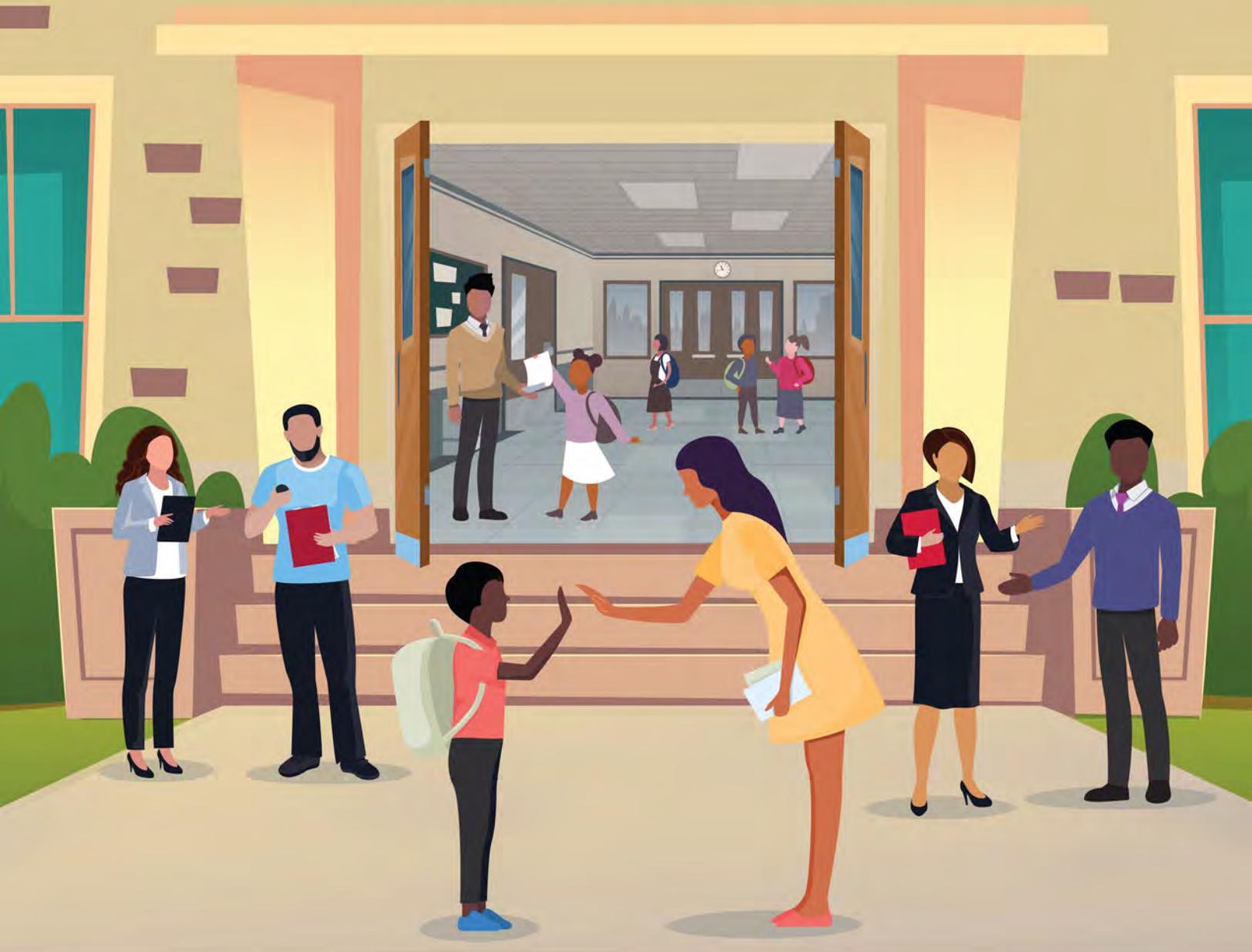




OPENING DOORS

*Strategies for advancing racial diversity
in Wisconsin's teacher workforce*



WISCONSIN
POLICY FORUM

ABOUT THE WISCONSIN POLICY FORUM

The Wisconsin Policy Forum was created on January 1, 2018, by the merger of the Milwaukee-based Public Policy Forum and the Madison-based Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance. Throughout their lengthy histories, both organizations engaged in nonpartisan, independent research and civic education on fiscal and policy issues affecting state and local governments and school districts in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Policy Forum is committed to those same activities and to that spirit of nonpartisanship.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was undertaken to provide policymakers, school and district leaders, teacher preparation program administrators, and the public with greater understanding about the challenges and barriers to enhancing the diversity of Wisconsin's teacher workforce as well as promising strategies and policy levers to overcome them.

The report author would like to thank those who provided their time and insights to make this research possible. Special thanks to Yaribel Rodriguez from City Forward Collective for her partnership in convening teacher focus groups. We are grateful to Sam Coleman from Shorewood School District, David DeGuire from Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Deirdre Hargrove-Krieghoff and her team from Madison Metropolitan School District, and Stephanie Maney and Yaribel Rodriguez from City Forward Collective for valuable input on early drafts of this report. Most importantly, thank you to all of the teachers, school administrators, teacher preparation program leaders and faculty, state education leaders, and others who trusted us with their stories, insights, and perspectives.

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“I long, as does every human being, to be at home wherever I find myself.” – Maya Angelou¹

INTRODUCTION

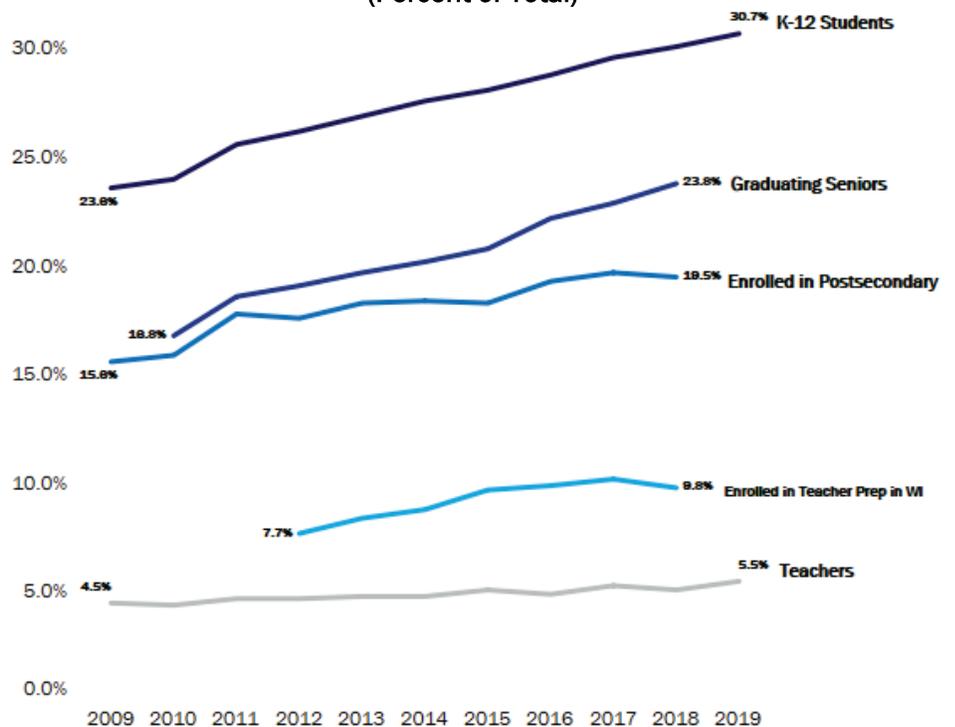
In June 2020, the Wisconsin Policy Forum published *A Teacher Who Looks Like Me: Examining racial diversity in Wisconsin’s teacher workforce and the student-to-teacher pipeline*.² The impetus for that research was both the long-standing racial disparities in educational outcomes that have persisted in Wisconsin for decades and a growing body of research pointing to the benefits that a racially diverse and representative teacher workforce can bring to mitigate those disparities. Studies have linked students’ access to teachers from their own race and ethnic background with a variety of beneficial outcomes – from higher rates of academic achievement, attendance, high school graduation, and college enrollment, to lower rates of suspension, dropout, and discipline referrals.³

A Teacher Who Looks Like Me showed that while students of color have been rising as a share of Wisconsin’s public K-12 student population, its teacher workforce has remained overwhelmingly white. We found similar gaps in representation for individual race and ethnic groups and throughout the state in rural, suburban, and urban communities.

Moreover, we found those gaps to be fueled by race-based disparities at key educational milestones required to pursue a teaching career. The consequence has been a narrowing stream of people of color throughout the student-to-teacher pipeline. Specifically, as shown in **Figure 1**, while students of color made up 31% of K-12 students statewide in 2018, that share dropped to 24% for graduating seniors, 20% for those enrolled in college, 10% for teacher preparation program enrollees, and 6% for teachers statewide.

This report follows up on our data findings by examining the drivers of these trends and the range of potential local strategies and state policy options to improve the diversity of Wisconsin’s teacher workforce. While this is a challenge with which education leaders and policymakers are grappling throughout the country, our focus is on the policy proposals that are tailored to Wisconsin’s particular challenges and that ideally would complement, coordinate, and capitalize on the assets and resources already being deployed.

Figure 1: People of Color in Wisconsin by Education Milestone over Time (Percent of Total)



Sources: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction; National Student Clearinghouse as reported by DPI; National Teacher Preparation Data, Higher Education Act Title II Reports, U.S. Department of Education



We begin with a discussion of the barriers and challenges that impede progress toward greater teacher diversity in Wisconsin at both the individual and institutional level. Then, we explore key local strategies that schools, districts, universities, and community-based organizations are undertaking to attract, support, and retain teachers of color throughout the state. The discussion spotlights some specific local initiatives to illustrate how such efforts can take shape on the ground. Where possible, it also considers how well those efforts are working and what more may need to be done at the state or local level.

Building on our understanding of Wisconsin's particular teacher diversity challenges and some of the assets local institutions are leveraging to address them, the final section addresses how state-level leadership and policy levers could complement and supplement local efforts. It explores five key policy priorities where we recommend state-level leaders and policymakers focus resources and action.

Methodology

We acknowledge the meaning of teacher diversity and teacher-student representation can and should include many dimensions of diversity including not only race and ethnicity, but also age, income, experience, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, and other backgrounds. Although we believe there is value in research focused on any of these dimensions, the scope of this report limits the focus and meaning of “diversity” to that related to race and ethnicity.

Our analysis of public data for *A Teacher Who Looks Like Me* illustrated various factors contributing to the magnitude of Wisconsin's teacher diversity problem. In seeking to identify potential solutions, we employed a variety of qualitative methods to uncover perspectives and insights on the barriers and strategies related to efforts to promote greater teacher diversity for both institutions (e.g., schools, districts, and higher education institutions) and individuals (e.g., college students, teacher candidates, and teachers).

In a series of **focus groups** with teachers of color from district, charter, and private schools (primarily in Milwaukee, where the population of teachers of color is considerably larger than anywhere else in the state), we gained valuable perspective on why teachers enter the profession, why they stay, why they consider leaving, and what they think schools, districts, and state leaders could do to support the success and retention of teachers of color long-term.

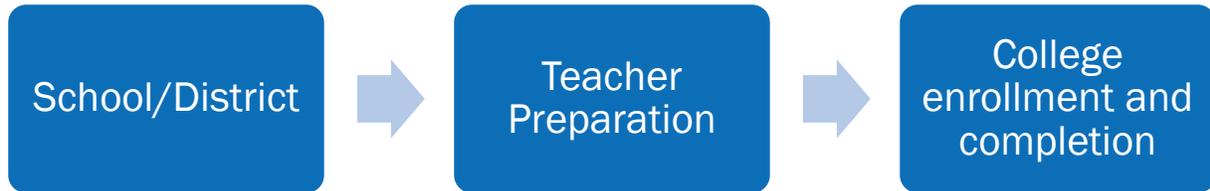
Through **in-depth interviews** with subject matter experts, practitioners, and administrators representing a range of educational institutions across the state, we gained perspective on systemic and institutional barriers to teacher diversity in Wisconsin as well as promising models aimed at improving it. Examples of those who participated in interviews include school district administrators; teacher preparation program administrators and instructors; teacher candidates; higher education institution leaders; leaders of state-level education associations; Wisconsin Department of Public (DPI) Instruction officials; leaders of community organizations and foundations; and others.

Throughout the report, we highlight a selection of quotes by research participants that capture themes that emerged from our research particularly well. The perspectives we gathered from focus groups and interviews, coupled with a **national scan of policy research and policy initiatives in other states** that hold promise as potential instruments of change in the Wisconsin context, informed the policy options we offer for consideration at the end of the report.



BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

In this section, we distill the perspectives we gathered from education and policy leaders to describe the individual and institutional barriers to teacher diversity in Wisconsin along three of the principal stages of the teacher career continuum.



We start with the challenges that characterize the end goal – recruitment and retention of classroom teachers of color in schools and districts. We then work our way upstream in the teacher pipeline to examine what fuels the challenges surrounding teacher preparation. Last, we look at some selected challenges and barriers to students of color in their pursuit of college enrollment and completion.

Underlying perceived challenge: Racism and racial bias embedded in education system

Before we discuss these pipeline-specific challenges, it is important to acknowledge that many of the teachers, educators, and administrators we interviewed pointed to racial bias and racism as pervasive factors that undermine individual and institutional efforts to promote equity across Wisconsin’s educational continuum. A prevailing perspective was that despite intentions and efforts to the contrary, K-12 and higher education systems often favor white students, staff, and their interests in matters such as decision-making, resource allocation, and policy adoption.

Several of our interviewees also expressed a sense that the experience, culture, and perspectives of people of color is being marginalized and that such marginalization shows up in everyday interpersonal interactions in work or learning settings. It contributes to a sense of isolation and feelings of not being valued, welcome, supported, or heard. This constitutes an extra burden that our interviewees observed people of color carry throughout their teaching career, creating what former U.S. education secretary John King has termed “an invisible tax on people of color.”⁴ As a result, they may encounter roadblocks that bar their progress toward becoming a teacher, decide not to pursue a teaching career, or experience a sense of burnout and leave the profession.

“I feel like when you’re black and socially conscious you’re just going to be in a constant state of anxiety and frustration...Advocating for kids, especially students of color and trying to break down systems, that’s just so mentally and emotionally, physically exhausting. You reach points where you have nothing left to give.”

Teacher



The following discussion explores some of the key challenges to teacher diversity in Wisconsin and demonstrates the role institutional racism can play in shaping the systems, structures, and cultures of the organizations (and the individuals that operate within them) that are tasked with building the teacher career continuum.

Barriers at the school or district level

Although high levels of teacher turnover in Wisconsin generally have been well-documented by the Forum⁵ and others, research has shown teachers of color confront a different set of barriers and challenges than their white colleagues.⁶ The following are principal factors that our qualitative research with Wisconsin educators uncovered that appear to contribute to challenges schools and districts encounter in recruiting and retaining teachers of color.

Compensation and negative experiences in K-12 years deter entering teaching career

One resounding theme to emerge around barriers to teacher diversity is the notion that students of color do not see teaching as a desirable profession. Many of our respondents cite a lack of same-race teacher role models and unfavorable experiences in their K-12 years, during which they might have felt they were treated unfairly by their teachers, who were more than likely white throughout their entire schooling.

“I think a lot of times about how we internalize oppression...There were just things that I felt like were wrong with me because of my educational experience.”
Teacher

Teacher compensation was cited as another key deterrent to both attraction and retention of teachers of color. An Economic Policy Institute analysis estimated that teachers in Wisconsin earned almost 18% less in weekly wages than other professions requiring an undergraduate degree (using pooled data between 2014 and 2018).⁷ Unless students successfully obtain financial aid, scholarships, or loan forgiveness for undergraduate degrees and/or teacher preparation programs, they can incur considerable debt, making the relatively low salaries offered by many teaching positions unattractive.

This, in part, helps explain a sentiment we heard that the teaching profession suffers from competition from other career fields that offer more financial security. For many students of color in Wisconsin who often grew up in low-income households, this may be a compelling reason not to pursue a teaching career.

“I’ve had the thought, something else could be easier and pay me equally as much, and I can still get benefit. But when it comes down to the reason why you’re there and your purpose and the need that you’re fulfilling, then I’m definitely [staying]. But the thought [of leaving the profession] has crossed my mind at those moments of just feeling overwhelmed, overworked, and under-supported.” Teacher



Racial bias in hiring and promotion process

A structural obstacle to teacher diversity cited by our respondents and corroborated in accounts in other states⁸ is implicit racial bias in school hiring and promotion. In the absence of a consistent process for selecting applicants and promotions based on objective criteria, these decisions can disadvantage candidates of color. To illustrate, one school district administrator of color with whom we spoke described sitting on a hiring committee and noticing Black candidates with the most experience receiving the lowest rankings from other white committee members. When questioned about this observation, committee members explained it with comments such as, “the person would not be a good fit here” or “I’m afraid they won’t stay here.” If candidates perceive that they are not judged to be as qualified as white peers, that might also lower their performance in interviews or discourage them from seeking jobs or promotions.

“We know when people doubt our abilities because of our race. Just feeling that does not foster a sense of belonging – it makes me want to go elsewhere. I’m not feeling like I’m treated like I belong here.” School district administrator

Workplace does not foster a sense of belonging

Teachers of color comprise a relatively small share of teachers in any given school in Wisconsin. Consequently, many teachers of color are the only if not one of a very few teachers of color in their school or district. In addition, many districts, like the wider communities in which they are situated, are extremely segregated. These forces can contribute to a sense of distress and isolation, of not belonging, and in some cases, of not being welcome. There are a number of ways these experiences can cause teachers of color to question whether to stay in their position.

First, according to teachers who participated in this research, teachers of color can find their predominantly white colleagues looking to them to speak for or represent their entire race or ethnicity, rather than be seen as an individual. Similarly, in schools where the teaching staff is predominantly white but the student population is more racially diverse (which is the case in many school districts), teachers of color often feel they are called upon to support, represent, and advocate for the majority of students of color and their families. Sometimes that means they feel the need to call out racism in the way white colleagues treat, talk to, or talk about students of color.

Second, racially isolated teachers of color tend to stay in a state of alert to be ready to “code switch” – that is, to adjust their behavior to ensure they are not misunderstood or inadvertently making white colleagues uncomfortable. Third, a teacher can feel extra pressure to prove themselves, to be impeccable, or risk reinforcing negative stereotypes about their race. As one participant put it, teachers of color often feel “conditioned to work twice as hard just to be treated the same.”

These instances all contribute to the earlier referenced “invisible tax” teachers of color pay to teach in a predominantly white school or community. Without a mentor or colleagues with whom to connect and navigate both the technical and cultural difficulties of being an early-career teacher of color, many teachers of color succumb to a sense of burnout and decide to leave their positions in search of a school community with more racial and ethnic diversity.⁹



“For people of color, particularly those who have navigated predominantly white spaces the majority of our lives, we know when we’re walking into a room or having a conversation with somebody, and the people in the room don’t believe that we have the competence or the qualifications to be there. And that alone is enough to say, ‘I could really go somewhere else and be treated as a professional and an expert and not have to defend why I belong here in this space.’” School district administrator

Lack of mentor, principal, and other support especially early in career

Research by the Forum and others has shown that a substantial share of teacher attrition across all races occurs in the first three to five years.¹⁰ But this is especially true for teachers of color. A 2019 University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) study of public school teachers in Wisconsin found that 42% of Black teachers and 31% of Hispanic/Latinx teachers had left their teaching position within two years, compared to 23% of white teachers.¹¹ The study also found that teacher retention was related, in part, to the extent to which teachers trusted other teachers and their principals.

“I don’t see myself staying in education past the next few years. A big part of it is just how mentally taxing this first year was on me, and I think how drained I felt after this first year...it isn’t something that I can foresee myself in.” - Teacher

This may provide context for the perspective we gathered that turnover among teachers of color, especially beginning teachers, largely stems from inadequate supports during the transition and early years of teaching. Based on our interviews, principals and other school leaders have a large role to play in whether a teacher feels supported. For teachers of color, this may be especially true because efforts to address racial disparities affecting both staff and students in a given school start with the principal; Also, teachers in the UWM study reported more trust and confidence in principal feedback when the principal shares the teacher’s own race or ethnic background.

Unfortunately, those who spoke with us perceived principal turnover as a problem as well, especially in some of the lowest-performing schools where the need for trusting, supportive teacher-principal relationships is all the more crucial. Research corroborates this perception, showing that the disruption accompanying principal turnover contributes to teacher turnover (which in turn is linked with lower student achievement).¹²

Another common experience reported by participants is that early-career teachers, especially teachers of color, often are required to handle, largely on their own, the most difficult and challenging classroom placements and are assigned relatively larger caseloads of students with challenging academic and behavioral needs. Although being paired with a veteran mentor teacher is widely recognized as a key factor of success for beginning teachers (and is technically a DPI requirement for all teachers in their first three years),¹³ scarce school and district resources often means access to a meaningful mentor relationship is limited.

“I always felt teachers of color got the largest classes, the classes with discipline problems, remedial learning needs, or attendance problems. I would think, ‘Why aren’t these kids being distributed throughout other teachers? Why do I have all the difficult students?’” Teacher

Limited autonomy and career advancement opportunities

Many teachers of color report a primary motivation for entering the profession is a desire to establish relationships with and support students of color, in particular. Alongside the crucial support provided by mentors and principals, teachers with whom we spoke also expressed the need for autonomy and trust in their professional judgment. In fact, research has linked teacher autonomy in the classroom and the ability to participate in organizational decision-making with lower teacher turnover, especially among teachers of color. These factors even outranked salary, professional development, and classroom resources as factors affecting turnover among teachers of color.¹⁴ However, teachers of color were found to be less likely to work in schools where this kind of autonomy is the norm, a finding that aligns with what we heard from our research participants as well.¹⁵

On a related note, teachers of color in our study, especially black male teachers, often feel they are pigeonholed into positions where they are called in to act as the “enforcer” or disciplinarian for students who frequently get in trouble or who have behavioral challenges. Some teachers report being steered to help with student behavior issues even when they are not the teacher assigned to that student. Moreover, they perceive school leaders as reluctant to reassign them because of the risk of losing someone who can connect with students. They feel that these dynamics limit the breadth of experience to which teachers of color might be exposed to build on other talents or expand their skills, capacities, and career opportunities. This helps illustrate a common reason why teachers of color told us they would consider leaving their position or the profession altogether.

“I feel like I’m not going to move out of this [enforcer/disciplinarian] role, although I want to go on and do administration. It’s frustrating because you would think if I could do so well consistently, you would want me to more greatly impact, benefit more kids. But instead it’s the same push every year.” Teacher

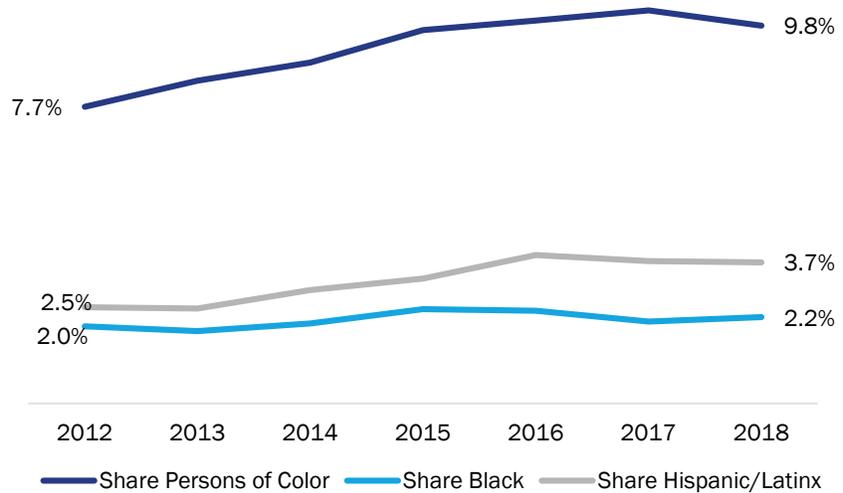
Barriers at the teacher preparation level

Teacher preparation programs are the bridge between college completion and placement as a licensed classroom teacher. Given the reality that a teacher preparation experience most commonly takes place on both a college campus (for coursework) and schools (pre-service practicum placements in classrooms), many of the obstacles discussed in those sections apply here as well.



Notably, overall enrollment in schools of education in Wisconsin declined by 33.4%¹⁶ between 2012 and 2018. Students of color could represent an opportunity, however, to reverse that trend. Although they represent less than 10% of those enrolled in teacher preparation programs now, their ranks are falling at a less dramatic rate than white students such that their share of all students has risen over time, as shown in **Figure 2**. With the right support, students of color could help boost enrollment in teacher preparation programs.

Figure 2: Percent Enrollment in Wisconsin Educator Preparation Programs
By race/ethnicity, 2012 to 2018



Source: National Teacher Preparation Data, Higher Education Act Title II Reports, U.S. Department of Education

“Teacher preparation departments need to be rooted in theories of anti-racism, for the sake of teachers and their students.” Teacher preparation program administrator

High cost of teacher education and lack of sufficient financial assistance

As previously noted, financial barriers are among the largest challenges for people of color entering the teacher workforce. Research suggests students of color are more likely to consider student debt as a criterion for selecting a career path.¹⁷ Given the relatively low compensation promised by a teaching career, many would-be teachers of color may be unwilling to incur the debt needed to complete a teacher preparation program.

Adding to the barriers related to the cost of teacher education is “red tape” and poor outreach and communication about existing financial assistance programs that limit awareness of and access to these resources. In addition to tuition, students pursuing teacher education programs have to pay for any licensure tests that the state or their program requires. Moreover, as will be discussed, teachers of color fail these tests at a higher rate than white students, and therefore incur even more cost for retaking them.

A related financial barrier that appears to be especially influential for potential teachers of color is the lack of flexibility in teacher preparation programs to allow them to work and pursue their training at the same time. Many preparation programs are designed to be full-time during the coursework phase, the clinical student-teaching phase, or both. This makes it difficult for students, many of whom are undergraduate students of color and career changers and do not have the means to



forsake compensated employment during that time. Many borrow but end up having to drop out for financial reasons before completing the degree, leaving them worse off than before.

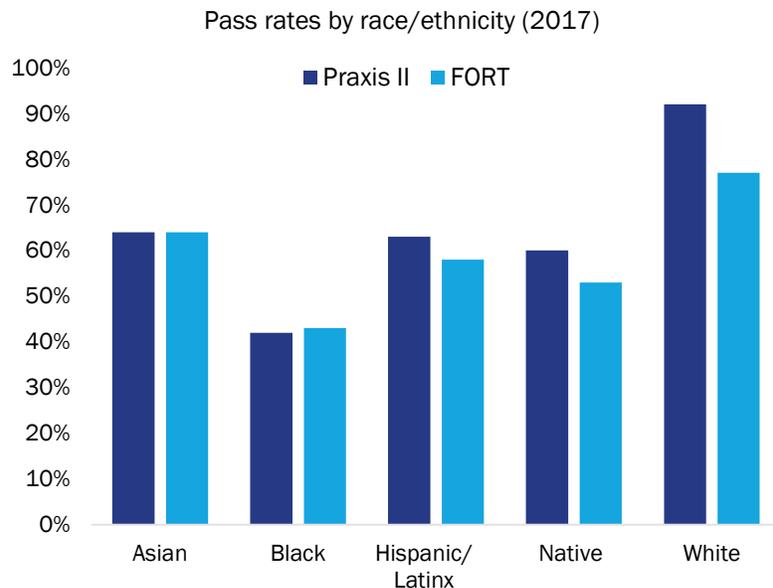
Students may be eligible for financial assistance from a variety of sources from their institution or from state and federal grants, loans, or scholarships. But despite the variety of financial aid options, in many cases, such assistance falls far short of the full cost of tuition, housing, books, living expenses, and other costs of enrollment in a teacher preparation program.

“Pay is not enough. When you see other professions make twice what you’re getting, you’re going to think twice. A lot of people that would have been good teachers [start our program], but they leave because they can’t afford school loans.” Teacher preparation program administrator

Teacher licensure testing requirements

According to our conversations with teachers and education administrators, assessments used to grant teaching licenses present another systematic barrier to teachers of color preparing to enter the teaching workforce. This underscores a finding in *A Teacher Who Looks Like Me* that showed how pass rates by teachers of color on two assessments used in Wisconsin’s teacher licensure programs – the Praxis II content knowledge test and the Foundations of Reading Test (FORT) – lag significantly behind those of white teacher candidates (**Figure 3**). This pattern of lower pass rates for teachers of color on standardized teacher licensure exams is not unique to Wisconsin.¹⁸

Figure 3: Wisconsin Educator Preparation Program Assessments



Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2018 Annual Report on Educator Preparation Programs

Moreover, there is research to suggest these tests are poor predictors of teacher effectiveness and performance in the classroom.^{19 20}

“I’ve seen some of the best educators not be able to pass [the FORT].” Teacher preparation program administrator



In recent years, DPI and state policymakers have responded to this issue. Current state requirements allow for more flexibility than in the past on how teacher preparation programs are authorized to assess their candidates for licensure eligibility. For example, rather than prescribe a set of assessments and passing scores that must be used, educator preparation programs can choose between three methods to verify a candidate's subject area competency – a passing score on the Praxis II test, a GPA of 3.0, or a content portfolio defined by the program itself (not DPI). In addition, special education teacher candidates have the option to waive the FORT and use an alternative method for demonstrating knowledge and skill as a reading teacher.

However, testing and teacher preparation barriers remain. At present, all other candidates (besides those going into special education) for elementary teacher licensure must pass the FORT.²¹ Altering that would require a change in statute.

Curriculum does not adequately prepare candidates for classroom realities

Finally, several interviewees noted that even when teachers do pass assessments and obtain their license, often they **are not fully prepared for the realities and demands of teaching**, especially in urban settings and with high-needs students and students from many cultural backgrounds. Reasons for this vary. Many teacher preparation program instructors have never taught in urban contexts where students of color and low-income students make up sizeable shares of classrooms. In some programs, teacher candidates are assigned official teaching duties during their teacher preparation coursework, which can provide valuable on-the-job experience but can also present challenges for which teachers may not be prepared. Moreover, given Wisconsin's multicultural classrooms, teachers and teacher preparation leaders with whom we spoke pointed to a need for teacher preparation curricula to include a much more robust emphasis on culturally and linguistically responsive practices and pedagogy.

“Working in economically divested communities with students who have trauma and high needs, teacher preparation programs are not doing a good job of preparing teachers for that. Even what it means to work in schools with black and brown children, at all.” Teacher

Barriers to college enrollment and completion

Barriers to success for students of color in postsecondary education is a multifaceted issue that deserves in-depth analysis that is outside the scope of this report. Although college completion and enrollment do not pose a barrier to students of color pursuing the teaching profession specifically, they deserve mention in this discussion. If students of color cannot start or finish college, then they cannot consider becoming a teacher. Because most teacher preparation programs confer a bachelor's degree, many of the barriers (such as high cost) to teacher preparation discussed above apply here.

However, a common perception we heard from both teachers and higher education administrators that applies generally to undergraduate programs and to teacher preparation programs in particular was that the **culture of higher education systems, and especially four-year campuses, generally do not understand or adequately take into account the needs of students of color**, multilingual



students, first generation college students, and those from low-income families. In many cases, these students are left to “sink or swim”, as one participant put it, and given little help in navigating the culture and complexities of enrolling in college and meeting its expectations, costs, and requirements.

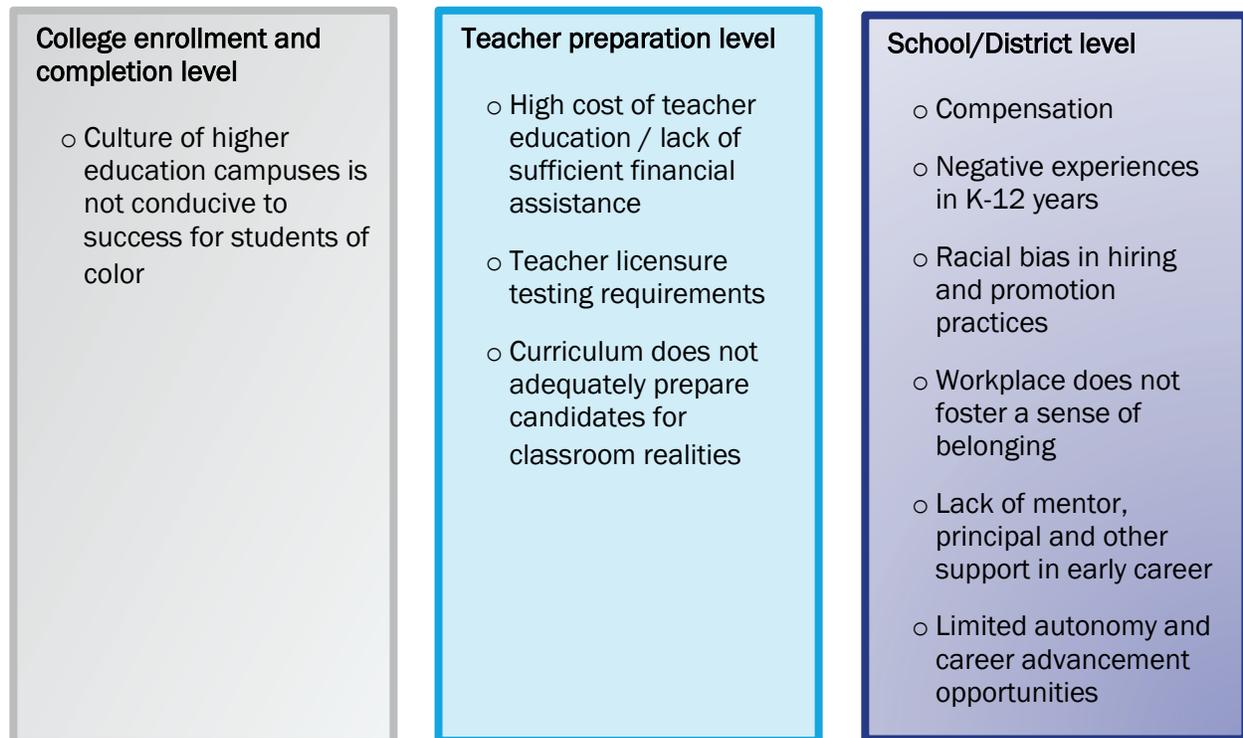
In addition, students of color generally represent a small minority on college campuses and often suffer feelings of isolation, the burden of being asked to speak for their entire race, and unconscious racism from peers and instructors – analogous to similar experiences discussed above for teachers of color in many school districts. We also heard that these challenges are especially salient for Native American students who, in leaving home to attend college, are severed from a particularly crucial connection to their identity as part of their home community.

“There’s such a tight knit [Native American] community here that it’s really hard for kids to leave. They want to but it’s really hard because they’ve lost their support system.” Teacher

Summary of barriers and challenges

This discussion lays the groundwork for identifying policy solutions aimed at enhancing teacher diversity in Wisconsin. **Figure 4** summarizes the key barriers that appear to limit the number of people of color entering and remaining in the teacher pipeline.

Figure 4: Barriers and challenges to teacher diversity in Wisconsin



**Underlying perceived challenge:
Racism and racial bias embedded in education system**



Racial disparities in college enrollment and completion, the first key prerequisites to becoming a teacher, stem in part, from campus cultures that do not address the specific financial, academic, and social-emotional needs of students of color. These students also encounter barriers to success in teacher preparation programs that range from high cost and lack of financial assistance, to licensure tests that disadvantage students of color, to insufficient preparation for the realities of teaching in a multicultural classroom. Finally, teachers of color experience a range of barriers and challenges that discourage them from pursuing a teaching career or contribute to disproportionately high attrition from teaching positions in schools. We found these challenges to include negative experiences with teachers during the K-12 years, relatively low compensation, implicit racial bias in school hiring processes, experiences of isolation and interpersonal racism in their school or community, lack of support from mentors and principals, and limited autonomy and opportunity to advance professionally.

Despite individual and institutional efforts to mitigate the impact of these challenges on communities of color, they appear to be perpetuated by what many perceive as an undercurrent of institutional racism throughout the teacher pipeline. The overarching impact of all of these barriers is to hold in place systems and institutional cultures that do not welcome people of color and, in many cases, convey a message that they do not belong. The next section explores some of the promising ways local institutions are working to address these challenges.



LOCAL STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS

The following discussion highlights strategies and solutions that our qualitative research suggests hold promise to improve teacher diversity in Wisconsin at the local level.

While this is not a comprehensive list, it captures many of the most common and effective ways schools and districts, colleges and universities, teacher education programs, and community partners are working to improve teacher workforce diversity in Wisconsin. In some cases, we spotlight initiatives in particular communities.

The overarching thread that ties these disparate efforts together is support – financial, professional, and cultural – to help current and potential teachers overcome the barriers previously discussed. This support starts with assistance with teacher preparation programs and extends to support for teachers in the critical first five years of their career.

“Diversifying the teacher pipeline, while not a silver bullet, is a huge part of the answer to advancing educational equity in Wisconsin.” DPI administrator

Target funding and financial assistance for teachers and teacher candidates

Targeted financial incentives and assistance for teachers and teacher candidates of color could open the door to many students of color who might not otherwise have the means to pursue teaching as a long-term career. Financial support for teacher preparation in particular can take many forms. Traditional scholarships, need-based aid, loan forgiveness programs, and service scholarships can help cover the bulk of tuition and other costs associated with participation in teacher preparation programs. In addition, paid stipends for student-teaching and other clinical or practicum classroom experiences can replace the need for students to work to earn an income separately, providing them with financial flexibility to devote their time to short-term summer and student-teacher placements or longer-term placements such as teacher residencies (discussed in more detail below). In this section, we discuss some selected approaches to financial support for teachers and teacher candidates in Wisconsin.

Districts could consider offering **salary premiums** to teachers who agree to teach in high-poverty and hard-to-staff schools, classrooms, or subjects. Because teachers of color tend to be more concentrated in high-poverty districts and/or carry relatively high student debt, such policies have the potential to benefit, attract, and retain more teachers of color than might otherwise be the case.

Districts also could **review the demographic patterns in their salary policies and compensation plans** to determine whether teachers of color are compensated at systematically lower rates than white teachers and take steps to mitigate such disparities through compensation and budget policy.



Loan forgiveness programs and service scholarships generally are set up to cover the cost of teacher training in exchange for a commitment to teach in high-need subjects or high-poverty schools. These approaches have been particularly helpful in boosting recruitment of teachers of color by addressing student debt.²²

Loan forgiveness and service scholarships have been particularly helpful in boosting recruitment of teachers of color by addressing student debt.

The Wisconsin Minority Teacher Loan Program aims explicitly to expand the number of teachers of color by extending loan forgiveness to students of color pursuing a teaching license in a shortage area (such as bilingual or special education) at a Wisconsin higher education institution and who agree to teach for four years in a school with at least 40% students of color. However, presumably due to tighter eligibility rules in the 2015-17 state budget, the number of awards under this program declined from 68 in 2014-15 to a single loan in 2017-18.²³ We discuss this program in further detail in the next section on policy options.

We found many of the most promising support programs involved a **multi-level partnership with some combination of public and private dollars** and collaboration between school districts, higher education institutions, and community organizations. One example of this is UW-Madison's recently launched Teacher Pledge Program, a loan forgiveness program that aims to "attract and retain diverse cohorts of students who are dedicated to becoming future educators across Wisconsin."²⁴ Exclusively funded through private alumni support, the program pays for all in-state tuition, fees, testing, and licensing costs for any student who pledges to teach in a Wisconsin school for three or four years after graduation. Their loan can be forgiven in three years if they pledge to teach in high-need subjects or geographic areas (which include both urban and rural areas).

A similar privately-funded model, the Janesville Multicultural Teacher Scholarship, offers scholarships of \$25,000 to Janesville residents or high school graduates who pursue a teaching degree at any institution and who pledge to teach for at least three years in the Janesville School District. The program sparked the creation of a similar program in Beloit.

It should be noted that a number of education leaders who spoke with us for this research were not even aware these programs existed, a reality that should inform policy interventions to improve outreach efforts and streamline application processes at both the local and state levels.

Partnerships between school districts and universities have been used to leverage state dollars to provide financial and academic support to local teacher candidates during their training. For example, the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) awards grants to community nonprofits that partner with school districts and teacher preparation programs to expand teacher training and recruitment for low-income urban schools.²⁵

A recent grant was awarded to City Forward Collective (CFC), a nonprofit that promotes educational equity in Milwaukee, to partner with Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) on scaling up an Emerging Educators Program. The program helps current MPS paraprofessionals/educational assistants (and other staff) who hold an associate's degree to continue to work in their current



position while, at the same time, pursuing a teaching license through a partnering institution in special or bilingual education.

The program was piloted in 2019 with 40 MPS staff members who will be able to complete their teaching degrees debt-free through a combination of university tuition reduction and tuition reimbursement from MPS.²⁶ The DWD grant allows for an expansion to serve 140 new educators and includes further supports from CFC such as mentoring and a soon-to-be launched employee resource/affinity group for teachers of color to connect and provide mutual support. Educational assistants comprise a more racially diverse pool of educators than fully licensed teachers.²⁷ The program's emphasis on this particular group appears promising given that this is a group of educators that is already invested in the education of Milwaukee's students.

Expand pathways to teaching through school district-higher education partnerships

Currently, those considering a teaching career in Wisconsin can take a traditional or non-traditional (alternative) route, as defined by the state. In Wisconsin and nationwide, the vast majority of future teachers take the traditional route to teacher preparation, essentially by obtaining a first-time bachelor's degree from a school of education at a college or university. Only after graduating with their degree and completing their teacher preparation requirements do they seek employment as a classroom teacher.

For reasons laid out in the previous discussion on barriers and challenges, many teachers of color are not able to gain access to the traditional route to teaching and opt instead for alternative routes. Those routes may or may not be tied to higher education institutions but tend to offer more flexibility, carry less cost, and require less time to complete.²⁸ Many such programs allow teacher candidates to teach in their own classrooms while they complete their teacher preparation program.²⁹ While this affords them practical experience, an alternative-route teacher candidate can sometimes begin their teaching career without having received comprehensive preparation or support, a factor that research has shown is correlated with lower teacher retention.³⁰

Several initiatives in both Wisconsin and nationwide have sought to address this challenge through partnerships between school districts, higher education, and community organizations working together. These partnerships train teachers through flexible, alternative pathways that not only remove financial barriers and provide a variety of supports along the way, but are linked tightly to solid classroom experience and specific school and district needs.

In many cases, these are teacher workforce development approaches that work well in both urban and rural settings in that they seek long-term retention by investing from within – drawing from the school community itself by cultivating interest and expertise in teaching from a school community's high school students, paraprofessionals, and other school staff.

Research and experience has shown these alternative, partnership-oriented approaches to be more effective than the traditional model to attract, prepare, place, and retain teachers of color throughout their career. Without sacrificing the rigor needed to prepare teacher candidates for long-term success in multicultural classrooms, these programs tend to be defined by 1) a **flexible structure** that caters to the scheduling and financial needs of current school staff, career changers, high school students, and community college students; and 2) **strategic clinical placement and ongoing**



mentoring, whereby pre-service teachers are paired with high-performing experienced teachers and receive ongoing career mentoring, coaching on skill development, and feedback (ideally from mentors who share the same racial or ethnic background) during the training period and throughout the first one to three years. The mentoring component, alone, has been closely linked by research to teacher retention and is discussed further below.³¹

Alternative, partnership-oriented approaches have been found to be more effective than the traditional model to attract, prepare, place, and retain teachers of color throughout their career.

Although alternative pathways to teaching that integrate partnerships with schools to expand teacher diversity can take many forms, two frameworks hold particular promise.

- **Teacher residencies** are a relatively new but promising form of teacher preparation that feature partnerships between school districts and higher education and are designed around the school district's specific hiring needs. By one national estimate, about half of the participants in teacher residency programs are people of color, which aligns closely with the share of students of color nationwide, while teachers of color comprise only about 20% of all teachers.³²

Analogous to medical residencies used to train physicians, the foundation of a teacher residency is a lengthy assignment to a classroom (often a full academic year) that involves intensive supervision and feedback from veteran teachers. This apprenticeship experience is integrated with carefully aligned coursework at a partnering university resulting in a teaching license and bachelor's or master's degree. Residents often receive both living stipends and tuition relief in exchange for a promise to teach in the district for up to three or four years, during which time they continue to receive mentoring, coaching, or other supports.³³ This type of arrangement strengthens the resident's preparation, allows them to cultivate meaningful relationships with the school community, ensures ongoing support, and has been shown to improve the teacher candidate's students' performance on standardized tests, making it an extremely promising model for long-term retention of well-prepared teachers of color.³⁴

Although not directed exclusively to teacher candidates of color, the Wisconsin Improvement Program (WIP) and the UW-System's Institute for Urban Education (IUE) internship program are among a number of models in Wisconsin that exemplify many of the features of an effective residency program. Under WIP, DPI, teacher preparation programs, and school districts partner to provide promising pre-service teachers with a special teaching license that enables them to complete paid, full-time, semester-long teaching experiences in lieu of a student-teacher placement (school districts pay interns at least \$4,500 per semester). During their internship, teacher candidates are paired with experienced classroom teachers who serve as on-the-job mentors.³⁵ The IUE offers paid internships to education majors from any UW System campus to teach in participating districts to fulfill their student teaching requirements. Intern cohorts also receive mentoring, participate in professional development in culturally relevant pedagogy, and receive consideration for a full-time position after graduation.^{36 37}

- **Grow Your Own (GYO) programs** employ many of the features of teacher residencies but place particular emphasis on developing teachers from within the community by creating attractive pathways for current high school students or school staff with potential or interest in becoming teachers in their own school.³⁸

Several school districts in Wisconsin have established local chapters of a national organization called Educators Rising, a middle school or high school student organization for those who aspire to be teachers. Analogous to the approach taken by many districts to promote career and technical education, Educators Rising and similar programs, such as the Liberation Academy³⁹ at the Center for Black Educator Development that take a social justice approach and focus specifically on students of color, extend opportunities to engage in credit-bearing or extracurricular activities that give students exposure to and experience in the teaching profession. These can include tutoring younger students, classroom assistantships, college visits, summer institutes on college campuses, attending educator conferences, and opportunities to network with education professionals in various roles.

Some high school GYO programs go further by creating dedicated teacher preparation academic pathways that begin in high school through formal partnerships between school districts and teacher training programs. These programs often feature the opportunity to earn college credit in high school toward a teaching degree through dual enrollment in local colleges or universities in teacher preparation coursework – a strategy that promotes college and career readiness, gives students a head start toward earning their teaching credentials, and saves them tuition costs, among other benefits.

A particularly promising approach to GYO for diversifying the teacher pipeline is the creation of supportive pathways for current school staff who wish to become teachers. Many of these programs aim to support school staff who do not yet have a bachelor's degree (such as paraprofessionals or educational assistants) through training, professional development, mentoring, and financial support needed to become a fully-licensed teacher at their current school. Other staff-to-teacher programs are post baccalaureate programs tailored for career changers who already have a bachelor's degree in another discipline but need teaching-specific training and coursework.

Racine Unified School District (RUSD) has partnered with UW-Parkside to establish School-based Teacher Academies of Racine (STAR), a two-year program that exemplifies many aspects of strong GYO and residency programs. STAR draws mainly from current RUSD employees who already have bachelor's degrees, places them as full-time salaried teachers in special education classrooms, and releases them one day per week to complete licensure coursework and clinical requirements. Residents receive a 50% tuition waiver and financial support for textbooks, test fees, and licensure costs. The program provides ongoing professional development and mentoring both during and beyond the formal preparation program. Half of STAR's first cohort were teachers of color. The STAR program is among the first of its kind in Wisconsin but holds promise for replication. In fact, Greater Racine stakeholders have initiated a planning process to expand it to high school students. The intent is to leverage a small Educators Rising program and a career academy framework that are already in place in RUSD high schools to create a GYO K-12 teacher licensure pathway for RUSD high school students.



Embed equity and cultural responsiveness in teacher preparation and professional development

To combat the isolation and campus culture that pose barriers to many students of color entering teaching programs on college campuses, many teachers and leaders who spoke with us called for meaningful shifts in institutional norms and policies so as to center the student experience. Rather than ask students to assimilate to institutional requirements, this idea puts the onus on the institution to remove obstacles to student success by meeting their social, academic, financial, and other needs to help foster a sense of belonging there. This idea is encapsulated in an ongoing planning effort at UWM that aims to create “a radically welcoming culture for students.”⁴⁰

Our interviews, focus groups, and national research also suggest the need for all teachers to be effectively prepared to both recognize the cultural lenses and biases they hold and **bring culturally responsive curriculum and practices** to multicultural classrooms of students.^{41 42} These practices draw on the assets students bring to the classroom (rather than a commonly found focus on deficits), foster connection between students and teachers, and ground instruction in the cultures and identities of the students themselves. They also provide particular support to students from non-dominant cultures to be able to access and master the academic rigor needed to prepare for college, career, and beyond.

“The curriculum we have, it’s very Eurocentric...Not once do we read about Zora Neale Hurston or do we read African folktales. It’s very white. It’s very hard for kids to relate to that. And so I think even from a curriculum perspective, [we need to] change the curriculum to where students can see themselves.” - Teacher

Examples in the classroom include lessons on social movements; ethnic studies courses; diverse authorship in literature instruction; social-emotional skill building that can be transferred between different cultural settings; and holding high expectations for all students no matter their background. Research has linked effective culturally relevant practice to a number of student outcomes such as improved academic performance, better attendance, higher GPA, and lower dropout rates.^{43 44}

In addition to explicit training for teacher candidates, other avenues for building culturally relevant practices exist. People we interviewed suggested **making it easier for multilingual teachers** who come **from communities where English is not the dominant language to become certified to teach**. Another key strategy is the use of **participatory design** in both initial teacher preparation and ongoing professional development. This approach to program design is informed by asking the people from the communities being served, “What does a teacher need to know and be able to do to be an effective teacher?”

“[To determine what to include in teacher training], look to the people who are currently unserved, underserved, and most marginalized by the existing policies...They need to be the leaders of this work, because they are the most knowledgeable.” Teacher preparation program faculty member



Foster a culture of equity throughout school-level practice and policy

Discussion up to now has focused primarily on attraction, preparation, and recruitment of teachers of color. Here, we build on previous research by the Forum⁴⁵ and others that points to **teacher retention** as a crucial link to a stable, high-quality, diverse teacher workforce. Efforts to recruit teachers of color, in particular, could end up wasted if the school culture and working conditions push them out after only a short time in the job. To create an environment where teachers of color feel they belong, schools need organizational cultures and climates that affirm teachers' own cultures and identities.⁴⁶

“Creating actual spaces that welcome, support, honor, validate people of color...that alone would allow for a lot of the other barriers to be addressed. If you include me, and you respect me, and you honor me, then when I give you ideas of how we might be able to solve an issue, you actually hear them. It’s about creating a space where I’m not just there because you have to check a box.”
Teacher preparation program administrator

Some examples of school district policies to promote a culture of equity include the following:

- Some school districts are trying to address racial biases and barriers by **centering educational equity as the lens through which they consider all their decisions** – from resource allocation and professional development to hiring practices, curriculum design, and more. Madison Metropolitan School District presents a helpful illustration of this idea. About seven years ago, the district undertook a strategic planning process that resulted in an effort to define the meaning of racial equity and established a formal process for equitable decision-making and practices called an Educational Equity Guidance Tool.^{47 48}

For any proposed policy or practice change, the tool takes decision-makers through a series of data- and community-driven steps to consider the impacts of that proposal on educational equity. The process considers the extent to which district resources (such as money, programming, staffing, expertise, etc.) are intentionally distributed among schools, students, and staff such that everyone receives the support they need to achieve universal district goals.

Institutions could use decision-making structures like this to monitor and address some of the structural forces and challenges outlined previously. For example, districts could monitor the demographic patterns associated with how many high-needs students are assigned to teachers of color versus white teachers. If the data reveal inequities, districts can address it. And if the data do not match teacher perceptions, then school districts can use that information to discover and respond to the reasons why.

- Other districts are undertaking efforts to **promote cultural competence** as a key ingredient in building an institutional culture of respect, equity, and inclusiveness that helps foster an environment where teachers of color can thrive in the long term.⁴⁹ Cultural competence commonly takes form as regular and ongoing professional development aimed at providing



individuals with a set of tools to constructively lead or engage in difficult conversations around cultural differences throughout the organization. Examples include:

- Training faculty and staff in self-reflection practices to become aware of their own implicit biases and attitudes about race, class, power, and privilege as a way to improve working relationships between colleagues from different racial or ethnic backgrounds.
- Training leadership to take on uncomfortable issues, and giving them the skills to confidently lead and facilitate controversial conversations among colleagues, parents, students, and community members.
- Educating staff about how systems and structures of inequality operate and persist and building skill sets to address disparities within the institution.

“It’s the avoidance [of discomfort] that maintains the inequities that persist. Part of leading for equity, diversity, and racial justice requires having uncomfortable conversations that might seem controversial. But I always say confronting racism shouldn’t be a controversial topic. This is just something we should be doing. Will it be tense? Absolutely. Will it be uncomfortable? Absolutely. But it’s not controversial.” School district administrator

- Another common theme to emerge from our conversations about systemic factors supporting retention of teachers of color was the centrality of **school and district leadership**, for example the concept of **distributed leadership**. Encapsulated by one administrator of color with the comment “Do I have a voice in this work?”, distributed leadership⁵⁰ generally refers to an approach among school principals, superintendents, or other leaders to afford classroom teachers autonomy and seek their input on organizational decisions and policymaking.⁵¹ This approach has been associated with lower rates of turnover among teachers of color.^{52 53}

Another leadership-related mechanism that emerged in the perspectives of our participants is that **teachers of color appear to gravitate toward schools and districts where there are leaders of color**. Research bears this out, suggesting teachers feel more supported, report higher job satisfaction, and are less likely to turn over when their principal shares their same racial or ethnic background.^{54 55} Input from our participants suggests this may stem, in part, from teachers of color feeling more confident that they have an advocate in the spaces where institutional decisions are being made.⁵⁶ It also creates career ladders that open opportunities to teachers of color for professional advancement. Finally, participants in our study believe that having leaders of color at the decision making tables where structures, policies, and systems are established increases the likelihood that those decisions will be considered through a racial equity lens.

“Most school districts are going to have [someone] come along who will willingly confront or agitate or resist. And districts need that. When you have folks...who are willing to resist the status quo and disrupt the norm, embrace that. It’s going to be uncomfortable...it’s going to create some dissonance and some fear. But if we are truly serious about changing, that change has to come from within the system... and many districts miss their opportunity because they push people out or [they say] we have to get rid of this person because it’s causing too much of a disturbance. And instead, we need to make sure this person has a space to do this work.” School district administrator

Support teachers during critical early years

Consistent with research that has found teachers of color to be more likely than white teachers to leave the profession within two years⁵⁷, our interviewees pointed to several promising practices that focus on **teacher retention** by supporting teachers of color throughout the hiring process and first few years of teaching.

Hiring and staffing processes

Human resources department procedures and red tape can sometimes slow outreach, recruitment, and hiring processes such that quality candidates find positions elsewhere. One relatively simple procedure some schools and districts have implemented is **making sure open teaching positions are posted early enough in the academic year** to be able to reach high-quality candidates of color well before they graduate from teacher preparation programs or receive offers from other school districts. Boston Public Schools documented the impact of taking this approach, and Black and Latinx teachers comprised almost double the share of teachers hired before August relative to those hired in August (40% versus 27%).⁵⁸

The hiring and layoff processes themselves could be structured to include both **systematic safeguards against racial bias and intentional efforts to reach and recognize high-quality candidates and teachers of color**. Some districts have made strategic use of real-time monitoring of personnel data showing the demographics of the teachers who leave and enter in any given year to target their recruitment efforts toward finding highly qualified teachers that match the demographic needs of schools. We also found examples of policies in other states where school boards set hiring goals to fill vacant positions with qualified teachers of color to help close the gap between student and teacher demographics. Finally, some districts are examining changes to layoff policies that favor teachers with longevity, as these policies can disadvantage early-career teachers of color. School districts considering hiring approaches like these might wish to consider any legal ramifications of adopting them.

In light of the predominantly white population in Wisconsin, many districts already conduct outreach to Historically Black Colleges and Universities⁵⁹, Hispanic-serving institutions, and teacher preparation programs in other countries to boost the number of candidates of color. Participants in our research suggested this approach may have limited impact, however, because of Wisconsin’s climate, segregated culture, and racial disparities. This, in part, is why districts might find the most



success by focusing on GYO and retention practices, starting with making it standard practice to include teachers and leaders of color throughout the hiring process.

Some school districts also have enhanced efforts to include teachers of color throughout the candidate evaluation process from screening applications, to sitting in on interviews, to evaluating candidates and making hiring recommendations. Others have re-examined their overall candidate evaluation policies. One example of the latter is the Monona Grove School District (MGSD), which worked with a national consultant to undertake a comprehensive audit of its hiring and recruitment practices. Among the policy changes to emerge from this process, perhaps the most crucial step toward mitigating racial bias was the creation of a competency-based screening rubric and hiring process that eliminates “gut” reactions from hiring decisions that can inadvertently screen out highly qualified candidates of color.

Intensive mentoring and coaching for new teachers

A resounding theme in our research, and one that aligns closely with the literature and national best practices related to supporting teachers of color, was the need for comprehensive mentoring (focusing on career development), coaching (emphasizing specific skill development), and other professional development supports throughout a teacher’s first three to five years.^{60 61} These programs are important in general for teacher effectiveness and retention. Typically, they aim to support new teachers through some combination of orientation, mentoring, classroom observation and feedback, and other early-career supports. Wisconsin requires school districts to offer ongoing support to all new teachers, including three years of mentoring by an experienced teacher who has completed state-approved training.⁶² Based on our research, however, the mentoring being offered by many districts falls short of providing a level of support that our participants say new teachers, including teachers of color, need. Schools and districts that recognize this as a need for supporting and retaining teachers of color are addressing it in a number of ways.

According to our participants, there is a need to adapt early-career supports to the particular context (especially related to the demographics of the school community) in which a new teacher has been placed. The Madison school district has initiated efforts to tailor its support to first-year teachers to align with the specific challenges a teacher may face, asking questions such as, “If we are placing a new teacher of color in a school where the community and school staff are predominantly white, how are we as a district supporting them?” The district also has strategically allocated resources aimed at supporting early-career teachers by pairing them during their second and third years with veteran teachers in their own schools, a practice that simultaneously allows the district to provide experienced staff with leadership opportunities.

“I think as part of the onboarding process, [the district could assign the new teacher to] a teacher of color team. Because when you onboard someone into the district, you are surrounding them with people who can support their success. That’s the whole point of onboarding.” Teacher



Cohorts and affinity groups: Networks of mutual support for teachers of color

To help mitigate some of the feelings of isolation that can cause teachers of color to leave a teaching position or the profession altogether, some districts have created cohorts, affinity groups, or other identity-based professional learning networks that provide community and support for teachers of color as they navigate the challenges and experiences of working in a predominantly white institution.⁶³ These can take shape as monthly workshops aimed at practical professional development on general classroom practices, culturally responsive teaching, or navigating personal and interpersonal experiences of racial bias or racism. They can also be aimed at helping teachers of color develop skills to lead their schools or districts on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Summary of local strategies and solutions

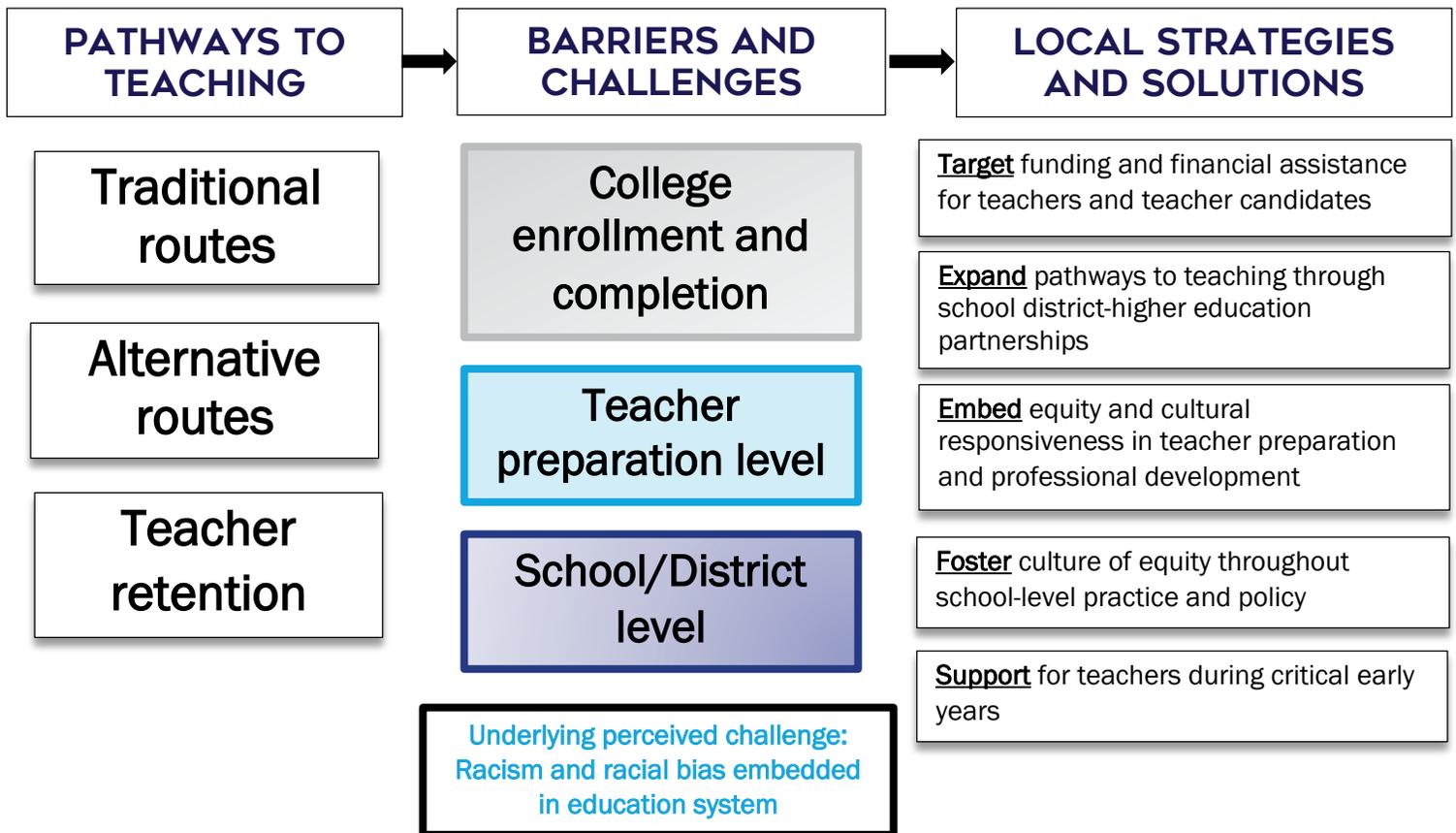
This discussion encapsulates a wide variety of initiatives that schools, universities, and other entities are undertaking to remove the barriers and challenges that impede progress toward enhanced teacher diversity throughout the teacher pipeline. Some of these local efforts target funding and support to individual teachers or teachers-in-training. Key among such **individual supports** are financial supports such as salary premiums for teachers in high-poverty schools as well as loan forgiveness and service scholarships funded by the state, local institutions, or community partners that expand access to teacher education programs. Other key strategies include one-on-one intensive mentoring and coaching during the first few years as a licensed teacher; and cohort programs that establish networks of mutual support for teachers of color.

Other approaches aim to effect systemic or organizational change as a way to enhance the conditions and organizational cultures that welcome and foster success for teachers of color. At the teacher training level, a particularly promising example of these **institutional approaches** is the establishment of teacher residency and GYO programs that emphasize developing teaching talent from within the community by providing intensive training while removing barriers related to cost and flexibility. Enhanced training in culturally responsive practices and alternatives to licensure tests such as performance-based assessments of teaching ability also hold promise. Strategies to support and retain licensed teachers often begin with efforts to foster equity throughout a school or district through decision-making procedures guided by anticipated impacts on equity; a commitment to organizational cultural competence; and efforts to develop a racially diverse and equity-minded cadre of school and district leaders. Finally, schools and districts can enhance the racial and ethnic diversity of their teaching staff by revamping hiring and staffing processes and procedures to remove racial bias and attract and retain high-quality teachers of color.

Our findings on local strategies to mitigate barriers to teacher diversity in Wisconsin (summarized in **Figure 5** on the next page) frame the next section on possible roles the state could play to complement, improve, or expand what is already working on the ground.



Figure 5: Summary of local strategies addressing barriers to teacher diversity in Wisconsin



STATE-LED POLICY OPTIONS

As illustrated in the previous discussion, many K-12 schools, higher education institutions, and community partners across the state have taken creative steps to address the challenges to creating a diverse teacher workforce. Yet, despite these promising localized efforts, a lack of diversity persists in schools and teacher preparation programs throughout Wisconsin.

The scale of the challenge suggests a need for action at the state level. State-driven policy has the potential to advance teacher diversity beyond what localized approaches can accomplish alone. As noted by the Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race & Equity. “To advance equity, government must focus not only on individual programs, but also on policy and institutional strategies that are driving the production of inequities.”⁶⁴

Informed both by this analysis of the Wisconsin context and by our review of state-led efforts around the country, in this section we consider how the state of Wisconsin could fulfill a leadership role in advancing policy that addresses Wisconsin’s specific teacher diversity challenges.

“To advance equity, government must focus not only on individual programs, but also on policy and institutional strategies that are driving the production of inequities.”
Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race & Equity



Elevate teacher diversity as a top education priority

Those who shared their insights for this report suggest that in the absence of a coordinated, statewide approach, each community is fending for itself to address its teacher workforce diversity challenges. Communities are doing so with limited resources, likely creating inefficiencies such as forgone opportunities to benefit from lessons learned; duplication of efforts and costs; and expenditure of resources that might be better deployed for alternative purposes. To raise the priority of teacher diversity and improve coordination, state leaders could:

- **Convene statewide stakeholders to set a common vision and align efforts around it.** State leaders could convene a special task force including racially diverse stakeholders representing legislators, DPI, superintendents, schools, teachers, teacher preparation programs, and students. The purpose of the task force would be to clearly define the nature and scope of the teacher diversity challenge in the state, provide advice on potential solutions, and establish goals, accountability measures, and metrics for evaluating success in addressing existing disparities. Ohio’s state-level teacher diversity efforts are aligned with the work of its Diversifying the Education Profession in Ohio Taskforce,⁶⁵ which could provide a model for Wisconsin. Similarly, the Arkansas Department of Education’s Teach Arkansas Campaign orients a number of state-led supports and initiatives around five specific teacher workforce goals, one of which is to “increase the number of minority teachers in public schools by 25 percent in 5 years.”⁶⁶
- **Explore legislative solutions.** In tandem with key local stakeholders such as superintendents and others mentioned for the task force above, policymakers could assess a variety of legislative options. The North Carolina legislature commissioned an analysis that found 13 states with laws



or directives addressing recruiting and retaining teachers of color. One of those was New Jersey, which promulgated a law aimed at increasing access to teaching pathways specifically for men of color. Also, after Washington State's Professional Standards Board identified educator workforce diversity as a state priority, its legislature created a grant program to pilot and scale up GYO programs across the state,⁶⁷ while Massachusetts created a Teacher Diversification pilot program that "names and works to combat challenges that impact the diversity of the teacher workforce across Massachusetts."⁶⁸ A special legislative council could be created to consider legislative options for Wisconsin, or that responsibility could be charged to the task force described above.

It is important to note that Wisconsin's DPI already is helping to coordinate statewide efforts. The department has piloted the creation of three regional councils – one in Madison, one in the Milwaukee/Racine region, and one aimed at rural communities statewide, each made up of some combination of representatives from DPI, schools, districts, universities and other key stakeholders. The councils have begun collaborative work to build high-quality teaching pathways, especially GYO programs; share best practices for teacher retention; identify sources of financial support for teacher candidates; and many other considerations to ensuring an adequate and diverse teacher workforce.^{69 70}

As the first to be launched, the council for the Madison region has made progress toward building collaborations between teacher preparation programs and school districts. If this regional approach could be scaled to include the rest of Wisconsin, it could help unify local efforts into a broader statewide strategy. Indeed, the regional council model compares closely with a key recommendation made by the Council of Chief State School Officers to create "collaborative mechanisms such as the equity labs that states have organized to address equity gaps, provide spaces to gather the right stakeholders and work in collaboration with other experts in the state."⁷¹

Target state investments

The state also could promote teacher diversity through direct investments in individuals, institutions, and programs. Options might include:

- **Financial assistance to support students' completion of college and teacher preparation programs.** Providing assistance to individuals to help offset the costs of teacher preparation programs and licensure is one of the most common strategies states employ to diversify their teacher pipelines.⁷² As noted earlier, Wisconsin already does fund the Minority Teacher Loan Program, but the program has failed to reach many recipients, especially in recent years. The number of awards made under this program dropped from \$159,000 for 68 awards in 2013-14 to \$10,000 for one award in 2017-18. The 2019-21 state budget allocated \$519,000 to the program and expanded eligibility in a number of ways compared to prior years, but data are not yet available to show how that affected the number and amount of awards given over the past two years.⁷³

State investments to improve teacher diversity in Wisconsin logically could begin with efforts to expand eligibility and outreach to prospective recipients by maximizing the reach of what the state already budgets under this existing program. Moreover, if eligibility for the program were expanded, for example to allow recipients to teach in schools with 29% minority student membership (the statutory threshold prior to the 2015-17 budget), rather than 40% under

current law, demand for this kind of financial support likely would surpass the number of awards currently available. For instance, over 750 students of color were enrolled in Wisconsin educator preparation programs in 2018.⁷⁴ Even a quarter of that number, an approximation of the number of students of color in the first year of a four-year bachelor's program in teaching that year, significantly exceeds the total number of awards made since 2013-14 (135).⁷⁵

The state also could appropriate resources to augment the privately-funded efforts for UW-Madison's Teacher Pledge program, which, as previously noted, provides loan forgiveness scholarships to UW-Madison School of Education students. The state could target its resources to expand access across the UW System. Policymakers should ensure any investments in financial assistance programs include resources to sufficiently publicize and streamline application process to expand awareness and access to teachers of color.

Providing assistance to individuals to help offset the costs of teacher preparation programs and licensure is one of the most common strategies states employ to diversify their teacher pipelines.

- **Fund grants to institutions to incubate or expand programs that expand the pipeline of teachers of color.** The state also could fund teacher preparation programs, school districts, and partnerships between them to create or expand promising teacher residency and GYO programs. Although it was not adopted, Governor Evers' 2019-21 budget proposed eliminating the Minority Teacher Loan Program and replacing it with a competitive grant program to school districts for efforts to recruit teachers of color. In this vein, the state could consider expanding workforce development grants similar to the recent DWD teacher training grants it made to school district and higher education partnerships in Milwaukee and Madison (see page 16).

We found several examples of this approach in other states.⁷⁶ Tennessee⁷⁷ ⁷⁸ and New Jersey⁷⁹ ⁸⁰ have both funded collaborative teacher residencies, efforts to recruit and prepare teachers of color, and other innovative collaborations between school districts and teacher preparation programs. Texas⁸¹ passed legislation to create a competitive grant program targeting the creation of teacher residency programs at Texas A&M University-Commerce. The Texas Education Agency also extends competitive grants to school districts, educator preparation programs, and other entities to increase the quality and diversity of the teacher workforce through GYO programs.⁸² ⁸³ Finally, California⁸⁴ sought to address teacher diversity and retention across the state by allocating \$75 million in seed funding for grants to grow teacher residency programs statewide.

An important caveat is that the high-quality residencies we have described call for strong partnerships and shared vision among institutions at multiple levels (state, higher education, school district, philanthropic and community partners, etc.) State support often is key to defray the considerable start-up costs that characterize these efforts. But in order to be sustainable long-term, these cooperative efforts generally require diversified funding streams from every level.

- **Leverage federal funds to support state and local efforts to improve teacher diversity.** In addition to providing its own funds, the state could undertake a comprehensive review to identify or



expand the use of federal funding for state and local school districts' efforts to both recruit and retain teachers of color. Our national scan suggests two main sources of federal funding on which Wisconsin may be able to capitalize – Higher Education Act (HEA) Title II Part A (Teacher Quality Partnership grants) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Title II Part A (Preparing, Training, and Recruiting Licensed Teachers, Principals, and Other School Leaders grants).

The state could provide technical assistance and guidance to help school districts and teacher preparation programs position themselves to take advantage of HEA Teacher Quality Partnership grants. The program provides competitive grants to partnerships between teacher preparation programs and school districts that seek to improve teacher preparation, enhance professional development, and expand school leadership activities aimed at supporting new teachers. Grants are not specifically for teacher diversity, but many states have used them for that purpose. Awards can support a number of the strategies, especially those related to teacher retention, described in the previous section, including mentoring and coaching during pre-service classroom experiences; high quality early-career teacher support (induction) programs; alternative routes to teacher licensure; and teaching residencies.⁸⁵

Grants through ESSA Title II Part A may be awarded either directly to states or to local school districts and can be used for a wide range of activities, many of which have been outlined here and overlap considerably with eligible uses for the HEA Teacher Quality Partnership grants.⁸⁶ These grants can also be leveraged to improve recruitment and retention of culturally competent educators, especially teachers of color; GYO programs that target paraprofessionals' ability to gain teacher training and credentials; the development of affinity group support programs; and ongoing professional development in cultural competency and equity coaching.



Provide both flexibility and rigor in teacher preparation and evaluation

Studies have corroborated perceptions expressed in our interviews that required teacher licensure tests do not consistently measure or predict effective teaching practices, that this may be especially true for teachers of color, and that there are valid, unbiased alternative ways to assess classroom practice that predict future teacher performance.^{87 88 89}

With respect to the state's role in teacher licensing, two principal themes we heard are the need to replace or supplement teacher licensure exams with performance-based assessments of pre-service teachers and the need for flexible licensing policies to address school staffing challenges while also ensuring rigorous standards.

Given the barriers posed by licensure requirements for teachers of color, a logical state policy response is to **eliminate or offer alternatives to existing teacher licensure tests**. These tests could be replaced or supplemented with assessments of actual classroom teaching performance based on valid standards of effective teaching practice, including those related to culturally responsive practice.⁹⁰

For example, as noted previously, a change in state statute in 2019 created a waiver on the FORT, allowing teachers working toward special education licensure to demonstrate their teaching skills using an alternative course of study that covers the foundational pillars of reading, incorporates feedback from an instructional reading coach, and requires a portfolio that demonstrates



competence in reading instruction.⁹¹ However, those seeking initial licensure as an elementary teacher or reading specialist are still required to pass the FORT.⁹²

Given the way in which the FORT alone appears to screen out teachers of color, state policymakers could consider adopting statutory changes eliminating FORT as a requirement for licensure for all teachers and replacing it with a requirement that all teachers demonstrate their skills and knowledge to teach reading using a practice-based performance assessment. In other words, the alternative course of study offered to special education teachers may be a sufficient model to expand for all teachers, although careful evaluation would be required to ensure that approach reliably predicts effective classroom performance.

Other states have enacted policies aimed at this goal. For example, Massachusetts piloted a new practice-based performance assessment of teaching skills for student teachers that is aligned with the same standards used for current teachers. Based on a 2019 evaluation, the new instrument was found to be a better predictor of teacher performance than state licensure exams.^{93 94} Another example comes from Virginia, where provisionally licensed teachers who attempted but did not pass an initial licensure exam are able to obtain their license through a recommendation from a superintendent and a yearly evaluation rating their performance as proficient.⁹⁵

Studies suggest teacher licensure tests do not consistently measure or predict effective teaching practices, that this may be especially true for teachers of color, and that there are valid, unbiased alternative ways to assess classroom practice that predict future teacher performance

Given another key observation from our research regarding the need to expand the number of well-prepared teachers of color in shortage areas such as special education and bilingual/bicultural education, **greater flexibility with regard to state requirements for shortage areas may be warranted.**

One promising avenue toward this objective is through state-approved district-specific teacher preparation and licensure pathways. For example, the state already offers a three-year district-sponsored license with stipulations⁹⁶ through which districts are allowed to create district-specific professional development programs that allow educators already licensed to teach across a wide grade band or other subject areas to receive comprehensive training aimed at developing their mastery in the specific subject areas and relevant grade bands where they are assigned to teach. After three years of experience and review by DPI or an educator preparation program of their work portfolio demonstrating their proficiency, the teacher can supplement their initial license with a specialty license in the specific area in which the district training program prepared them. The state could provide funding, incentives, technical assistance, and other supports to districts to avail themselves of this mechanism, especially if they use it to expand teacher diversity.

A related policy that would require more substantial statutory or rule changes is to create teacher preparation and licensure pathways where, rather than depending on outside teacher preparation entities, districts develop and deliver directly the teacher preparation training needed to meet their own staffing and competency needs. This training could be attractive to staff who are already committed to the district's students and families but might lack the financial wherewithal to pursue existing teacher training programs. It could be accompanied by a three-to-five-year service



commitment. An evaluation of district-run teacher preparation programs in several cities found that they helped boost both teacher diversity and teacher supply in hard-to-staff subjects and produced similar student achievement outcomes as existing preparation programs.⁹⁷

Require greater transparency and accountability for teacher preparation programs and school districts

There are a number of ways that the state, in conjunction with teacher preparation programs and school districts, could use data collection and dissemination as a means of focusing more attention and priority on teacher diversity, tracking progress, and consequently, advancing teacher diversity outcomes.

Wisconsin administrative code currently requires all teacher preparation programs to submit to DPI a plan that shows how the program will devote the necessary resources to recruit, enroll, and retain a diverse student body.⁹⁸ In addition, the federal HEA requires institutions that house teacher preparation programs to issue performance reports to the state and general public, including information on the racial and ethnic breakdown of those who enroll in their programs.

However, they are not required to do the same for those who complete their programs, even though the number and share of program completers by race arguably is a better indicator of program effectiveness and the future supply of teachers of color. This omission makes it difficult to identify and address shortcomings in those programs. In the absence of a federal mandate, **the state could exercise its authority to require that teacher preparation programs report completion rates by race for all teacher certification programs.**

The HEA also requires states to determine criteria by which to evaluate the quality of teacher preparation programs. In addition to common evaluation criteria used by most programs – like indicators of teaching skill and pass rates on licensure exams – the state could establish criteria and use them to evaluate programs on racial and ethnic diversity of both enrollees and completers, as is done in Delaware, Virginia, and Tennessee.^{99 100 101}

There are a number of ways the state, teacher preparation programs, and school districts could use data to focus more attention and priority on teacher diversity, track progress, and advance teacher diversity outcomes.

Delaware goes a step further by using such data to “inform recommendations for continuous improvement of preparation programs and determine the direction of statewide initiatives related to diversifying the teacher workforce.”¹⁰² North Carolina recently approved a measure that holds its teacher preparation programs accountable for efforts to enroll candidates of color at a similar rate that the wider institution enrolls them, as well as for growth in representation of candidates of color over time.¹⁰³ With state accountability measures focused on improving diversity among teacher candidates, institutions might be more likely to invest in recruiting and supporting candidates of color.

Finally, just as teacher preparation program data collection and accountability standards could be strengthened, **state policy also could require school districts to both report and be accountable for**

various measures of teacher diversity and retention of teacher of color as has been done in other states, such as Illinois, Massachusetts, Tennessee, and Virginia.^{104 105 106}

For example, although DPI already publishes school-level teacher demographics on its website, the department could promote more public awareness of teacher diversity by publishing an annual report that makes statewide trend data on teacher and student diversity available and provides policy recommendations to school boards and districts, as Tennessee's Department of Education has done.¹⁰⁷

DPI also could require school districts to publish teacher recruitment, retention, and attrition rates – disaggregated by race – as part of state annual school and district report cards. Delaware, for example, posts an educator mobility dashboard that shows staff retention and turnover rates disaggregated by race at the state, district, and school levels.¹⁰⁸ The state also could require retention rates, disaggregated by race, be tracked according to the teacher preparation programs from which teachers graduated. Such data could provide valuable insight for improving both educator preparation and early-career supports.

Finally, the state could include teacher diversity as one of its evaluation criteria for its federal ESSA report card. Such reporting could be used as the basis for publicly announced state and local teacher diversity goals, help inform analyses of how well teachers reflect the racial and ethnic demographics of the state's students, and create awareness, transparency, and progress around issues of teacher diversity.



Build state data system capacity

The need for better data disaggregated by race and ethnicity emerged as a major theme in both our conversations with educators across the state and in our scan of how other states have approached their teacher diversity challenges. Although there are several large-scale longitudinal data systems at various institutional levels in Wisconsin, they are not connected in a cohesive statewide system, and the public-facing data omit some important educational milestones. State leadership on efforts to improve teacher diversity, therefore, also could involve taking the lead on **building capacity for data-informed decision making at every stage of the education system.**

The state of Ohio presents an instructive case. Faced with teacher diversity gaps that are very similar to those in Wisconsin, the Ohio Department of Education selected teacher diversity as one of the measures on which it would be held accountable on its ESSA state plan and undertook a data-driven approach to propel its actions going forward.¹⁰⁹ The Ohio workgroup on this issue undertook a comprehensive data analysis of diversity gaps at every level of the educator career continuum using a free Data Tool developed by the Center on Great Teachers & Leaders.¹¹⁰

Use of this kind of tool could help identify weaknesses in the state's data collection systems (such as the lack of data on those who complete postsecondary and teacher preparation programs in Wisconsin) and help focus attention on why fewer teachers of color are progressing to various stages along the educator preparation continuum and where in the pipelines the racial disparities are most severe. States such as California have reviewed their data systems in this way and sought to build systems that combine K-12, postsecondary, teacher preparation, educator workforce, other workforce outcomes, and even social service information.¹¹¹



In fact, several participants in our research suggested this kind of approach as a major opportunity for Wisconsin's efforts to close educational equity gaps. Specifically, they expressed the need for Wisconsin to **build a comprehensive K-20 data warehouse that connects the various data silos that operate in a relatively independent fragmented system** across the state. These include but are not limited to DPI's public school student outcomes data; DPI's staffing data; data within or reported by each institution of higher education (both public and private); all approved educator preparation programs (both traditional and alternative routes); federal data on teacher preparation programs; and the educator employment database, the Wisconsin Education Career Access Network (WECAN).

Such an undertaking likely would require major investments and would entail at least some risk, as other state information technology projects have gone over budget in some instances or even failed outright in rare cases. However, it could offer unprecedented insights and benefits that extend well beyond the question of teacher diversity.



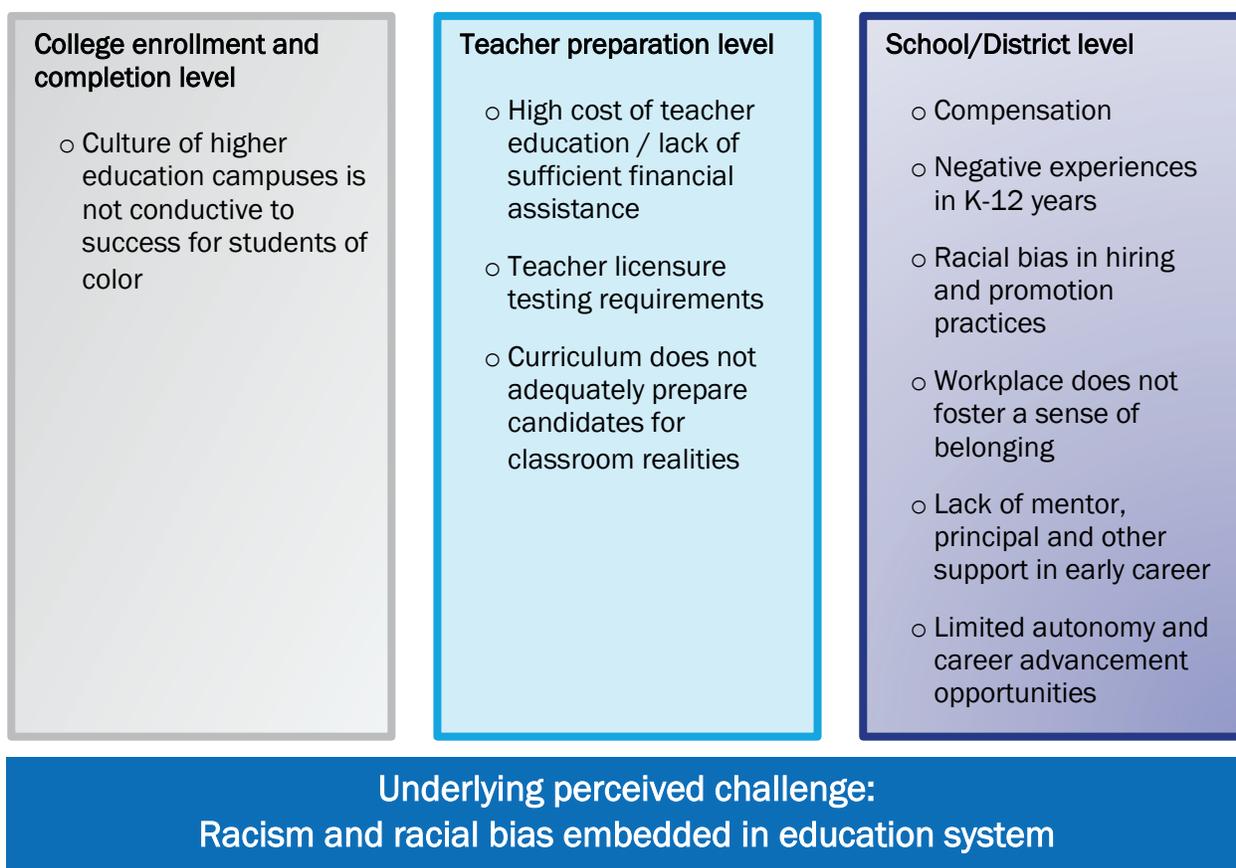
CONCLUSION

A Teacher Who Looks Like Me cited the importance of a racially and ethnically diverse teacher workforce for both white students and students of color. It also illustrated the nature and scope of Wisconsin's teacher workforce diversity challenges.

In this report, we sought to address several of the questions raised by our earlier research, such as: What are the conditions and barriers that prevent candidates of color from joining the ranks of teachers and building a long-term career in the profession? What are schools, districts, higher education institutions, and others doing to change those conditions? And what more could be done, especially by the state, to move the needle on this important component of educational equity?

To answer these questions, we gathered perspectives from a broad array of Wisconsin teachers, school and district leaders, teacher education faculty, higher education administrators, state leaders, and others. Based on their input and summarized in **Figure 6**, we identified key barriers to expanding teacher diversity at three levels of the teacher pipeline.

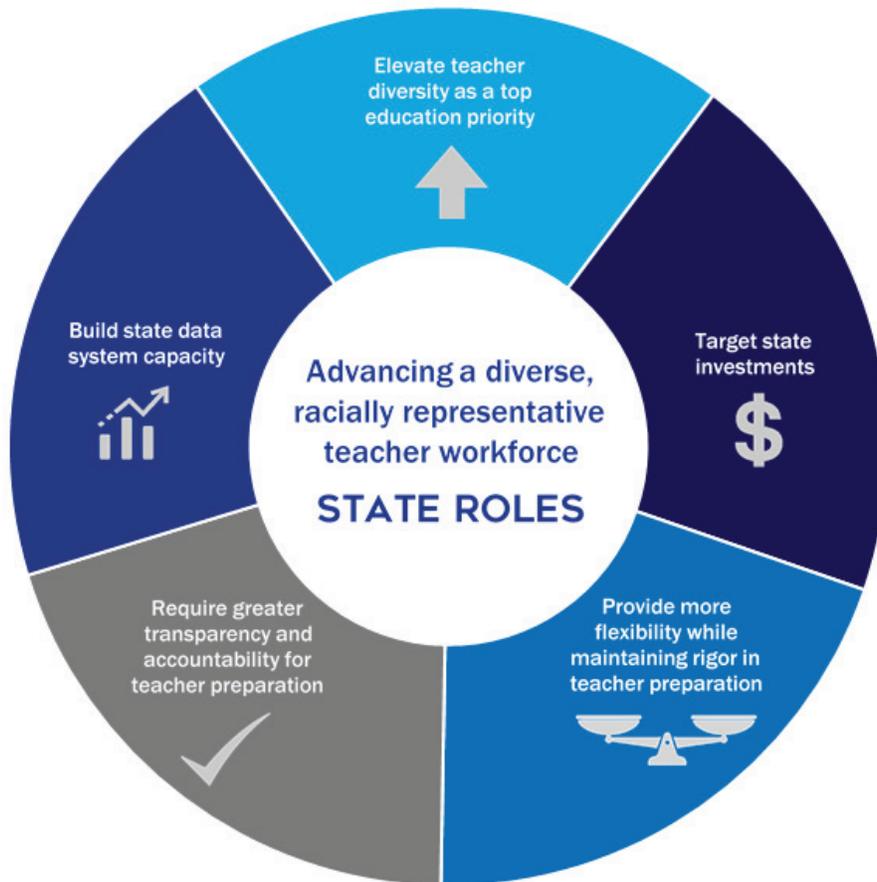
Figure 6: Barriers and challenges to teacher diversity in Wisconsin



Our research also identified several promising strategies that local institutions have been initiating to mitigate these barriers and ways the state could support and expand upon those local efforts. **Figure 7** displays options for state policymakers to consider along five interrelated fronts:



Figure 7: Summary of state policy options for advancing teacher diversity



Elevate teacher diversity as a top education priority

- Convene statewide stakeholders to set a common vision and align efforts around it
- Explore legislative solutions

Target state investments to support both individuals and institutions

- Provide financial assistance to help students complete college and teacher preparation programs
- Fund grants to institutions to incubate or expand programs that expand the pipeline of teachers of color
- Leverage federal funds to support state and local efforts to improve teacher diversity

Provide both flexibility and rigor in teacher preparation and evaluation

- Eliminate or offer alternatives to existing teacher licensure tests
- Provide greater flexibility with regard to state requirements for shortage areas

Require greater transparency/accountability for teacher preparation programs & school districts

- Require teacher preparation programs to report and improve completion rates by race for all teacher certification programs.
- Require school districts to both report and be accountable for various measures of teacher diversity

Build state data system capacity

- Build a comprehensive K-20 data warehouse that connects a fragmented system of data silos





Elevate teacher diversity as a top education priority in Wisconsin by convening key stakeholders to establish a common definition of the state's teacher diversity challenge; a vision to guide and coordinate disparate local programs and legislative strategies; and specific state/local goals, transparency and accountability measures, and metrics for tracking progress.



Target state investments to support both individuals and institutions. The state could invest in loan forgiveness and service scholarships that both reduce the cost of college and teacher training and provide incentives for teachers to serve Wisconsin schools with particularly acute staffing needs. The state also could invest in programs that expand or support high-retention residency and GYO teacher education models as well as strategically leverage federal funds to bolster state and local investments.



Provide both flexibility and rigor in teacher preparation and evaluation. The state could consider eliminating or offering alternatives to teacher licensure tests that historically have blocked or discouraged students of color from entering the teaching profession. Another strategy is to allow districts the flexibility of running their own teacher preparation programs designed to prepare teachers for district-specific needs and context. This could be accompanied by measures to hold districts accountable for ensuring their teachers demonstrate rigorous state standards of teaching competency.



Require districts and teacher training programs to demonstrate greater transparency and accountability for teacher diversity. State reporting requirements could be fortified to foster greater public transparency and accountability surrounding performance by race in teacher preparation program enrollment, completion, and licensure tests. Analogous provisions could be implemented to require school districts to report and/or demonstrate improvement on measures of teacher diversity. The state could further facilitate transparency and accountability by providing user-friendly public access or dashboards to related state and local data.



Build state data system capacity: In an effort to build state-level capacity for data-driven policymaking and monitor progress toward greater teacher diversity in Wisconsin, the state could consider leveraging its authority and resources to build a cohesive statewide data system that connects a fragmented array of independent data silos.

We present these considerations as Wisconsin, along with the rest of the world, passes the one-year anniversary of efforts to respond to an unprecedented global pandemic. At the same time, we have seen the ways in which COVID-19 has disproportionately harmed communities of color and exacerbated longstanding disparities in many aspects of American life, not least of which is educational opportunity.

As Wisconsin's leaders forge a post-pandemic path going forward, they should consider the importance of a racially representative teacher workforce as a component of a high-performing system of K-12 education that mitigates educational opportunity gaps based on race and ethnicity. Our research suggests Wisconsin has a long way to go to improve the diversity of its teacher workforce, but that local institutions are taking meaningful steps, and actionable state policy options hold promise to help meet that goal. We hope this report helps guide practitioners and policymakers working to advance racial equity at all levels of Wisconsin's education system.



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