Diverse Educator Retention and Recruitment Strategies for Educator Preparation Programs

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JANUARY 2024

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Introduction

The lack of ethnoracial diversity in the teacher workforce is a persistent issue nationally and in Illinois. Despite significant efforts to diversify the teaching profession, the number of teachers of color[1] remains disproportionately low overall compared to the number of students of color. On average, 17% of educators in Illinois identify as a person of color despite almost 50% of students identifying as persons of color (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). The lack of racial or ethnoracial parity between students and teachers is associated with the systematic firing of Black educators in the aftermath of *Brown v. Board of Education* (Fenwick, 2022).

Furthermore, approximately 27% of newly registered undergraduate students pursuing teaching degrees in Illinois in 2019 were individuals from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. However, during the same year, only 18% of undergraduate students who successfully completed their education programs identified as people of color (Illinois Educator Preparation Profile, n.d.). These figures highlight a potential area for enhancement in terms of attracting and retaining candidates of color in educator preparation programs (EPPs).

The underrepresentation of teachers of color has numerous negative consequences, including lower student achievement and higher dropout rates for students of color (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Having a same-race teacher is associated with increased test scores (Dee, 2004; Egalite et al., 2015; Yarnell & Bohrnstedt, 2018), high school retention (Lindsay & Hart, 2017), and college matriculation (Gershenson et al., 2018). Evidence suggests that the race-matching effects of teachers are also concentrated among Black male students and in high-poverty areas (Gershenson et al., 2021). In addition to the benefits of student-teacher race matching, research has shown that all students benefit from having teachers of color (Education Trust — New York, 2017). As a result, the importance of increasing teacher diversity and supporting candidates of color is increasingly recognized by EPPs.
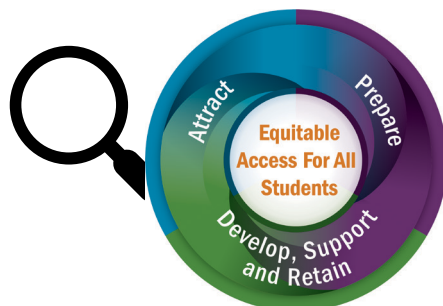
Diversifying the teacher workforce takes a comprehensive approach that spans the teacher career continuum. The teachers of color workforce could be expanded at multiple points across the educator talent development framework (Exhibit 1) — from attracting students; preparing candidates; and developing, supporting, and retaining teachers. Research has shown that some student–teacher race matching disparities have to do with retention, but other studies have shown that the early stages of the pipeline are responsible in large measure for the lack of teacher diversity (Goldhaber & Mizrav, 2022). Candidates of color face unique challenges in EPPs, such as racial discrimination, lack of culturally responsive curriculum, and inadequate mentoring and support. Research has also shown that EPPs can make changes that can improve

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[1] We use terms "teachers of color" and "students of color" to refer to ethnoracial groups who are not White, but rather are, but not limited to, Black, Latinx, Hispanic, Asian American, Native American, Indigenous, Pacific Islander.

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the recruitment and retention of candidates of color. In other words, **EPPs are key players in diversifying the teacher workforce.**

Exhibit 1. Talent Development Framework

Exhibit 2. Preservice Teacher Preparation Development Pipeline

Increasing interest in the profession among high schoolers	→	Improving application and admission processes	→	Providing financial supports	→	Improving student academic and campus experience	→	Improving licensure and placement supports

Several key milestones must be met as candidates prepare to become teachers. Each milestone offers the opportunity for EPPs to implement specific strategies to recruit, retain, and support candidates of colors through the program. Exhibit 2 illustrates the key points where EPPs can implement strategies to improve candidate recruitment and retention. For most teachers, interest in being a teacher may be expressed later in the college process, as most young adults do not have their career planned out when going to college. For others, the challenge might be graduating and passing licensure exams. At each milestone in the preservice teacher preparation development pipeline, EPPs can implement specific strategies to recruit and retain candidates of color.

This document explores strategies in the teacher preparation pipeline for supporting candidates of color in EPPs. It reviews evidence-based practices for recruiting and retaining candidates of color in teacher preparation programs and the implications of these practices for improving diversity in the teaching workforce in Illinois. This resource also includes examples from EPPs around the country that are taking steps to recruit and retain teacher candidates of color and to increase diversity and inclusivity in the teaching profession.

Resource Highlight: *Roadmap for Educator Preparation Reform*

EPPs face challenges when it comes to undertaking reform. To be successful, change within EPPs has to happen at the system level and at the individual level. *The Roadmap for Educator Preparation Reform* is a planning framework intended to guide and support EPPs to make programmatic reform. The roadmap highlights the major guidelines that EPPs should consider throughout the reform process and provides supporting facilitation guidance, examples, resources, and tools from EPPs that have engaged in and benefited from this process. The roadmap identifies eight steps in the process of educator preparation reform:

(1) **Engage Key Leaders**: Reform cannot happen without the support of strong leaders. Engaging key leaders early in the EPP reform and continuous improvement process lays a strong foundation for sustainability and helps inform and prepare faculty to participate in the reform efforts and navigate change.

(2) **Facilitate Needs Assessment:** Prioritizing content, practices, and processes for program reform requires a systematic and data-driven approach coupled with stakeholder input. Teams must collaborate to examine data from multiple sources to explore needs and assess reform priorities.

(3) **Determine Program Review Focus:** Before beginning the review process, the team must clearly define the evidence-based practices or frameworks that will be used to review individual programs. Teams should carefully consider all sources of data to achieve consensus about the focus and scope of the program review.

(4) **Review Programs:** A systematic review of the coursework and clinical experiences within programs can help identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improved alignment with evidence-based practices and frameworks. A data-driven program review is the foundation for developing a strong action plan for program reform.

(5) **Develop Action Plan:** Developing an action plan for program reform creates a blueprint to guide implementation efforts and provides clarity on team roles and responsibilities. A strong action plan lays the foundation for structures to promote accountability and continuous improvement.

(6) **Implement Reforms**: Implementation of the action plan for program reform must be intentional and thoughtful. Building faculty capacity and shared accountability helps create the conditions for long-term success.

(7) **Practice Continuous Improvement:** Reform efforts often lose momentum after initial implementation. Creating a continuous improvement cycle helps maintain the work's momentum and sustain program reform over time.

(8) **Scale Impact:** Scaling impact requires thoughtful planning and intentional partnerships. Documenting successes, challenges, and lessons learned during improvement efforts creates a solid foundation for sustainability and scale-up.

The strategies, examples, and supporting research were collected from a review of online resources and academic journals and Artificial Intelligence software, as well as from consultations with national experts.

This resource is structured as follows:

1. Introduction

2. Strategies

    a. Strategies on increasing interest in the profession among high schoolers

    b. Strategies on improving application and admission processes

    c. Strategies on providing financial supports

    d. Strategies on improving student academic and campus experience

    e. Strategies on improving licensure and placement supports

3. Conclusion

4. Bibliography

5. Appendix: Strategy reflection tool

Selected Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining Candidates of Color

Strategies for increasing interest in the profession among high schoolers

1. **Partner with high schools that offer dual enrollment for high school students.**

   Dual enrollment programs, which allow high school students to take college-level courses and earn college credit while still in high school, have been shown to increase college access and success for students of color (Barnett et al., 2013; Hoffman & Nixon, 2018; National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). The benefits of dual enrollment include exposure to college-level academics, increased confidence, tuition cost savings, and college readiness. Research suggests that dual enrollment is associated with the likelihood of a student enrolling in and persisting through college (Britton, 2022). Dual enrollment is not always distributed equitably, so students of color sometimes don't have equitable access and therefore don't reap the benefits of these programs.

   A South Carolina program has been engaging high school students since 1986. The South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement Teacher Cadet program is heralded as one of the oldest and better-known grow-your-own programs in the nation (Berrigan & Schwartz, 2000). This state-funded program, which is located on the campus of Winthrop University, is committed to recruiting high-achieving, homegrown students. Cultivating teachers for rural areas experiencing shortages is an important aspect of the program. High school students take a dual-credit course taught by a certified teacher that exposes them to the education profession, as well as to problems and critical issues that affect educational quality in our nation's schools. They also get field experiences, reflections, self-assessments, and classroom observations. The Teacher Cadet program aims to cultivate future leaders who will become civically engaged advocates for public education.

2. **Support candidates early with precollegiate programs.**

   Precollegiate programs provide opportunities for high school students from underrepresented backgrounds to explore the teaching profession and gain early exposure to college-level coursework (Lashley et al., 2018). Early college programs can help to increase the number of diverse candidates who pursue careers in teaching (Chapman & MacDonald, 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Additionally, precollegiate programs can offer mentorship, tutoring, and other support services to help these students succeed academically and navigate the college admissions process. EPPs can work with local high schools to provide learning opportunities at the college or university for exposure to coursework and experiences.

3. **Increase the number of professors of color teaching in educator prep programs.**

Faculty of color in EPPs can help underserved students feel represented and connected while also assisting White students in informing their perspectives on racial identities and culturally responsive practices in teaching. Professors of color can help future teachers develop confidence in their abilities to meet the challenges of today's multicultural classrooms, support them in finding an affinity for the profession, and provide tested methods for supporting a diverse student population.

Resource Highlight:

Culturally Relevant Education Professional Development Pack created by the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center provides learning modules for faculty who are exploring issues of diversity within their university. Module 1 specifically addressing strategies for hiring more faculty of color.

Virginia Commonwealth University has developed a comprehensive approach to deliberately prioritize professors of color throughout the hiring process. The strategies outlined in "Strategies for Successfully Recruiting a Diverse Faculty" are applicable across academic fields and can be specifically implemented for professors in EPPs.

These strategies involve incorporating professors of color on hiring committees, recognizing and addressing publication challenges faced by scholars from these communities in esteemed journals, and leveraging racial affinity groups to circulate job postings and enhance outreach efforts.

4. **Focus on recruitment and retention of non-traditional students.**

Non-traditional students may include older students, career changers, community college students, retired military personnel, or paraprofessionals working in schools. These students bring unique strengths from their lived experiences and past work experiences. Non-traditional students are more likely to be women, belong to ethnoracially diverse groups, and have less educated parents than traditional students (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Pursuing non-traditional students can enable EPPs to maximize the supply of teachers of color (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). By actively seeking out and supporting the enrollment and success of non-traditional students, EPPs can foster a more inclusive learning environment, promote equity in education, and prepare future educators who are better equipped to meet the diverse needs of students in today's classrooms. Additionally, these students often offer unique insights and real-world experiences that can enrich classroom discussions, enhance cultural competency, and contribute to the overall quality of teacher preparation programs.

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Strategies for improving applications and admissions processes

5. Provide information on and guide students through the process of accessing financial aid.

In addition to just offering financial aid, programs must take action to ensure students of color know about the availability, qualifications, and process for accessing the available financial support (Dynarski, 2015). Providing information on and guidance through the financial aid process can raise students' awareness of available resources and increase their confidence in applying for aid, which can lead to higher rates of enrollment and persistence. For example, providing students with personalized assistance in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) can increase the likelihood of enrolling in college by 7 percentage points (Bettinger et al., 2012).

The Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) provides various resources to help students navigate the financial aid process. ISAC provides workshops and online resources to help students and their families understand the FAFSA and complete it accurately and on time. Additionally, ISAC offers free one-on-one financial aid counseling to students and their families to help them understand their options and make informed decisions about their finances. ISAC also provides information on scholarship opportunities and helps students understand the different types of financial aid available, such as grants, scholarships, and loans.

6. Establish articulation agreements with community colleges to ease the transfer process.

Community colleges, which have higher percentages of Black and Latinx students than most four-year institutions, are a source of potential teachers from diverse backgrounds that is often overlooked (Bragg, 2007; Ma & Baum, 2016). Most of the programs offered at community colleges do not lead directly to teacher licensure, but many community colleges offer associate degrees and certificates that prepare students by providing the foundational aspects of teaching. Matriculation from community college will enable students to transfer to four-year institutions prepared to complete their coursework and work toward obtaining a teaching license. It is often hard for community college students to transition to a four-year institution of higher education. Partnerships and articulation agreements can make the process easier and more straightforward.

An innovative collaboration between Hinds Community College and Delta State University in Mississippi has led to the establishment of the 2 Plus 2 Child Development Partnership program. This program enables aspiring educators to begin their higher education journey at a local community college, completing their first two years of coursework, before seamlessly transferring to a four-year educator preparation program at Delta State University.

7. **Address barriers in the admissions process.**

Given evidence of racial bias in college admissions (Rosinger et al., 2021), strategies for reducing bias can be important for recruiting and retaining candidates who are ethnoracially diverse in EPPs. These might include blind review processes, diversity training for admissions officers, and using holistic admissions criteria that consider a student's entire background and experiences (Espinosa et al., 2011). Furthermore, admissions officers can simplify the application process by providing fee waivers for students of color, first-generation college students, and Pell grant recipients or offering tailored support services such as mentoring and academic advising (Harper et al., 2016). Some strategies aimed at making the admissions process more accessible, such as providing early decisions, may help to increase the number of students of color, first-generation college students, and Pell grant recipients on campus (U.S. Department of Education, 2016b).

Strategies for providing financial supports

8. **Provide financial assistance to students through stipends, scholarships, and tuition support.**

Students of color often face financial barriers in accessing higher education due to the way educational systems are structured (Santos, & Haycock, 2016). The unjust system can result in students from ethnoracially diverse backgrounds, first-generation college students, and Pell grant recipients having to work long hours or take on additional jobs to afford the cost of tuition. These factors can negatively impact their academic success and lead to higher rates of dropping out (Bowen et al., 2009). Providing financial support can help alleviate these financial barriers and allow students from ethnoracially diverse backgrounds to focus on their studies and fully engage in their academic experience. Students who receive need-based scholarships were more likely to persist and graduate than those who do not receive such support, particularly among students of color (Kalamkarian & Johns, 2013). Furthermore, research suggests that financial assistance programs that are tailored to the unique needs of students of color — such as scholarships for students from ethnoracially diverse groups or programs that provide tuition support to students who are the first in their families to attend college — can be particularly effective in increasing retention rates among this population (Jackson & Acker, 2015).

Strategies for improving student academic and campus experience

9. **Support collaborations between university admissions and the education department for recruiting purposes.**

Education departments and admissions offices can work together to develop priority recruitment strategies and provide support for diverse candidates throughout the

application and admission process. For example, they can offer application fee waivers, host diversity-focused recruitment events, and provide mentorship and advising to help prospective students navigate the application process (Ingersoll et al., 2022). Furthermore, once students are already accepted to the university in general, the Education Department can conduct individualized outreach to encourage students of color to start to take education classes and consider an education major. The largest gap for students is often between being accepted to the university and choosing to major in education (Goldhaber & Mizrav, 2022).

The [Academy for Teacher Excellence Program at University of Texas at San Antonio](#) developed a comprehensive recruitment plan to attract Latinx students who were already enrolled at the university to enroll specifically in the EPP (Flores, Clark, Claeys and Villarreal, 2007). The program includes "soliciting referrals from faculty and student service offices, ensuring that program staff were at freshman orientations and other campus events, and disseminating information about the program widely around [the campus] to ensure quick recognition of the work they were doing" (Goe & Roth, 2019, p. 11).

10. **Invest in and partner with minority-serving institutions.**

Investing time, resources, and energy into developing relationships with historically Black colleges and universities and minority-serving institutions (MSIs) can have a positive effect on the teacher pipeline for states, districts, and schools. MSIs have a long history of preparing educators to teach diverse student populations despite the systemic inequities that they face (Marchitello & Trinidad, 2019). As a more inclusive learning environment for people of color, MSIs provide districts with access to a more ethnoracially diverse teacher pool (Toldson & Pearson, 2019). EPPs with graduate programs can create partnerships with MSIs to build a pipeline of candidates of color.

11. **Provide culturally responsive mentoring, close connections with faculty, and holistic advising.**

Students who are paired with a mentor are more likely to persist in college — especially first-generation students from low-income backgrounds (Barr & Castleman, 2017; Chamberlain & Parnell, 2022). One randomized control study finds that participating in a mentoring program is associated with a 14 percentage point increase in consistent college enrollment. Mentoring allows for close connections with advisers and faculty, and mentors are associated with higher levels of college retention (Advising Success Network, 2021; Holland et al., 2020). Of course, "one size fits all" mentoring is not as powerful as mentoring that is tailored to meet the unique needs of candidates of color (Region 8 Comprehensive Center Network, 2021).

12. Create affinity groups and peer-to-peer mentoring for students of color.

Affinity groups and peer-to-peer mentoring programs have been shown to increase program retention rates and program completion rates for students of color (McGee & Bentley, 2017; Talbert-Johnson et al., 2018). Affinity groups provide a safe and supportive space for students of color to share experiences, receive support and mentoring, and develop a sense of belonging within the program. Peer-to-peer mentoring programs have been shown to increase academic achievement, engagement, and persistence among students of color (Strayhorn, 2015; Yomtov et al., 2017).

13. Foster an inclusive campus climate to reduce instances of discrimination, bias, and racism.

Research shows that teacher candidates of color often experience racism and discrimination as they participate teacher preparation programs, and these experiences can negatively impact their self-efficacy and ultimately lead to higher rates of attrition from the teaching profession (Grooms et.al., 2021). Conversely, a supportive and inclusive campus climate can lead to greater satisfaction, increased retention rates, and ultimately better outcomes for teacher candidates of color.

For example, the University of Mississippi is working to promote diversity, inclusion, and racial reconciliation. It is making Hate vs. Bias Training mandatory for new officers within the University Police Department and requiring additional diversity training for existing officers. Additional measures include a Welcome Home onboarding program for new employees and the Respect the "M" orientation session for new students to foster a more inclusive campus climate. The university also offers the optional MPower program, which is aimed at cultivating appreciation for university culture, cultural differences, and inclusivity, for first-year students. Consider how you have worked with your diversity officer to implement something similar.

14. Promote a cohort program design model.

Cohort program designs, which involve groups of teacher candidates progressing through their training together, may be particularly effective for recruiting and retaining teachers of color. Cohort programs can create a sense of community among teacher candidates and provide social and emotional support, which may be especially important for candidates from underrepresented backgrounds. In addition, cohort programs can offer opportunities for mentorship and networking, as well as customized coursework and field experiences tailored to the needs and interests of teacher candidates of color (Mauldin et. al, 2022).

15. Embed culturally responsive practices in teacher preparation.

The use of culturally affirming practices by faculty may enable students in EPPs to retain content easily, shift their perspectives on diversity, and improve their performance on licensure tests and exams. A culturally responsive curriculum can validate the struggles of Black teachers, dismantle systemic racism in education, and authentically portray the history of Black educators (Mason et al., 2021). Equipping all teachers — including teachers of color and their White counterparts — with the capacity to implement culturally responsive pedagogy can support students of color in EPPs.

Strategies for improving licensure and placement supports

16. Offer paid student teaching positions.

Teacher candidates of color face financial barriers in accessing teacher preparation programs and are more likely to work part-time or take on additional jobs while student teaching, which can hinder their ability to focus on their training (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Paid student teaching positions can help alleviate these financial burdens and allow candidates of color to fully engage in their training and gain the experience they need to become effective teachers. Additionally, research suggests that teacher candidates of color often face discrimination and cultural mismatches in traditional student teaching placements, which can lead to lower job satisfaction and retention rates (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Offering paid student teaching positions can allow candidates of color to choose placements that align with their interests and strengths and increase the likelihood of a positive and successful teaching experience.

17. Establish partnerships to build residencies or registered teacher apprenticeship programs.

Registered teacher apprenticeship programs typically combine classroom teaching experience with academic coursework and mentorship, allowing aspiring teachers to learn and develop their skills while working alongside experienced educators. Apprentices in these programs are registered with a state or regional education agency and receive support and guidance as they progress toward earning their teaching credentials. The specific structure and requirements of registered teacher apprenticeship programs can vary depending on the institution offering them (Goldhaber et al., 2020).

> **Resource Highlight:**
>
> *Take a Seat at the Table* describes the role of EPPs in teacher-registered apprenticeship program (RAP) development and implementation. As teacher RAPs continue to expand, this resource offers strategies for EPPs to lead the way in co-designing teacher RAPs.

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New York's Classroom Academy transformed its two-year residency model into a teacher registered apprenticeship program in 2019. Collaboration with the New York State Department of Labor and New York State Education Department enables Classroom Academy to allow district/employers to partner with multiple EPPs and provides students an annual stipend of $22,000 along with $5,000 per year in college tuition assistance, addressing a major financial barrier for students of color.

18. Provide students support for licensure acquisition and testing.

Teacher certification tests can serve as a significant barrier for candidates of color. These tests often contain culturally biased content and language that may be unfamiliar to candidates of color, leading to lower passing rates compared to their White counterparts (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2016; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Additionally, candidates of color are more likely to come from lower-income backgrounds, which can limit their access to resources such as test preparation materials and courses. Universities can play an important role in supporting candidates of color in licensure acquisition and testing. For example, EPPs can provide targeted resources and support for test preparation, including workshops and tutoring services, to help candidates overcome any knowledge gaps and cultural biases in the testing process.

For example, Tennessee State University developed a Praxis lab designed to assist teacher candidates in their preparation for Praxis exams and edTPAs. The lab is supervised by graduate students from ethnoracially diverse backgrounds who not only provide academic support but also create a sense of community and mentorship. These labs serve as more than just preparation spaces; they foster a supportive environment where teacher candidates, particularly candidates of color, can find guidance and connect with peers and mentors throughout their journeys toward becoming educators.

Conclusion

EPPs play a vital role in enhancing the student-teacher race match in Illinois. By actively participating in the reform process and implementing carefully selected strategies, EPPs can potentially enhance the recruitment and retention of candidates of color within their programs and the teaching profession as a whole. The selection of strategies aligns with a comprehensive commitment to effecting systemic change, encompassing a dedicated process and commitment to transforming systems.

Resource Highlight:

Education Preparation Provider Enrollment Diversification Guidebook: Diverse Pipeline Pilot 2021-22 supports EPPs and their institutions to design and implement an enrollment diversification strategy to substantially increase the number of teacher candidates of color graduating each year.

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Appendix: Selected Strategy Reflection Notetaking Tool

Use the table below to review the evidence-based strategies listed in this document within the context of your institution. The purpose of this tool is to encourage your institution to consider how these strategies would contribute to improved teacher recruitment and retention of students of color in the educator preparation program. This means thinking about whether this strategy is already in place, whether it could be enhanced, and whether it could be evaluated. Complete the table below. Reflect on each prompt in the first row given where you are with the strategy in your school.

Strategy:	What about this strategy is aligned to the core reasons our program is not attracting or retaining candidates?	What would be the cost of the strategy? Where can we get funding?	Who can lead the implementation of this strategy?

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