

Center on  
**GREAT TEACHERS & LEADERS**

at the American Institutes for Research\* ■

## **STRENGTHEN AND DIVERSIFY THE EDUCATOR WORKFORCE: Address Shortages by Engaging Stakeholders in a Data-Driven, Equity-Focused Approach**

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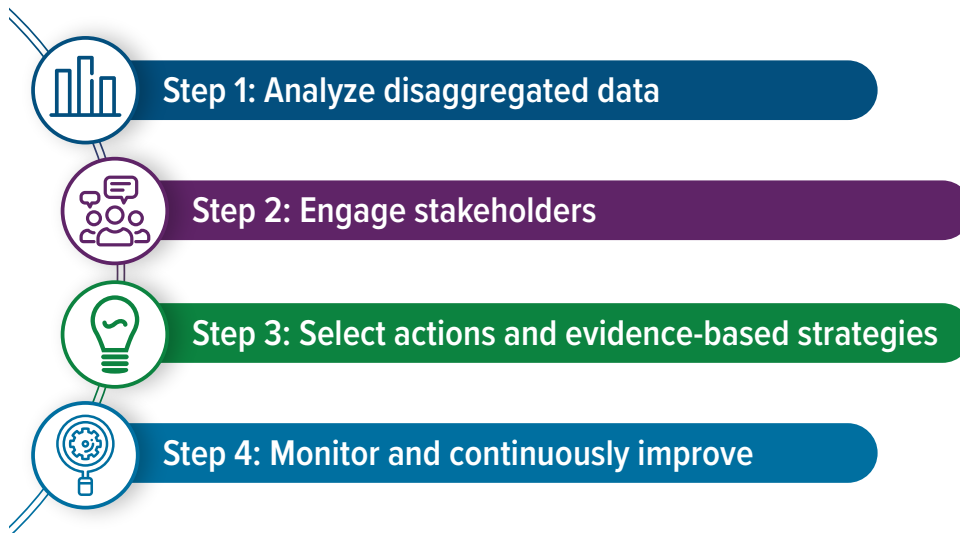
MARCH 2022



State education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) are grappling with short- and long-term educator shortages and the lack of educator diversity in the profession. These complicated problems require a data-driven solution. They also require an equity focus if we want all students to have talented teachers from a racially and ethnically diverse teacher corps.

New federal funding presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make a substantial impact for the students who are most impacted by educator shortages and the lack of diversity in their classrooms ([GTL Center, 2021](#)). Used strategically, *the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ARP)* funds can drive SEAs and LEAs to leverage existing efforts, reframe ongoing efforts, and/or start something new to address problems related to educator shortages and diversity.

Through our work with states and districts over the last 14 years, conducting strategic planning, addressing shortages, and diversifying the workforce, we recognize the challenges of this work. We welcome SEAs, LEAs, and educator preparation programs (EPPs) to engage with us to use the following approach to address both educator shortages and workforce diversity.



## Step 1: Analyze Disaggregated Data

Stabilizing and diversifying the educator workforce requires a thoughtful analysis that reviews both shortage data and diversity gaps. An analysis of shortage and diversity data can help education leaders make more strategic and data-driven investments. The [GTL Center Diversifying the Educator Workforce Data Tool](#) can support SEA, LEA, and EPP teams in this work by building new opportunities for examining shortage and diversity gaps through four distinct lenses, enabling practitioners to develop a deeper understanding of the gaps in their systems, and exploring the problem from multiple data-based perspectives.

**Short-term solutions can have impacts on long-term shortages and gaps.** Although engaging paraprofessionals or substitute teachers to lead classrooms this year may address short-term



Short-term  
shortage needs



Long-term  
shortage needs



Subject matter  
shortages



School level  
shortages

needs, in the long term, this approach may have potentially negative effects on students as they experience the disadvantages associated with having an underprepared and potentially ineffective teacher. Looking at the long term, structured career advancement pathways for paraprofessionals can increase the number of teachers in hard-to-staff schools and could potentially improve diversity and student outcomes (*New America, 2016; Villegas & Clewell, 1998*).

**Subject matter and school-level shortages.** Subject matter shortages are important to address. At this time, there are critical shortages of special education teachers, bilingual educators, school counselors/psychologists, social workers, and nurses. Research has suggested that shortages are often concentrated in specific high-need subjects **and** in hard-to-staff or underserved schools (e.g., schools serving student populations with concentrated poverty; *Dee & Goldhaber, 2017; Mason-Williams et al., 2019*). If education agencies examine data at the subject or district level only, they may miss gaps impacting students at the school level.

**Keep equity at the forefront.** The [State Plan](#) from the U.S. Department of Education asks SEAs to assist LEAs “in identifying the most urgent areas of shortages with particular plans for individuals LEAs facing the most significant needs” (p. 16). A review of subject matter and school-level shortages is more likely to lead to targeted policies and practices that address the needs of our most disadvantaged students—students of color, students in low-income communities, students with disabilities, and English learners. These students are [most impacted by educator shortages](#), were [disproportionately impacted by the pandemic](#), and are often impacted by the lack of diversity in their classrooms. Stakeholders can take a solid step toward closing achievement gaps by disaggregating data to examine educator shortages at the subject level and school level, as well as diversity gaps at district and school levels.

**Examine diversity gaps using research-driven principles.** To successfully diversify the workforce, schools, districts, and states should review policy, practices, and data used throughout the entire career continuum in an attempt to identify the drivers of diversity gaps. Doing so allows education leaders to prioritize the places and students for which diversification is most urgent, and it ensures that the places most in need of diversification benefit from the strategies.

[GTL Center GIS Mapping](#) supports SEA, LEA, and EPP teams by building new opportunities for examining both shortage and diversity gaps, building contextual understanding and exploring the problem from multiple data-based perspectives. An example of how the tool has been further developed is highlighted in the third part of our webinar series, [Beyond Selection and Hiring: Diversifying the Educator Workforce by Eliminating Barriers and Creating Pathways Throughout the Pipeline](#).



## Step 2: Engage Stakeholders: Support LEAs to Identify Where Shortages Are Most Severe

After education leaders are engaged in the data, the next step is to ensure the appropriate stakeholders are involved to collectively review and interpret the data. While the [State Plan](#) from the U.S. Department of Education does not include stakeholder engagement as a requirement in Section F (p. 15), doing so brings context into the conversation and creates essential partnerships for solving the problem and sustaining impactful policies and programs.

SEAs, LEAs, and EPPs can support this process by leading data-focused workshops with key stakeholders to disaggregate and visualize teacher workforce data to determine (a) emerging and unaddressed shifts in the teacher workforce because of the pandemic and (b) which students, teachers, regions, and subjects are disproportionately impacted by persistent educator shortages. One such approach uses the GTL Center’s [root-cause analysis tool](#), facilitated by our trained experts. This tool allows stakeholders to prioritize the most urgent needs.

Beyond data analysis, stakeholders are critical to building a consensus around the uses of federal funding and serve as essential partners in addressing shortages throughout the educator career continuum. Stakeholders can be engaged in designing, implementing, and continuously improving strategies. This ongoing dialogue is essential for creating policies and practices that have lasting positive impacts.



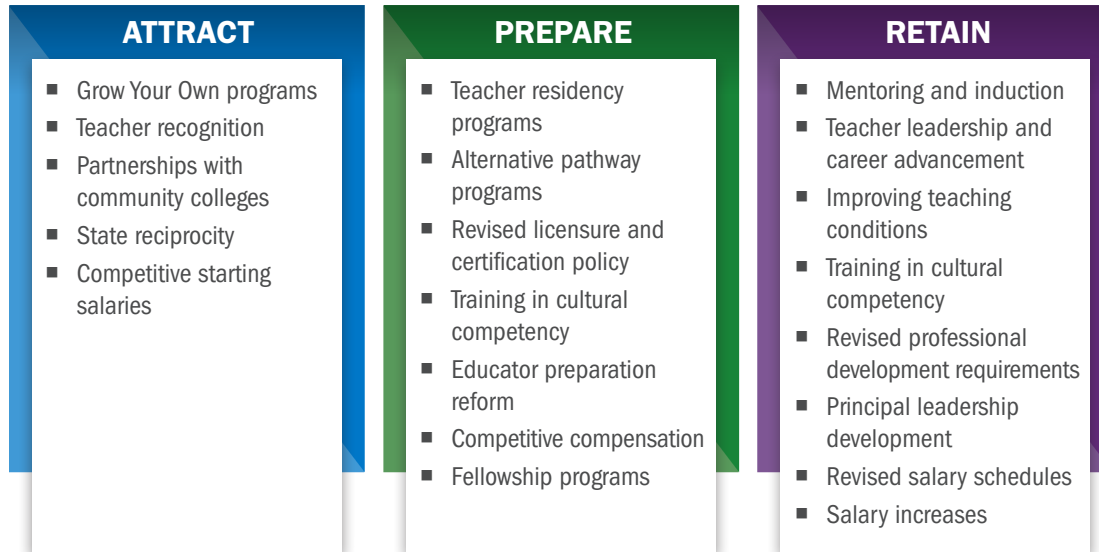
## Step 3: Select Actions and Evidence-Based Strategies

The [State Plan](#) from the U.S. Department of Education asks SEAs to describe “the actions the SEA will take to fill anticipated gaps” (p. 16). Beyond that requirement, education leaders should prioritize [evidence-based strategies](#) for eliminating educator shortages and diversity gaps. Using the insights from Steps 1 and 2, strategies should be aligned to both data and context (e.g., hard-to-staff Comprehensive Support and Improvement schools, rural schools, and EPPs). Making deliberate choices about which strategies to invest in and where to focus resources ensures that states and districts target limited funds to where they are most needed and can have the greatest impact.

For example, pathways for paraprofessionals are one way to recruit linguistically diverse individuals and people of color into the profession, many of whom are already invested in school communities, live in those communities, and often share the cultures and ethnicities of their students ([New America, 2016](#); [Villegas & Clewell, 1998](#)). In addition, because college graduates of color have, on average, higher levels of student debt than White graduates ([Scott-Clayton & Li, 2016](#)), scholarships and loan forgiveness programs can attract graduates of color who might not otherwise consider teaching as an option. Building cultural competency in EPPs helps all candidates feel better prepared for the classroom and, when used in professional development, can make teaching conditions better for teachers of color [who report feeling](#)



isolated and pigeonholed in their roles when their colleagues have limited cultural competence. The GTL Center supports clients in the design, development, implementation, and monitoring of the following strategies used across the talent development continuum:



## Step 4: Monitor and Continuously Improve

Monitoring the progress and implementation of the evidence-based practices is valuable because it helps states and districts assess whether programs have the impact that we hope they would have while helping programs to meet short- or long-term goals. The [State Plan](#) from the U.S. Department of Education requires monitoring for “safeguarding funds for their intended purposes” (p. 16). Beyond that requirement, states can assess the *impact* of these strategies and programs with GTL Center support (e.g., indicators of workforce stability, diversity, effectiveness, equity, student learning and well-being). This process will support decisions about how to reallocate funds from initiatives that do not show impact to those that do. It can also support decisions around what to scale for greater impact.

This detailed approach may go beyond the federal requirements, yet through [our work with states and districts](#) we know that it is essential to eliminating gaps and achieving state and district goals. It might be the difference between losing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and making a substantial impact for the students who need it the most.

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