment in teacher preparation programs. It is the expectation that through the implementation of the following recommendations, in-state institutions of higher education (IHEs) will see an increase in teacher preparation enrollment numbers and in the number of students completing their preparation program over the next five years.

Recommendations

1.1 Reimagine traditional teacher preparation programs to appeal to today's students and attract additional students to the teacher pipeline.

IHEs should be working collaboratively to share best practices and models for improving teacher preparation program quality and attractiveness. Efforts should be made to explore and expand clinical experiences through yearlong residencies. The state, IHEs, and local education agencies (LEAs) should work to address the financial barriers posed by the immersive, yearlong teacher residency programs. Across the state, several notable efforts are already underway to revamp and revitalize teacher preparation. Wilmington University is partnering with multiple districts and school sites across Delaware to provide a full immersion, yearlong experience to undergraduate and graduate candidates in teacher preparation programs. The University of Delaware is redesigning its teacher preparation programs in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). Relay Graduate School of Education and Colonial School District are collaborating to provide flexible and immersive teacher preparation experiences. Wesley College offers a 4+1 program for students interested in earning their secondary teacher degree.

1.2 Develop a strategic plan to promote education as a profession, draw awareness to the breadth of career opportunities, and promote its attractiveness.

The most valuable teaching promotion campaign begins in our classrooms with our teachers. Promoting teaching as a profession means ensuring teachers are well-resourced and their social, emotional, and pedagogical well-being are supported. Additionally, this means ensuring the messages shared about teaching within the classroom and the

community are positive. Teacher leaders should be encouraged and supported to attend community events to promote the profession and their schools. Additionally, schools should be understood as open spaces that actively engage the community.³ In order to effectively attract potential teacher candidates, messaging intended for the promotion of the profession should align with the values and commitments of today's rising college freshman. Those values include a commitment to community service, the desire to work in a career that makes a difference, and a desire to work in careers that afford promotion and advancement.² It is important that teaching be framed in a way that speaks to the profession's valuable community service, ability to make meaningful difference, and potential for career advancement.

1.3 Foster and expand "grow your own teacher" initiatives.

Research shows that teachers, distinct from many other professions, prefer to work close to where they grew up.4 Grow-Your-Own-Teacher (GYOT) initiatives recognize the importance of community connection in selecting the teaching profession. These initiatives present a vital opportunity to address geographic teacher shortages by fostering entry into the profession among students that may be more likely to return upon completion of a teacher preparation program. In addition to increasing recruitment at-large, GYOT initiatives can be utilized to target diverse teacher candidates that more aptly reflect the ethnoracial diversity of Delaware's schools. Wherever possible, LEAs should create, expand, and support Teacher Academies and Educators Rising. GYOT initiatives should ensure that the most highly qualified teachers are adequately supported

and incentivized to participate so students have the best exposure to the profession. Across the state there are efforts underway to foster and expand GYOT programs. Indian River and Red Clay Consolidated School Districts both received funding from Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) Innovation Grants to support GYOT programs. Appoquinimink School District is establishing relationships with IHEs to increase in-state matriculation and create scholarships for teacher pathway participants.

1.4 Establish and support paraprofessionalto-teacher pathways across the state.

Paraprofessionals play a crucial role in the classroom assisting teachers, supervising students, and offering administrative support. Their experience, commitment to students, and familiarity with school communities make them great potential teacher candidates. Over onefifth of Delaware's paraprofessionals have a bachelor's degree or higher, substantively decreasing the necessary course work to obtain teacher certification. Also noteworthy, 1-in-3 paraprofessionals in the state are educators of color, making paraprofessional pathways an additionally viable means for the recruitment of teachers of color.⁶ However, many paraprofessionals report they are unable to seek certification due to the financial burden of teacher preparation courses and fieldexperience. Wilmington University is actively working to create a new alternative routes to certification (ARTC) program, Para-to-Teacher Residency, that would allow paraprofessionals to begin work as a teacher upon beginning the two-year degree process. IHEs, LEAs, DDOE, and Delaware State Education Association (DSEA) should be called upon to further develop and

foster flexible and responsive paraprofessional pathways.

1.5 Create and promote meaningful loan forgiveness programs that incentivize teaching in Delaware schools.

Substantive loan forgiveness presents a meaningful opportunity to attract students to the profession and teachers to Delaware's schools. In June 2018, the 149th Delaware General Assembly passed House Substitute 1 for House Bill 346 to establish a High Needs Educator Student Loan Payment Program; however, a more substantive commitment is needed to address the mounting cost of higher education and the comparatively low starting teacher salaries. The state can be called upon to establish an in-state loan forgiveness program modeled after Federal Teacher Loan Forgiveness, which provides tiered-funds up to \$17,500 for teachers in eligible schools and in high-need content areas. Additionally, the eligibility for federal loan forgiveness should be shared widely by teacher preparation programs and LEAs for recruitment efforts.8

1.6 Conduct a comprehensive examination of the salary and non-monetary compensation practices of surrounding states.

On average, Delaware teachers are paid less than teachers in neighboring states. Delaware should conduct a comprehensive analysis of its own salary and non-monetary compensation. Consistent with the recommendations of the 148th General Assembly Education Report and building upon the work of the Committee to Advance Educator Compensation & Careers (CAECC), starting teacher salaries should be increased to ensure the state is regionally

competitive and capable of attracting highly qualified teachers. ¹⁰ This recommendation is not only a matter of regional competition but also an important reiteration of the commitment to Delaware's teachers.

Challenge 2: Content-Area Shortages

Over the past five years, emergency teacher certificates in Delaware have nearly doubled. 11 For the 2018–19 school year, identified critical needs positions include: middle and secondary math, science, and English Language Arts; special education; business education; agriscience; family and consumer sciences; English Language Learner, bilingual, world language, and immersion teachers; library media specialists; school nurses; speech and hearing therapists; and school psychologists. Based on the current teacher preparation enrollment numbers, longitudinal trends, and the growing establishment of dual-language immersion programs, there is reason to believe critical need shortages will only continue to grow.

The following content-area recommendations are intended to ensure shortages are adequately monitored, teachers are being appropriately recruited, and LEAs are afforded the flexibility to address those needs. It is the expectation that through the implementation of the following recommendations, the state will be able to steadily reduce the number of emergency teaching certificates in the upcoming years.

Recommendations

2.1 Ensure areas of critical needs and teacher shortages are tracked, projected, and adequately communicated to relevant stakeholders.

In addition to DDOE's annual critical needs list, critical needs areas should be reported by geographic area and at the school level so attention can be given to the hardest-to-staff schools. This information should be transparently defined, effectively communicated, and made publicly available to facilitate planning among and between IHEs and LEAs. IHEs and LEAs should also ensure teachers and teacher candidates are aware of loan forgiveness and critical needs tuition scholarships associated with critical needs areas to bolster targeted recruitment efforts.

2.2 Actively recruit students into educator preparation programs that address critical shortages.

Institutions of higher education and teacher preparation programs should actively promote and recruit potential and current students into teacher preparation programs that prepare teachers in critical needs areas. Additionally GYOT and paraprofessional-to-teacher pathway programs, aforementioned in recommendations 1.3 and 1.4 respectively, should emphasize and promote critical needs content-areas.

2.3 Establish a flexible and responsive system that allows schools to fill critical needs areas efficiently.

The state currently has nine ARTC programs that address critical needs areas—including

recently created programs to address special education shortages. The state should also be called upon to revisit the process for onboarding and obtaining licensure for skilled and technical educators and provide additional supports to ease this process. As additional programs are created and grow, IHEs and teacher preparation programs should ensure that they are aligned with projected critical needs. IHEs and teacher preparation programs must be called upon to continue to create, expand, and support alternative routes to certification and establish intensive, flexible programs for Praxis content preparation for existing licensed teachers.

Delaware can also lead the way in creative policies to address critical needs. Examples include flexible funding models that would allow LEAs to cost-share teaching professionals; creating partnerships to allow unlicensed content area specialists or teacher candidates in residency to teach collaboratively with certified teachers in critical needs areas; and developing policies to allow districts to hire unlicensed teachers while establishing a time frame for certification—such as the Type 29 Certificate in Illinois specifically designed to address shortages of bilingual educators.¹²

Challenge 3: Teacher Attrition

Teacher attrition rates in Delaware, consistent with national trends, averaged 7.5% over the past five years.¹³ It is estimated that 90% of the annual teacher demand nationally is caused by teachers leaving the profession.¹⁴ Strengthening the teacher pipeline requires ensuring our

teachers are supported to remain in the classroom and develop their craft. Additionally, teacher attrition is costly; annual teacher attrition—just of those teachers leaving the state entirely—is estimated to cost Delaware between \$2.8 and \$6.1 million dollars annually.¹⁵

The teacher attrition recommendations call for more supportive mentorship experiences, improved data collection, increased individualized professional learning, and the mitigation of late teacher movement—teachers leaving soon before or soon after the school year begins. It is the expectation that through the implementation of the following recommendations, the state will consistently reduce yearly attrition rates in the upcoming years.

Recommendations

3.1 Develop more supportive induction and mentorship experiences.

Strong and supportive mentorship through induction is an important aspect to reducing teacher attrition. According to the 2017 TELL Delaware survey, almost half of new teachers did not have an established time to meet with mentors during school hours, were observed less than once per month, and 71% reported observing their mentor teacher less than once per month. Fiforts should be made to expand these experiences to meet and exceed state minimum requirements.

Relatedly, LEAs should mindfully remove barriers to strong mentorship experiences for pre-service teachers—such as limits to the number of teacher candidates a mentor may have over a certain period that may limit the development of mentorship expertise—and

should ensure mentor recruitment should reflect a commitment to diversity. Additionally, LEAs should adequately incentivize cooperating teacher participation.

Efforts and innovative programs are underway around the state to strengthen induction and mentorship experiences. The Red Clay Consolidated School District's retired teacher mentorship program hires retired teachers to provide more intensive mentorships to novice teachers through induction. The DDOE offers New Teacher and Mentor Academies to provide supports for novice teachers and their mentors, as well as Comprehensive Induction Program (CIP) Grants for funding to develop and/or deliver innovative induction programs for new educators.

3.2 Establish a statewide system of exit surveys to assist in the identification of the needs of Delaware schools and teachers.

The use of exit surveys is a best practice to assess why teachers are leaving the profession and can support a plan for informed teacher attrition reduction. Exit surveys are often completed at the district level, but there is presently no statewide system of survey administration. Not only should data be collected at the state level, it should be made publicly available to inform best practices and reduce overall attrition.

3.3 Explore pathways for individualized professional development.

There is both a need and demand for teachers to continue to grow and lead in their profession while remaining in the classroom. Sixty-four percent of respondents to the 2017 TELL Delaware survey reported having a small or no

role in the development of in-service professional development experiences.¹⁹ Delaware should explore a competencies-based licensure renewal process that could serve as an alternative to clock hours and allows more meaningful professional learning experiences, tailored to the needs and interests of individual teachers. Additionally, teacher salary structures should be tailored in ways that recognize professional learning through endorsements, specialized credentials, or performance-based skills and knowledge clusters.²⁰

3.4 Conduct a comprehensive examination of the impact of late-movement and practices intended to minimize the incidence.

Late teacher movement is a source of school inconsistency and staffing instability and presents a challenge for schools to fill vacancies in a timely manner. Delaware can look to other states for practices designed to decrease late-movement such as the Maryland public school system, which requires that teachers and school systems mutually advise one another by specified dates to terminate a teaching contract. The local school system further reserves the right to report violations to the state Department of Education.²¹

Challenge 4: Diversity and EquityLiteracy

The ethnoracial diversity of Delaware's teacher workforce is not reflective of the K–12 student population thus creating a representation gap. While students of color represent 55% of the

K-12 population, teachers and administrators of color represent only 15% and 27% respectively.²² The issue however is not merely demographics, teachers of color are shown to have significant and demonstrable impact on student outcomes and school climate: teachers of color improve student educational outcomes, increase placement of students of color in advanced courses, and may also increase parental engagement.²³ In addition to matters of the representation gap, less than half of Delaware's recent teacher preparation graduates rated themselves as very wellprepared to teach diverse communities and over half of all respondents to the 2017 TELL Delaware survey selected equity-relatedsubjects as desired for further professional learning.24

The diversity and equity-literacy recommendations include meaningful support systems for pre- and in-service teachers of color, training to address bias in human resources practices, and equity-literate preservice teacher training and professional learning. It is the expectation that through the implementation of the following recommendations, there will be a substantive and sustained increase in the numbers of diverse educators entering teacher preparation programs, in the K–12 workforce, and advancing to leadership roles across the state.

Recommendations

4.1 Support and expand meaningful support systems for pre- and in-service teachers of color and men.

It is important to recognize the needs and provide support for historically underrepresented and underserved teacher-

candidate and in-service teacher populations.²⁵ Delaware's institutions of higher education have the opportunity to create meaningful systems of support and recruitment for diverse teacher candidates, much like Clemson University's "Call Me MISTER" program that provides tuition assistance through loan forgiveness, academic mentorship, a cohort system of social and cultural support, as well as job placement assistance.²⁶ Efforts are underway in Delaware to provide meaningful systems of support for in-service teachers of color. The Educators of Color group at Colonial School District provides four dimensions of support: 1) a system of social and cultural support; 2) curriculum development; 3) recruiting efforts, including actively identifying underrepresented students that may be interested in the teaching profession for recruitment into the GYOT program; and 4) engaging in community outreach.

4.2 Provide training for administrators and human resource professionals to address implicit bias and racism in hiring and promotion practices.

Research suggests that hiring and promotion practices in school districts are highly discretionary and may rely upon preferences of existing administrators.²⁷ It is therefore important that administrators and human resource professionals be adequately trained to address implicit bias and racism; awareness training can serve as the first step to addressing bias in hiring and promotion practices. LEAs can be called upon to create diversity goals and consider making applicant and hiring demographic data publicly available in order to access the extent to which diversity recruitment

efforts are fostering increased applications and hiring of educators of color.²⁸

4.3 Establish equity-literacy as a crosscutting theme of education preparatory programs and professional learning.

All teachers and teacher-candidates should engage in continued equity-oriented professional learning to address the needs of a diverse student population. An equity-literacy approach offers a comprehensive framework and lens that teachers can use to recognize bias and inequity in the classroom and knowledgably address inequities.²⁹ Teacher preparation programs present a unique opportunity to begin equity literate education for teachercandidates early in their career and may also serve to redress many of the challenges identified by teacher-candidates of color.²⁵ For in-service teachers, equity-oriented professional learning should be conceived of as more than a training but rather a professional learning journey. Across Delaware, schools such as Shue-Medill Middle School in the Christina School District, Warner Elementary School in Red Clay Consolidated School District, and the Colonial School District are already taking the lead to identify equity-oriented professional learning pathways for teachers and administrators.

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