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# Keeping Up with the Kids: Increasing Minority Teacher Representation in Colorado

## Executive Summary

Prepared for  
Colorado Department of Education

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## Executive Summary

A major challenge in the U.S. education system, including Colorado's education system, is the mismatch between the racial and ethnic diversity of the nation's overall student population and that of the teacher workforce. In Colorado, during the 2012-13 school year, the proportion of minority students was 43% and the proportion of minority teachers was 10%.<sup>1</sup>

During the 2011-2012 school year, 48% of the nation's public elementary and secondary students were minorities, increasing to 50% by the 2013-2014 school year. Most recent national data for public school teachers, from the 2011-2012 school year, reports that only 18.1% of teachers are minorities.<sup>2</sup>

Colorado House Bill 14-1175 required the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to study and develop strategies to increase and improve the recruitment, preparation, development, and retention of high-quality minority teachers in elementary and secondary schools across the state. Through a competitive request for proposals process, CDE selected Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA) to prepare this report in response to HB 14-1175. We used a mixed-methods approach to evaluate minority teacher recruitment and retention, starting with a set of initial research questions to guide data collection, review, and analysis. Our final report synthesizes themes from demographic data, quantitative data, qualitative interview data, and policy data to create recommendations for different key parties in Colorado. The challenge of increasing minority teachers in Colorado involves both the recruitment and retention phases of teaching, and we analyze both of those phases in this study.

Administrators at school districts and teacher preparation programs across Colorado reported during interviews that they face critical shortages of teacher candidates of color and teachers of color. Colorado district administrators and teacher educators who were interviewed for this analysis shared a belief that increasing teacher diversity enhances students' relationships to and connections with teachers, which in turn is part of narrowing the achievement gap. However, both literature review data and interview data revealed a number of barriers to recruiting and retaining minority teachers, which include: negative perceptions of the teaching profession among minorities; low teacher salaries; barriers for minority students in attending and completing college; financial barriers associated with college; licensure tests; issues of cultural competence; and relocation.

There is room to improve Colorado's current recruitment strategies. To be effective, recruitment strategies must be tailored to fit the context where minority teachers live, are prepared, and work—

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<sup>1</sup> For data on teacher demographics in Colorado see: Colorado Department of Education, Staff Statistics <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/staffcurrent>. Data on student demographics in Colorado are available from Source: Colorado Department of Education, student enrollment data: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/pupilcurrent>.

<sup>2</sup> National teacher data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Characteristics of Public and Private Elementary and Secondary School Teachers in the United States: Results From the 2011-12 Schools and Staffing Survey* (NCES 2013). Information on student enrollment from the Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education (2014)*: [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_cge.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cge.asp)

taking into account geographic area, population demographics, local culture, and lived experiences of minorities—since there is no single backdrop to minority teacher recruitment and retention, and no monolithic minority community. Some effective strategies include: a focus on context—geographic area, population demographics, local culture, and lived experiences of minorities—since there is no single backdrop to minority teacher recruitment and retention, and no monolithic minority community; recruitment of minority candidates already living and working in a community; intentional and focused recruitment in nontraditional areas, or from nontraditional social and professional pools like church groups, local businesses, chambers of commerce, and other community organizations; support for minority candidates’ cultures, and for cultural competency in general, within districts and teacher preparation programs; a focus on teaching as a way to give back to the community, particularly for minority teachers who may have a strong sense of humanistic commitment; and implementation of programs at each stage in people’s careers (early outreach / grow your own programs, recruitment within college, and recruitment of recent graduates and mid-career switchers).

While at least half of Colorado teachers are trained outside of the state, in-state programs—both traditional and alternative—are larger sources of new minority teachers. New hires to school districts in Colorado include a slightly higher proportion of minorities than the state’s overall teacher population: 12% of new hires are minorities compared to 10% of all teachers. The data on the race/ethnicity of new college graduates in Colorado is incomplete. However, public and private university-based teacher preparation program graduates appear to include an even higher percentage of minorities (14%) than new hires into Colorado’s teacher workforce. And it appears that 21% of new bachelor’s degree graduates are minorities. Thus, there is an expanding possible pool of new minorities that could be entering the classroom.

Once minority teachers are trained and placed in classrooms, the focus shifts to retention. Factors like student and teacher characteristics, job structure, and working conditions all influence rates of retention. Our research found a number of strategies for retention, including: higher salaries and incentives; effective principals and school leadership; comprehensive mentoring and induction programs; networks of teacher collaboration and support; increased classroom autonomy; better facilities and education resources; and support of, or positive reinforcement for, teachers’ humanistic commitments.

Three major strategies, or themes, emerged from data analyzed for this report. First, there are shared minority teacher recruitment and retention goals across school districts and teacher preparation programs, but limited capacity to address these goals. While there are examples of successes in Colorado and across the nation, many district employees and teacher preparation administrators still need more capacity in terms of support, resources, knowledge, and skills to deal with this critical issue.

Second, programs must fit with contexts. Local efforts to address minority recruitment and retention are occurring in very different contexts across the state. Different communities within Colorado have very different minority populations. Equally important, these communities have different strengths and concerns to consider when addressing the dearth of minority teachers. For example, some communities

have minority populations who value living and working near their families and hometowns and who might be reluctant to leave their communities for colleges, universities, or teacher preparation programs. Other communities have easy access to teacher preparation programs. Some of the larger school districts have resources to support extensive recruitment to teacher preparation programs.

Third, relationships are key. Relationships—between education institutions and minority communities, between minority and majority educators, between mentors and minority novices as well as prospective teachers—are key to recruiting and retaining teachers. Relationships are a key concept to consider when developing pipeline strategies. Relationships signal long-term engagement to supporting minority communities in Colorado. A focus on relationships also promotes cultural awareness, sensitivity, encouragement, and continued support among education professionals.

Taken together, this means there is no single, statewide solution to the challenge of recruiting and retaining minority teachers. Instead, there are multiple possible solutions, tailored to fit the assets and needs of different communities and different parts of the state. The role of the state is to help communities organize and build capacity to recruit and retain minority teachers, and to evaluate recruitment and retention efforts to learn from successes and challenges. In order to accomplish these goals of organization, capacity-building, and continued evaluation, we make these recommendations:

***Recommendations for the Legislature:*** The legislature has a key role in providing incentives and long-term capacity-building support for minority teacher recruitment and retention. We recommend the legislature create and authorize a multi-million dollar per year program that consists of a set of five to ten multi-year grants. These grants would be available to individual and consortia of districts, teacher preparation institutions, and non-profit organizations to increase the recruitment and retention of effective minority teachers. The grantees should conduct programs that best meet their needs and context. Below is a list of program options.

- Create Regional Minority Teacher Recruitment Alliances, responsible for developing minority teacher recruitment plans for their respective member districts.
- Develop financial incentives, such as bonuses or loan forgiveness, for minority teachers.
- Develop and grow Teacher Cadet programs focused on minority students.
- Create minority teacher induction programs between districts and teacher preparation programs.
- Provide principal, school staff and district administrator training and support on cultural competence and minority teacher recruitment and retention.
- Create financial supports for paraprofessionals attaining their teaching licenses.
- Forge partnerships between Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and local districts in Colorado to enhance the minority teacher pipeline.
- Provide additional funding for mid-career recruitment programs focused on attracting minorities into the classroom.
- Support centers within teacher preparation programs to assist with minority teacher recruitment, advocacy, and support.

After the proposals process, recipients awarded grant funding could determine how to best use resources based on their local context and needs. Grants should strengthen the recruitment and training of teachers of color through both traditional and alternative routes. The grant program should also be structured to help grow the capacity of districts that do not currently have experience with grant competitions or human resources innovations (e.g. smaller, poorer, more rural districts).

Building capacity will require monetary resources, but with specific expectations for how these resources will be used. Put differently, these grant efforts should not just passively exist; they must accomplish measurable progress. To this aim, the legislature must require collection of data on progress, provide for periodic evaluation of grant-funded programs, and reporting so that program successes and pitfalls can be shared within the education community.

As school districts, teacher preparation programs and non-profits would propose projects to create and strengthen minority teacher pipelines, data collection will be key to evaluating and learning from recruitment and retention programs to help determine how resources are best allocated. Some data collection will require legislative mandates so that all of the appropriate data is collected and can be shared across state departments.

Any efforts to improve minority teacher recruitment and retention should flow out of an underlying theory of action, with four components: identification of potential teachers to recruit or current teachers to retain; engagement with potential teachers to recruit or current teachers to retain; support for potential and current teachers to help them enter or remain in the profession; and outcomes in terms of increasing the number of minority teachers. Each proposal should describe the process for accomplishing each of the four components above, as well as the challenges and supports to the implementation of those components. Evaluations for each program should be tailored to support implementation needs and to gather program-specific evidence of impact. Along with this specificity, evaluations should also examine the implementation of each program component listed above.

At the same time that program should include these components, programs should also be monitored through a set of indicators, or evaluation and measurement questions to track progress. Shared indicators of success will strengthen our ability to identify and learn from successful programs. To develop these indicators, we recommend creating a Board for Investing in Colorado Educators (BICE): a consortium or collaborative group of educators and leaders to guide the broader recommendations and the implementation of this report.

In structure and design, BICE would mirror consortiums in other states, like the Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB). The OEIB ensures that Oregon's legislatively adopted "Equity Lens," is used with fidelity. The lens, as described by an OEIB member interviewed for this report, is a "guiding premise for examining every aspect of education, and for engaging others in discussion of data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and economic level." In Colorado, BICE could host discussions prior to the release of a grant-related RFP, and provide support districts or programs that do not regularly participate in competitive grant programs.

BICE should determine how to create competition for developing a minority teacher pipeline, deciding what an effective grant application looks like, contains, or involves. BICE would also set up specific measures of progress. We suggest the following indicators as starting points:

1. How many people were identified as potential teachers or current teachers to be retained?
2. How many people were engaged in the process of learning about the program to recruit or retain teachers?
3. How many people entered the program?
4. What supports did people receive?
5. Did all program participants receive the same supports, or did supports vary by person? If the supports varied by person, why and how did they vary?
6. How many people successfully completed the program?
7. How many minorities who participated in the program entered teaching or were retained in teaching?

Indicators of progress could also focus on how many minority teachers are staying in classrooms beyond their first three years of teaching, demonstrating a high likelihood to stay in the teaching profession long-term. As part of this work BICE should create and issue a yearly educator equity scorecard (that includes minority teacher preparation, recruitment and retention statistics, highlights successful program and important next steps for addressing this issue.

***Recommendations for Administrative Support:*** The recommendations for administrative support are threefold. First, CDE should conduct an expert examination of the teacher licensure test results. This examination could identify whether there are differences in pass rates by race/ethnicity, and whether the tests, or aspects of the tests, are barriers for minority teacher candidates. If there are significant differences in pass rates between racial/ethnic groups, then CDE should review the tests for cultural bias, validity, and reliability as indicators of teacher preparation and success. And if the tests are deemed valid, reliable predictors of educator effectiveness, and if there are still disparities in pass rates between racial/ethnic groups, then the focus should shift to helping minority candidates understand and effectively prepare for the tests. This preparation could take the form of classes, coaching, tutoring, or other study strategies.

Second, CDE can either help broker and facilitate programs or hire a contractor to respond to the legislation-authorized incentive programs for minority teacher recruitment. For example, CDE could help develop a resource center within the state to help build district capacity to recruit and retain minority teachers; help districts collaborate and share resources; support minority teachers as they seek workplaces that are a good fit to their needs and expectations; and communicate the importance of diversity. A resource center could also include a clearinghouse to distribute information—a place for districts or preparation programs to turn with questions about any part of the minority teacher recruitment and retention pipeline.

Third, Colorado must improve its data collection to ensure it has the capacity to fully describe the teacher preparation pipeline and workforce. For all of the current and new programs that support

people through the teacher pipeline, there must be clear plans and procedures for data collection on who is in the pipeline and whether they are retained in the pipeline. The consortia developing plans for the pipeline should create data collection plans and get legislative permission to share data as needed.

***Recommendations for the Teacher Preparation Community:*** Teacher preparation programs must respond to legislation-authorized grant programs. Equally important, teacher preparation programs can continue to be a proactive part the solution to the challenge of increasing the proportion of minority teachers in Colorado. Teacher preparation programs can continue and expanding efforts to be welcoming, culturally sensitive places where all candidates feel supported. Furthermore, preparation programs can expand connections with surrounding communities, community colleges, and districts to create networks of relationships where candidates of color can excel.

***Recommendations for School Districts:*** Districts play a major role in recruiting students of color to teacher assistant roles, teacher cadet programs, and other grow-your-own pathways to teaching. Districts should build on existing resources that include creating and sustaining highly supportive licensure programs for paraprofessionals and other classified staff. All districts need to evaluate and improve their efforts at minority teacher recruitment and retention. Districts should also consider how to best educate all staff—minority and nonminority—in issues of diversity and cultural competence.

In the long run, school districts play a central role in preparing and supporting minority students as then enter higher education. In other words, districts play a central role in preparing their own workforce. Therefore long-term efforts to increase the number of minority students who succeed in college, and believe teaching is a good career after they graduate, are central to changing the demographics of Colorado’s teacher workforce.

***Recommendations for the Minority Community:*** Efforts to address minority teacher recruitment and retention should involve various members and groups from the minority community (e.g. NAACP Denver, the Department of Africana Studies at Metro State University Denver, CLLARO, Colorado Latino Forum, etc.) in problem-solving conversations and recommendations. Minority groups can help connect interested potential teachers with preparation and pipeline opportunities, and can help new minority teachers—whether new to Colorado or to the teaching profession—feel welcomed and connected to Colorado.

***Recommendations for all Stakeholders:*** Minority teacher recruitment and retention is a change in culture, a set of technical policy challenges, and a political challenge. Above we have outlined the technical and policy recommendations. But there is also a political challenge of sustaining public policy efforts around this issue. Key to the implementation and success of these efforts are sustained partnerships among stakeholders. These partnerships need to advocate for and support efforts to improve minority teacher recruitment and retention.