

# REPORT FROM THE TASK FORCE ON DIVERSIFYING VIRGINIA'S EDUCATOR PIPELINE



August 2017

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## I. Executive Summary

Like much of the nation, Virginia is facing a growing shortage of high quality teaching professionals entering and staying in Virginia's public classrooms. At the same time, the Commonwealth's educator pipeline is becoming more racially homogenous over time.

These trends are of particular concern in a state like Virginia with a rapidly growing and increasingly diverse population.

As the Commonwealth works to attract and retain the teachers necessary to meet growing demand, it must also work to address the lack of diversity in our teaching workforce. Research indicates that a racially representative mix of teachers and administrators can have a strong positive effect on educational outcomes for minority students. Therefore, the disproportionate racial composition of Virginia's school staff poses a direct threat to the success of Virginia's increasingly diverse students. To address this issue, Virginia must acknowledge the unique set of challenges faced by minority educators and advance strategies specifically tailored to attract, retain, and support teachers of color.

The *Taskforce on Diversifying Virginia's Educator Pipeline* (TDVEP, or the Taskforce) identified three key barriers that prevent minority candidates from becoming and remaining teachers. They are as follows:

- Barrier 1: The length and cost of the traditional teacher preparation pathway is disproportionate to salary, which is particularly burdensome for first-generation college students and low income students – who are often minorities.
- Barrier 2: Students are not exposed to or made aware of pathways into the profession early enough, nor are non-teaching majors aware of potential pathways into the profession.
- Barrier 3: The provisional licensing route is underutilized, and teachers of color who are provisionally licensed in Virginia obtain full licensure at lower rates than their peers.

No singular solution exists for any of these hurdles, but the Task Force provided a number of useful suggestions relating to each. Though every recommendation is worth considering, the Taskforce specifically highlighted five priorities:

- The Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) should revise the Approved Program Regulations to allow undergraduate education based majors in teaching/education in schools, colleges, and departments of education.
- Drawing on successful existing models, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) should develop a model "Grow your own program" (GYO) to interest high school students in teaching careers, and deploy it to all local school divisions. The state should also provide financial incentives and supports to divisions for the design and implementation of GYO programs. As part of this, dual enrollment offerings should be expanded at the high school level and should transfer seamlessly into degree pathways for students.
- Virginia and its localities should provide model teacher induction and mentorship programs, and support their implementation and training. Additionally, the state should redirect a portion of its Title II federal funds and increase state funding for mentors to support provisionally licensed teachers until they achieve full licensure.

- The state should cover or subsidize the cost of Praxis tests, the Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment, and test prep programs for minority and low-income students.
- Virginia should annually convene teachers and teacher candidates of color to help facilitate their engagement in policy development as well as recruitment and retention strategies. This event emphasizes the state's commitment to facilitating a diverse teaching workforce for our students, helps non-teaching major students understand options for teaching out of college, and supports human resource departments from local school divisions in the recruitment of potential teachers.

The complete list of the Taskforce's recommendations can be found in Section IV of this report.

## II. Overview of the *Taskforce on Diversifying Virginia's Educator Pipeline*

In the fall of 2016, the Office of the Secretary of Education and the Virginia Department of Education were awarded a National Governor's Association (NGA) grant to address the lack of diversity in Virginia's educator pipeline. The *Taskforce on Diversifying Virginia's Educator Pipeline* was subsequently convened by the Virginia Secretary of Education, Dr. Dietra Trent, and asked to compile a list of concrete policy recommendations to advance this aim. The group was comprised of representatives from teacher preparation programs at Virginia's two-year and four-year higher education institutions, including its Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's); a geographically diverse mix of local school administrators, principals and teachers; civil rights advocacy groups; university and nonprofit programs supporting teachers of color, and many others. A full roster can be found in Appendix A.

Over the course of six meetings and nine months, the Taskforce received presentations on the national problem, Virginia's specific challenges regarding recruitment and retention, programs and organizations striving to address these issues, and a variety of other related topics. From the beginning, the group articulated a shared vision for a diverse teaching workforce, the challenge in achieving that goal, and the potential impacts that success might have.

*The Vision:* All Virginia students benefit personally and intellectually when they learn from education professionals with a variety of racial, ethnic, socio-economic and religious backgrounds. We believe that there is value in all students learning from teachers with diverse backgrounds; and simultaneously recognize that research indicates there is a unique role teachers of color play in improving the lives and academic outcomes of students of color.

*The Challenge:* Virginia's educator workforce pipeline is becoming less diverse over time, a trend that must be reversed if our shared vision is to be achieved. To achieve this, Virginia's public education system must consistently offer students the opportunity to encounter and learn from education professionals representing racial and ethnic backgrounds that mirror that of the Commonwealth's student population.

*The Goal of the Taskforce:* The Taskforce will develop intentional strategies that will increase the diverse educator applicant pool, create strong professional pathways to licensure and employment, and support the retention of teachers of color, in particular African Americans and Hispanics, in the K-12 education workforce, which will in turn positively impact student achievement in Virginia.

The Taskforce was divided into two subcommittees; the first focused on pathways into the profession and the second studied strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers of color. Each subcommittee's research led to valuable insights and actionable policy recommendations.

### III. The Challenge of Teacher Diversity in Virginia

#### *The Changing Face of Student Enrollment in Virginia*

Diversity among Virginia's student population continues to increase, non-white students made up 49 percent of Virginia's student population in 2016-17, up from 39 percent in the 2003-04 school year. Notably, Hispanic student enrollment as nearly doubled from 8 percent in 2006-07 to 15 percent for the 2016-17 school years.

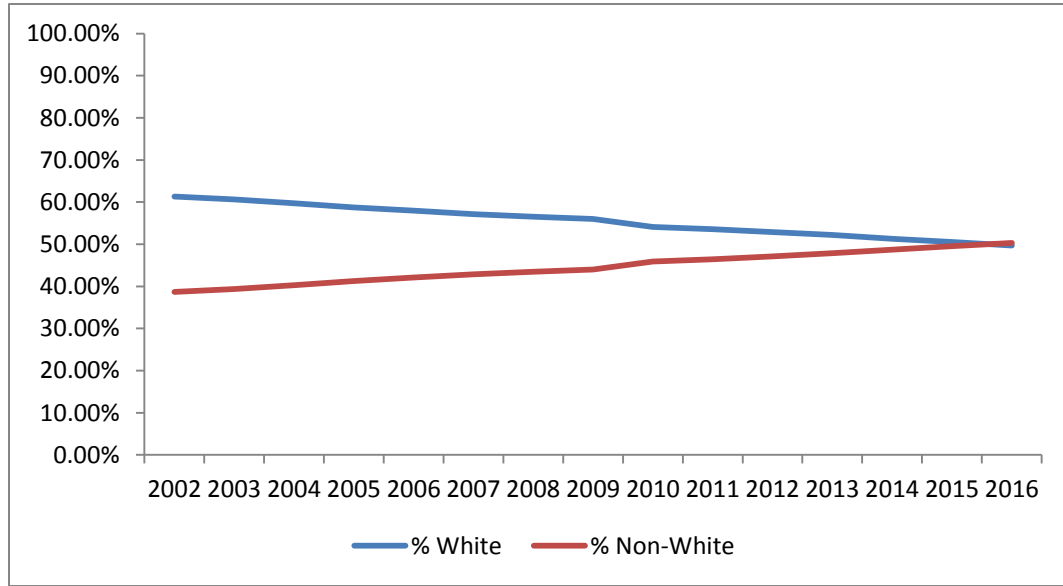


FIGURE 1: STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS IN VIRGINIA, 2002 - 2016

#### *The Benefits of a Diverse Teacher Workforce*

There is a robust body of research demonstrating the unique benefits students of color experience when they learn from a teacher of color. Multiple studies have produced evidence supporting significant academic achievement gains for students when they have same-race teachers and quality is held constant. In addition, those teachers serve as roles models and examples of success to students, particularly those in low-income communities who may not otherwise have such role models.

It is clear that as Virginia strives to eliminate the achievement gaps faced by students of color and students in poverty, strong and diverse teachers play a unique role in helping minority students succeed academically and strive for a positive and productive future.

Finally, it should be noted that the Taskforce also recognized the value of having all students learn from teachers with diverse backgrounds, in preparation for participation in careers and communities with increasingly diverse members.

## Current Status of Teacher Diversity in Virginia Classrooms

The lack of diversity among our current educator workforce is significant. Currently, non-white students make up 48.7 percent of Virginia's student population, but only 21.4 percent of the state's teachers are non-white. The Commonwealth's student body is becoming more diverse since each year, widening this disparity over time. Virginia's challenges with teacher diversity are reflective of broader national trends and are compounded by the disproportionate racial composition of our teacher pipeline.

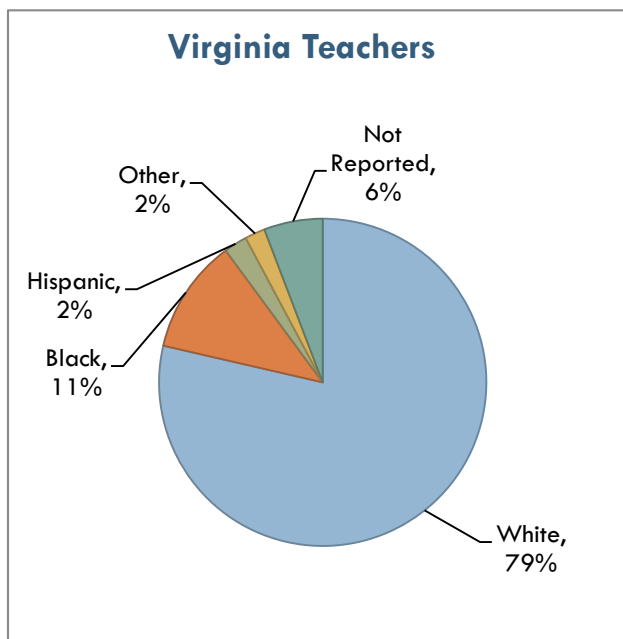


FIGURE 2: LICENSED INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL IN VIRGINIA BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2014-15

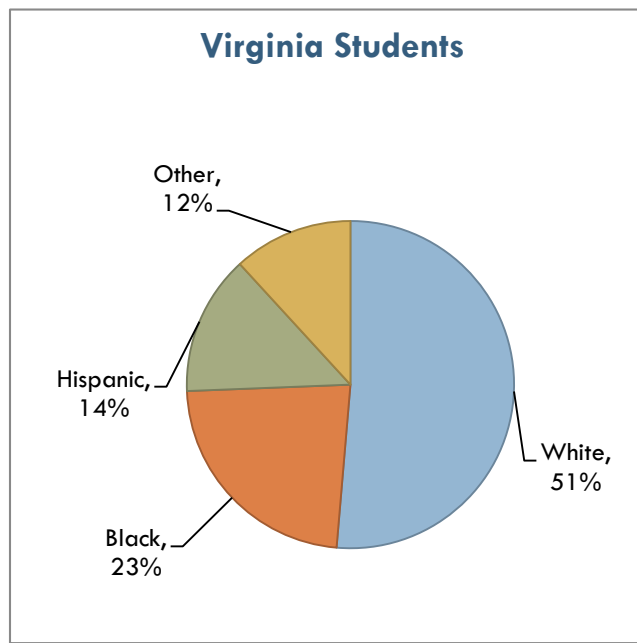


FIGURE 3: VIRGINIA ENROLLED STUDENTS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2014-15

According to the Teacher Diversity Index, Virginia has a greater disparity than its counterparts both nationally and regionally. The Teacher Diversity Index is a national tool that ranks states by demographic differences between teacher and student populations based on national data from 2011. The lower the number, the lower the percentage point difference between minority teachers and minority students. Virginia is ranked at 31, which equates to a 31 percentage point difference between minority teachers and minority students. To put this in a broader perspective, the national average is 30 and the average among other states in the south is 26.

Locale	Diversity Index
National	30
Southern United States	26
Virginia	31 <sup>1</sup>

FIGURE 4: TEACHER DIVERSITY INDEX, 2011

## Disproportionate Enrollment Decline in Teacher Preparation Programs

Virginia's teacher shortage is due in part to a shrinking pool of candidates entering the teacher preparation pipeline. Nationally, the number of individuals enrolling in teacher preparation programs has declined by 30 percent since 2008. According to the enrollment data from the State Council of Higher

<sup>1</sup> Source: Boser, U. (2014). Teacher diversity revisited: A new state-by-state analysis. Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/TeacherDiversity.pdf>

Education for Virginia (SCHEV), Virginia has seen a similar decline in teacher preparation program enrollment.

Nationally, only 25 percent of individuals enrolled in a traditional teacher preparation program based in an institution of higher education were individuals of color. According to data compiled by the Virginia Department of Education and SCHEV, minority enrollment in Virginia's teacher preparation programs has fallen from more than 50 percent in the 2010-2011 schoolyear to only 33 percent in 2016-2017. Though the diversity of the Commonwealth's teacher preparation pipeline exceeds the national average, significant action would be required to achieve demographic parity with our student population.

### *Teachers of Color Leaving the Profession*

Virginia, like the rest of the country, is struggling not only to recruit minority teachers but also to retain them. Nationally, teachers of color leave schools and the teaching profession at particularly high rates, with a turnover rate of 18.9 percent in 2012-13, compared to 15 percent for white teachers.

Additionally, teachers of color in Virginia with provisional licenses are less likely than their peers to complete full licensure and remain in the profession. As shown in Table 2 below, only 63 percent of minority teachers in Virginia with provisional licenses acquire their full time teaching license, a far lower percentage than any other racial category.

**FIGURE 5: DEMOGRAPHICS OF PROVISIONAL LICENSEES**

	Number Provisionally Licensed in 2012-13	Number Completing Licensure Requirements by 2015-16	Percent Completion within Racial/Ethnic Category
American Indian or Alaska Native	15	12	80.0%
Asian	89	78	87.6%
Black	597	377	63.1%
Hispanic	182	134	73.6%
White	3,073	2,383	77.5%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<	<	100.0%
Two or More Races	0	0	--
Race Not Reported	745	568	76.2%
State Totals:	4,702	3,553	75.6% <sup>[1]</sup>



## IV. Identified Barriers and Recommended Solutions

The two subcommittees of the Taskforce identified key barriers to progress and specific policy recommendations related to those barriers. At their final August 2017 meeting, the full Taskforce voted to endorse the following recommendations:

*Barrier 1: The length and cost of the traditional teacher preparation pathway is disproportionate to salary, which is particularly burdensome for first generation college students and low income students – who are often minorities.*

In Virginia, the traditional pathway into the teaching profession entails a 5 year program for students, as dictated by the Commonwealth's credentialing requirements. After completing their bachelor's degree and master's in education, the average Virginia teacher will have accrued \$50,879 in debt. When combined with low teacher pay, the high cost of training is a powerful deterrent for young people considering a future in the teaching profession.

### Proposed Solutions:

- 1a. The Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) should revise the Approved Program Regulations to allow education based majors in teaching/education through the development of a 4-year undergraduate major in teaching.
- 1b. Virginia should evaluate and leverage the Virginia Teacher Student Loan Program, to ensure that existing financial incentive programs offered in Virginia are designed and implemented to provide for strategic impact for minority teaching candidates.
- 1c. Virginia should offer a student teaching stipend for low income students.
- 1d. VDOE should provide technical assistance to help innovative districts provide compensation to student teachers during their student teaching experience, perhaps by hiring them as paraprofessionals or teachers' aides.
- 1e. The state should cover or subsidize the cost of Praxis tests, Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment, and test prep programs for minority and low-income students.

*Barrier 2: Students are not exposed to or made aware of pathways into the profession early enough, nor are non-teaching majors aware of potential pathways into the profession.*

Many potential educators are unaware of their eligibility and the training opportunities that are available. A greater effort should be made to recruit teachers throughout their educational experience.

### Proposed Solutions:

- 2a. Drawing on successful existing models, VDOE should develop a model "Grow your own program" for deployment to local school divisions. The state should also provide financial incentives and supports to divisions for the design and implementation of GYO programs. As part of this, dual enrollment offerings at the high school level should transfer seamlessly into degree pathways for students.

2b. VDOE should continue to convene annually the Teachers of Color Summit and Minority Teacher Recruitment Fair. This event emphasizes the state's commitment to facilitating a diverse teaching workforce for our students, helps non-teaching major students understand options for teaching out of college, and supports human resource departments from local school divisions in the recruitment of potential teachers.

2c. VDOE should consider facilitating the creation of a summer teaching fundamental program, in partnership with institutes of higher education, to help individuals with content expertise and transfer into the provisional licensure track.

2d. Virginia should utilize new financial resources available under the Virginia Community College Workforce Alliance to support minority utilization of the career switcher program.

*Barrier 3: The provisional licensing route is underutilized, and teachers of color who are provisionally licensed in Virginia obtain full licensure at lower rates than their peers.*

Provisional licensing has the potential to draw new and nontraditional teacher candidates into the teaching profession. Unfortunately, teachers of color are significantly less likely to obtain full licensure after a provisional period, contributing to the racial homogeneity of Virginia's teaching staff.

#### Proposed Solutions:

3a. VDOE should partner with institutions of higher education to support provisionally licensed candidates to obtaining full licensure, to include additional PRAXIS prep and discounted courses. These academic supports should include a focus on teachers in critical shortage areas, including minority recruitment.

3b. The state and its localities should provide model teacher induction and mentorship program, and support its implementation and training. Additionally, the state should provide funding to support mentors who are helping support provisionally licensed teachers.

3c. Virginia should create a statewide tracking system to help provisionally licensed teachers track progress to full licensure and connect with cohort of similarly positioned teachers.

3d. Virginia needs a consistent marketing strategy to promote alternative pathways into the profession; to include the development of tools to better communicate requirements for alternative pathways into the profession by VDOE.

*Barrier 4: Teaching suffers from declining respect and interest in the profession.*

Virginia needs to promote the teaching profession and appeal to young students of color. Teaching currently does not offer an attractive quality of life to younger teachers.

#### Proposed Solutions:

4a. Virginia should develop a public awareness campaign targeted towards minority students graduating in content areas and provide clear pathways for these students to transfer into provisional licensure, which includes needed supports to ensure attainment of a teaching license in Virginia.

- 4b. Teachers of color, and any teachers serving in critical shortage areas, including high poverty schools, need to be compensated for their work in demanding environments.

*Additional State Efforts to Address the Crisis: VDOE Partnership with CCSSO on Teacher Diversity*

To support the work of the Taskforce, the Virginia Department of Education joined with six other states on the Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) Diversifying the Teacher Pipeline State Action Group. This partnership was designed as collaboration among states to develop a statewide implementation plan to increase diversity in the teaching workforce. The primary objective of each states' plan was achieve parity in the demographic make-up of the teacher workforce with students in the state by 2040, starting with a plan for action in place by 2018 and evidence of progress by 2025. To this end, the Virginia Department of Education, in consultation with CCSSO has recommended the following statewide teacher diversity goal: *By 2040, Virginia will reduce the gap between percent of minority students and percent of minority teachers in Virginia by 15 percent approximately half of the current gap.* Achieving this goal will increase the percent of minority teachers in Virginia schools to 35 percent.

The following interim benchmarks were endorsed by the Taskforce as aspirational yet achievable goals for the Commonwealth to pursue.

Year	Percent Minority Teachers
2020	21%
2025	24%
2030	27%
2035	31%
<b>2040</b>	<b>35%</b>

**FIGURE 6: VIRGINIA MINORITY  
TEACHER GOALS**

## V. Conclusion

All students benefit from having teachers with diverse backgrounds, but research indicates teachers of color play a particular role in improving outcomes for students of color. By improving the Commonwealth's ability to recruit and retain minority educators, we are taking steps to reduce inequality in the teaching profession and among graduates.

Improving teacher diversity will take a concerted effort and sustained commitment by policymakers at the local, state, and federal level. Overcoming any one of the barriers identified will require considerable coordination among Virginia's Department of Education, higher education institutions, the Board of Education, and many other stakeholders. Progress in this area will be measured over years and generations, not days or months.

This report should not be considered a comprehensive list of all the challenges faced by current and prospective minority teachers, but as a jumping off point for future action. Racial inequality among educators is a pervasive national problem and warrants considerable additional research. Even still, the Taskforce's recommendations provide necessary structure for the Commonwealth's future conversations about teacher diversity.

## APPENDIX A:

### MEMBERS OF THE TASKFORCE ON DIVERSIFYING VIRGINIA'S EDUCATOR PIPELINE

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Benjamin Franklin Middle School

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