

# Innovative Practices in Workforce Development for K-12 Teaching

## Diversifying the Teacher Pipeline Through Project Impact

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### Introduction

Workforce development in the K–12 educational setting, including the preparation of new teachers, faces multiple challenges today. These challenges include an ongoing teacher shortage and the lack of a coordinated educational preparation pipeline. Also problematic are the numerous obstacles on the path to teacher credentialing in states like California. Although various studies have addressed these challenges over the past few years, there is still a need to investigate and highlight current workforce development efforts to alleviate these ongoing problems.

### Teacher Shortage

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the teacher shortage crisis is expected to worsen in the coming years, with an estimated 100,000 teaching positions needing to be filled annually over the next decade. As the COVID-19 pandemic began to wane in spring 2022, the National Center for Education

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Statistics reported that approximately half (44%) of America’s public schools reported full- or part-time teaching staff vacancies. The report indicated that up to 61% of the shortage was attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic. The same report revealed that 51% of the vacancies resulted from resignations, whereas 21% were a result of retirements.

A Learning Policy Institute (LPI) report indicated that in 2018, 48 states and the District of Columbia reported teacher shortages in mathematics, science, special education, and bilingual education. The LPI report also found that teacher shortages are most acute in schools that serve low-income and minority students.

Driven by a combination of factors, the teacher shortage in California results in part from low teacher salaries, high housing costs, and an overall high cost of living in many areas of the state. In a survey conducted by the California Teachers Association, 75% of California school districts reported having difficulty hiring qualified teachers in 2020, with special education, science, and mathematics being the most challenging subject areas to fill.

In 2022, California invested \$3.6 billion over a 4-year period to address the problem of teacher recruitment, training, and retention. This investment was distributed as follows (California Department of Education, 2022):

\$500 million was dedicated to recruiting new teachers, counselors, social workers, and school psychologists.

Approximately \$550 million was allocated to developing teacher residency programs.

\$1.5 billion went toward Educator Effectiveness Block Grants, which target the training of classified, certificated, and administrative staff, with an investment in accelerated learning, social-emotional learning, restorative practices, and more. Part of this funding is intended to help beginning teachers with preliminary teaching credentials clear their credential requirements and remain in the workforce.

\$250 million targeted incentivizing teachers, mentors, and other instructional staff to acquire national board certification.

\$20 million was dedicated to waiving credential fees for individuals entering the teaching workforce.

\$125 million was designated for the Classified School Employee Teacher Credentialing Program (C2TC) to support more than 5,000 classified employees transitioning into the teaching workforce.

A separate survey by the LPI (2018) found that California had the highest teacher shortage in the nation in 2018,

with 80% of school districts reporting a shortage of qualified teachers.

### **Obstacles to the Educational Workforce Pathway**

A need for proper and coordinated career guidance besieges the educational workforce pathway. Many students who consider education as a career do not receive adequate career guidance or counseling, making it difficult for them to make informed decisions about their future careers in education. A study by Kyser et al. (2021) investigated how the teacher pipeline could be better fueled by facilitating high school student's understanding of teaching as a profession and the steps they might take toward entering the teaching profession. This study revealed that despite a student's interest in teaching and whatever experiences they may have already had working with young children, they remain unclear about what is required to enter the teaching profession.

A different study conducted by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education and the Indiana Department of Education revealed that even when students have entered the teaching preparation pathway, for some reason, a significant percentage of undergraduate students who complete a bachelor's degree in education do not end up securing the initial license to teach (Wan et al., 2021). An important observation in this study highlighted how workforce development programs and initiatives across college campuses are often scattered across multiple departments or units, not connected with colleges of education, making it difficult to coordinate efforts with the colleges of education to ensure that students are receiving accurate and comprehensive guidance for entry into an education career.

The teacher credentialing process in many states, such as California, is also filled with obstacles, including multiple standardized tests and other rigorous requirements, making teaching a more difficult career field to enter than careers like nursing, which only requires academic coursework for admission.

An education policy analysis recently completed in California identified a wide variety of pathways to the teaching profession within the state, revealing vast differences in preparedness among beginning-level teachers. Research on student achievement places California in the lowest 10% of states nationwide,

suggesting that teacher quality is an issue that directly impacts student achievement.

Where, then, does the problem lie? Is it in recruiting, teacher training, or induction into the profession? Research has identified gaps in the alignment of standards, assessments, and other requirements for entry into teacher preparation, all of which indicate a lack of effective coordination of programs that recruit and train new teachers.

### **Diversifying the Education Pipeline**

In addition to the many obstacles teacher candidates face entering the profession, the field of education has continued to experience a significant underrepresentation of ethnic minority teachers nationwide. In the past 30 years, the proportion of ethnic minorities in the teacher workforce has risen by only 12%. Teachers of color represent only 20% of the teacher workforce nationwide. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, minority male teachers comprise only 5% of all public school teachers nationally. Data from 2018–2019 reveal that school demographics across the United States include 27% Hispanic and 15% African American students. However, Hispanic teachers make up only 9% of the teacher workforce across the nation, while African American teachers comprise only 7% of that workforce (Carr, 2022; Contreras, 2022; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

Research has also revealed that minority male students in K–12 schools across the United States lack a sense of belonging, including feeling isolation at school sites, hopelessness, cultural frustration, and a sense of disengagement. On the positive side, however, findings from an impact study in North Carolina and Tennessee conducted by Gershenson et al. (2022) indicate that Black primary school students demonstrate lower high school dropout rates when matched with a same-race teacher.

Additionally, when measured over time, Black students in North Carolina have increased self-reported college aspirations. Black students in Tennessee are increasingly more likely to complete a college entrance exam. Ultimately, increasing the number of teachers of color in schools provides students of color with role models, offers opportunities to connect culturally, sets higher expectations, and reduces implicit bias

(Gershenson et al., 2022; Givens et al., 2016; Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

Another study showed that increasing the number of teachers of color in schools reduces teachers' implicit bias and the negative effects it has on students of color (Givens et al., 2016). In a 2018 study, Carver-Thomas outlined additional benefits of increasing teacher diversity, among which is that three in four teachers of color work in schools that serve students of color. Elementary Black students with Black teachers score 3–6 percentile points higher on reading and mathematics STAR tests. Black K–3 students with Black teachers are 15% less likely to drop out of high school and 10% more likely to apply to a college (Carver-Thomas, 2018).

### **Workforce Development Programs at California State University San Bernardino**

Four workforce development programs at California State University (CSU) San Bernardino represent just a few examples of the many workforce development activities across the 23 campuses of the CSU system and at other public and private universities in the state. Several of these initiatives are discussed briefly in the following section, while one—the Project Impact Minority Male Teacher Pipeline Program—is discussed in greater depth.

#### **Classified to Certificated Employee Teacher Pipeline Program**

In 2022, California invested \$125 million in the Classified School Employee Teacher Credentialing Program. This investment aimed to transition more than 5,000 K–12 classified staff (secretaries, instructional aides, gardeners, security officers, and other staff) into the pool of fully credentialed teachers. This investment has opened new workforce development opportunities for the teacher pipeline (California Department of Education, 2022).

The James R. Watson and Judy Rodriguez Watson College of Education at CSU San Bernardino collaborated with two county offices of education in the region, the San Bernardino and Riverside County Offices of Education, and with some local school districts to submit proposals for this grant. Each grant submission has been awarded and funded, and the college is currently working with these partners to develop strategies for recruitment, training, and deployment of their classified staff as

they prepare for and become classroom teachers.

Intended outcomes of the Classified Employee Teacher Programs are described as follows in a memorandum of understanding for the Classified School Employee Teacher Credential Program between Fontana Unified School District (FUSD) and the CSU San Bernardino College of Education:

Increase the teacher pipeline in the district while working to help close academic achievement gaps in mild/moderate settings through intentional recruitment, training, and mentorship.

Recruit diverse classified employee candidates to serve district students and the community.

Cultivate inclusive, engaging, and restorative equity-oriented learning environments.

Ensure equity and justice at all Classified Employee Teacher Program implementation levels.

Retain teacher candidates through employment and supportive mentorship.

Share data collection and analysis for program monitoring and modifications.

Although the monetary award from this grant is not large, it provides a meaningful incentive for attracting classified staff into the teacher workforce.

**Teach Rialto Project**

Teach Rialto is an educator pipeline program that spans high school through undergraduate education to teacher certification. It is a partnership between the Rialto Unified School District (RUSD) in San Bernardino County and CSU San Bernardino.

In this program, the two educational entities have committed to work together to create and support a teacher preparation pathway and guarantee admission and priority enrollment for students from RUSD who complete the Teach Rialto pathway in accordance with the terms and conditions outlined by both parties.

These terms include meeting the A–G requirements for admission into any CSU or University of California campuses. Students are tracked from high school through their four years of undergraduate education until they earn their teaching credentials.

**Teacher Residencies**

Teacher residencies are a California state initiative involving a clinical model for teacher preparation and placement. The program started with a state grant that awarded approximately \$20,000 to each teacher candidate to offset the cost of teacher preparation. California appropriated these funds to support teacher residency programs across the state. Not many school districts and universities applied for these funds because they were too small to incentivize the implementation of pure residency programs.

A teacher residency is typically a 2-year program that requires teacher candidates to commit themselves full-time to a K–12 classroom for the entire duration of the program. These students cannot hold any outside employment while involved in the residency program. Given California’s high cost of living, it has often been impossible for students, especially students in institutions like CSU San Bernardino, a minority-serving institution, to afford to make such a commitment.

Advocacy from some educators, including CSU San Bernardino, with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction has resulted in the increase of this award from \$20,000 per teacher to \$40,000. The CSU San Bernardino Watson College of Education has partnered with RUSD to secure up to \$8 million for a 5-year implementation of the residency program.

**Project Impact**

Project Impact is an initiative of the Watson College of Education. This project aims to increase the diversity of teachers in the region by intentionally recruiting men of color, including African

American, Latino, and Native American males, into the teaching profession.

The program seeks to expand the teacher pipeline in California while working to help close academic achievement gaps in the K–12 settings through intentional recruitment, training, and deployment of minority male teachers into California classrooms. The program is comprised of four programmatic steps.

The first step is the recruitment of male teachers of color in collaboration with district and county offices of education, working with them to eliminate obstacles to entering teacher preparation by offering test preparation support, transcript review, and other services.

The second step is training. These men are provided rigorous training that goes beyond the standard teacher preparation curriculum. They receive additional resources, such as workshops, field trips, and access to regional educational leaders with whom they can network and learn more about the education profession.

The third step is deployment. Upon program completion, the university works collaboratively with school districts to ensure that these men are placed in contexts where they will have the most impact.

The fourth and last step is mentoring. These men are provided with mentoring from the point of admission throughout their fieldwork, clinical practice, and internship experiences, and beyond. The mentoring continues for up to 3 years after program completion or until they become tenured teachers. This lengthy mentoring aims to reduce attrition and ensure that they have gained tenure in the school district before the program

**Figure 1**  
**Programmatic Support Structure**

Programmatic Support Structure			
Recruitment	Training	Deployment	Mentorship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment through district and county pipelines</li> <li>Outreach &amp; engagement with community organizations</li> <li>Media Campaign</li> <li>Application/Testing Support (CSET, CBEST, RICA)</li> <li>Marketing Technology Tool - Hubspot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multitiered Teacher Preparation: Multiple Subject, Single Subject, Special Education</li> <li>Structured Professional Development</li> <li>Pre-Intern Experiences</li> <li>Educational Conferences and Symposiums for exposure to best practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct engagement with school districts for strategic placements</li> <li>Leveraging internship opportunities in school districts</li> <li>Linking with <b>Grow Your Own</b> programs in school districts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentors for ongoing support while in teaching positions</li> <li>5-Year mentorship to culminate in teacher tenure</li> <li>Goal of mentorship is retention, given the current rate of teacher attrition in California</li> </ul>



disengages with them. Figure 1 depicts the diagrammatic structure of the programs.

These recruitment, training, deployment, and mentoring processes have led to the establishment of a regional collaborative involving the two county superintendents of schools for Riverside County and San Bernardino County. Both of these county offices of education have signed a memorandum of understanding with the Watson College of Education articulating the nature of their partnerships in the four programmatic areas.

Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE), for example, made both financial and personnel commitments to this program when it started in spring 2020. Its financial commitment came through scholarships granted to teacher candidates at the program's inception. RCOE provides these candidates access to their county professional development programs to enrich their preparation through involvement in county educational opportunities while continuing their academic work at the university. The county administrative personnel also provides these men with seminars and workshops to prepare them for securing a teaching job, including offering mock interviews. RCOE is an active participant in the regional collaborative that the Watson College of Education has established to galvanize the educational agencies of the region in this effort.

The San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools (SBCSS) provides financial resources that Project Impact may use to address a diversity of needs, including recruitment, personnel, and student scholarships. SBCSS is in the second 3-year commitment that guarantees three years of financial support and active engagement with this program. SBCSS is an active participant in the regional collaborative.

Growing Inland Achievement (GIA), a nonprofit that focuses on educational attainment for the region, is another partner in this project. GIA has supported the program through innovation grants, providing financial resources for recruitment and program development. GIA is a co-host with the Watson College of Education of the regional collaborative on the Minority Male Pipeline program.

Another partner is the Blu Educational Foundation (BLU). BLU is an African American nonprofit organization that focuses on high school completion and college attainment

for African American students. BLU has been an ally in recruiting African American and Hispanic males into the program. BLU is also an active member of the regional collaborative.

RUSD is an active partner and constant presence at the regional collaborative and has also worked with the Watson College of Education to establish the RUSD Project Impact chapter. This effort has led to the recruitment of 26 men from the RUSD classified staff pool who have entered the program since fall 2022, with a district commitment to fund their education and hire them to teach in RUSD upon program completion. FUSD has also recently come on board as part of the regional collaborative.

Schools First Federal Credit Union is another partner offering a 5-year financial commitment to Project Impact. Its financial support has mainly gone towards student

scholarships. The support it provides and the support of the two county offices of education have made it possible for the men in the program to complete their degree programs without any debt. Debt-free teacher preparation is one of the goals of this program and has been achieved thus far through the support of the program's partners. However, as enrollment increases and needs grow, the program is soliciting more partners (see Figure 2).

### Master Your Craft

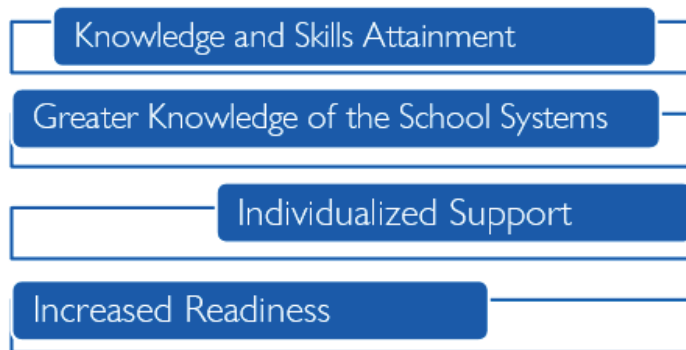
Master Your Craft is a series of professional development training sessions designed to enhance Project Impact program participants' knowledge with specific skill attainment and a clear understanding of the strategic application of those skills. Through Master Your Craft, these teacher candidates gain a greater understanding of the school-wide systems they will be

**Figure 2**  
**Current Partners**



**Figure 3**  
**Current Partners**

## Project Impact- Master Your Craft



joining as teachers and, more importantly, the way in which these systems can positively or negatively impact K–12 students’ educational experiences and outcomes (see Figure 3).

Project Impact teacher candidates pass through the program with individualized support that enables them to navigate the rigors of the teacher credentialing process. Project Impact meets these needs by preparing teacher candidates with foundational, experiential, and relevant pedagogy through quality credentialing programs, pre-internship educational experiences, and the Master Your Craft Professional Development series. Project Impact seeks to intentionally prepare teacher candidates as fully as possible to enter the classroom and immediately become impactful change agents for the schools and communities they serve.

The intent of Master Your Craft is to develop educators who master the skills for teaching and understand the varying contexts for using those skills in

real situations. These training sessions not only provide instruction but allow for sincere questioning that enables participants to internalize the information they receive. The goal is to align these professional development programs with relevant coursework to maximize learning and enhance these teachers’ effectiveness from day 1 (see Figure 4).

**A Study of Project Impact**

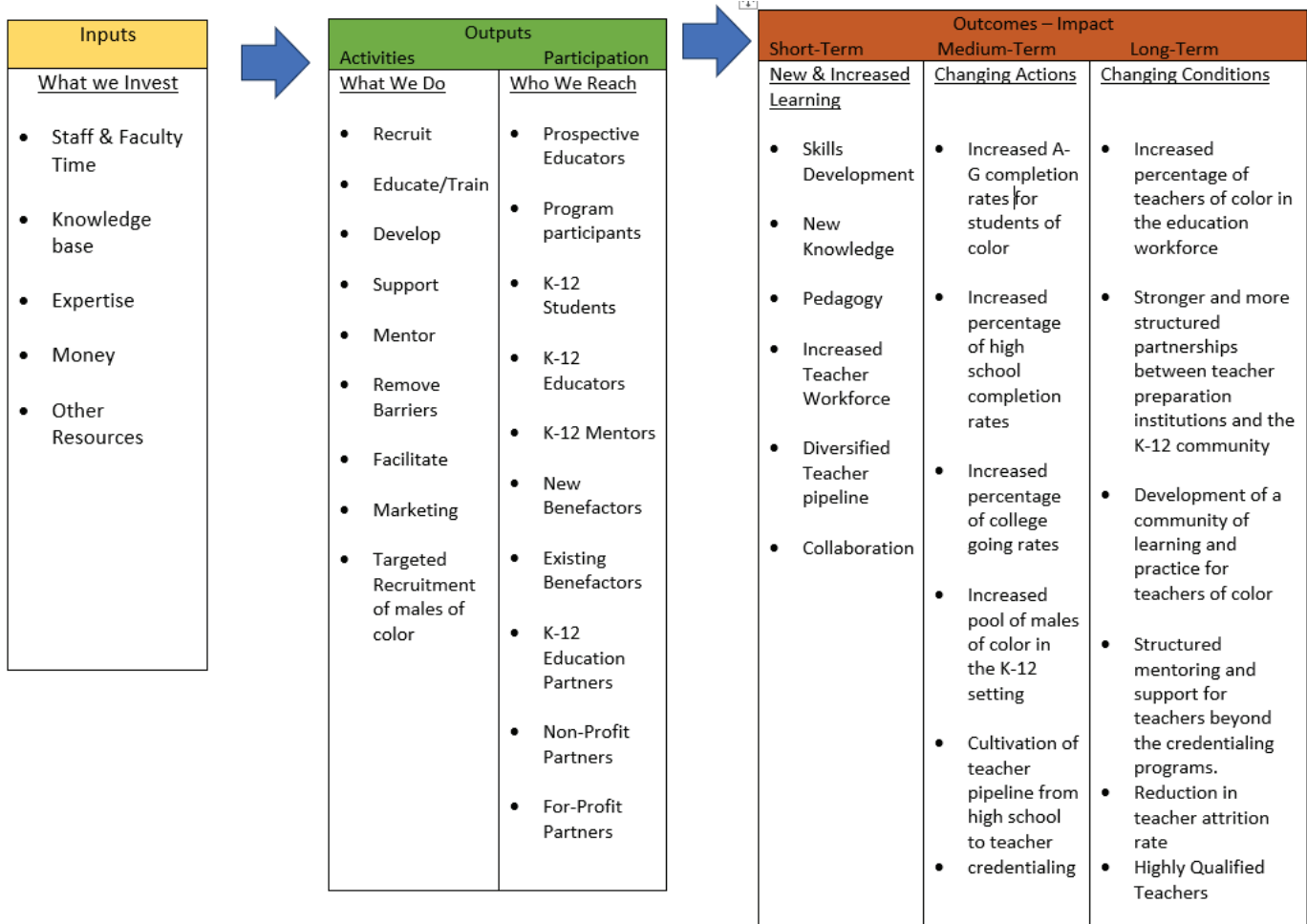
A recent study of Project Impact was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of the Project Impact Minority Male Teacher Pipeline Program as an education workforce development program. This initial study involved sampling the teacher candidates enrolled in spring 2023 as well as teachers who have completed the program and are practicing in the field to determine the effectiveness of the program and its activities from their perspectives.

The study employed a simple survey using a Likert scale instrument to

sample the program participants. The survey was distributed to 57 current and past program participants. Twenty-eight responses were received, indicating 16 of the respondents self-identified as Hispanic, 11 as African American, and 2 as other. The male candidates came from a variety of backgrounds, including the U.S. military, career technical fields, the health professions, education, and social services.

Respondents included program participants from the first cohort of spring 2020 through the spring 2023 cohort. Among the respondents, 9 self-identified as program completers, 2 as interns, 4 in the student teaching stage, and 12 in early fieldwork. The respondents represented five school districts in California’s Inland Empire. The survey indicated that 15 respondents were engaged in education-related work as either teacher’s aides, substitute teachers, or other forms of classified employment in a school district. Eleven were recent college

**Figure 4**  
**Project Impact Partnership Logic**



graduates; five came from technical, scientific, or career technical fields; one respondent came into teaching from the health services industry, and one came from social services.

### Study Findings

The study revealed that 26 out of the 27 respondents indicated that it was because Project Impact offered them the opportunity to contribute to society that they chose to enter the teaching workforce. It was also reported that the Project Impact vision spoke to their life goals (23 of 27 respondents). Three reasons stood out from the survey about why these respondents decided to enter the teacher workforce: (a) a desire to work with children, (b) the influence of a teacher in elementary or secondary school, or the influence of a teacher or adviser in college, and (c) the value or significance of education in society.

Survey participants also provided feedback about their experiences in the Project Impact program. Twenty-one of the 27 respondents indicated that they have participated in the Saturday professional development workshops, have been exposed to prominent education leaders in the field, and have gained a better understanding of the teaching profession due to their involvement in Project Impact. Twenty-three of the 27 respondents indicated they plan to make teaching a lifelong career.

### Conclusion

As a teacher workforce development program, Project Impact seeks to diversify the teaching workforce. Since its launch in the spring of 2020, this program has added a minimum of 92 African American and Hispanic men to the teacher workforce in the Riverside and San Bernardino Counties of Southern California. The goal of the program is to exponentially increase the diversity of the teacher workforce in California's Inland Empire and beyond.

The success of this program thus far is anchored by the effective partnerships that have been built in the region with the primary goal of increasing and diversifying the teacher workforce. The fact that two central county offices of education, several individual school districts, nonprofits, and a teacher's credit union have come together to partner with a college of education to increase and diversify the teacher workforce is what makes the Project Impact program unique.

### Next Steps

The next steps for the Project Impact program initiative include the following:

*Duplication of the Grow-Your-Own model of the Project Impact program across school districts.* The Grow-Your-Own model implemented with RUSD is currently being developed with another school district. The goal of the program is to perfect this model and use it to disseminate this approach more widely across the Inland Empire region of Southern California.

*Strengthening of the post-program mentoring program.* The program's commitment is to mentor these men for up to 4 years to ensure they transition smoothly into becoming tenured teachers and to reduce attrition. The program is investing resources into recruiting and training mentors who would commit to working with these men through their tenure as veteran teachers.

*Implementation of a longitudinal study that will review program effectiveness and teacher persistence/attrition rates after 5 years of program completion.* The structure and effectiveness of the Project Impact program will be studied continuously from the 5-year post-program completion mark of the first cohort to examine the degree to which the program has successfully produced effective teachers and ensured the longevity of the graduates in the profession.

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