

Reverse the Trend

National education groups are collaborating with states to address teacher shortages

By L. Earl Franks, Ed.D., CAE



A growing trend in education—teacher shortages—is affecting our nation’s schools, and now is the time to work together to address it and reverse it.

School districts across the country are facing a severe shortage of teachers—especially in math, science, special education, career and technical edu-

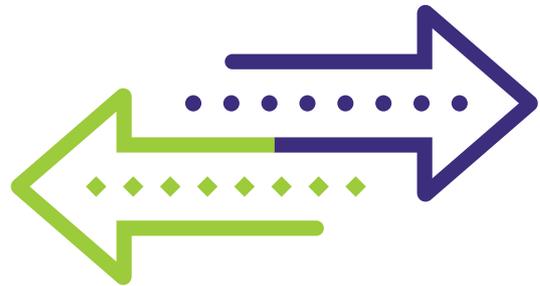
cation, and bilingual education, according to a March 2018 Education Commission of the States (ECS) report. Such shortages are much more common in urban, rural, high-poverty, high-minority, and low-achieving schools, according to the report. In fact, schools with high populations of students of color had 70 percent higher teacher turnover rates, and underfunded and underachieving Title I schools experienced a 50 percent higher specialty teacher turnover rate.

These shortages are not only expensive for school districts, but they also negatively impact school climate, culture, and student learning by undermining quality and stability in the classroom. To deal with this issue, states have been working on multiple strategies in an attempt to reverse the trend. In 2017, 23 states enacted almost 50 bills aimed to recruit teachers to high-need schools and high-need subjects, according to the ECS report.

State-Level Support at a National Level

From a national perspective, NAESP is involved in advocacy and policy efforts that attempt to address teacher and principal shortages, especially in rural communities. In July 2018, we helped outline provisions for a congressional bill, the Preparing and Retaining Education Professionals (PREP) Act, and supported it. This legislation will help ensure that there are enough teachers and principals, with the right skills and tools, to educate students and prepare them for the future.

Additionally, NAESP is a national collaborator in the Diverse and Learner-Ready Teachers (DLRT) Initiative,



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launched in March 2018 by the Council of Chief State School Officers. This initiative connects nine states with each other and experts in the field to receive individualized support in creating plans to address recruitment challenges. The participating states are Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, and New York.

The DLRT network is working to revise, enact, or remove state policies in order to address challenges in diversifying the educator workforce and ensuring all educators are culturally responsive in practice. NAESP’s role as a national collaborator in this effort has been specific to communication and advocacy, focusing on the following questions:

- What is retention?
- What is retention’s role in the larger teacher pipeline?
- What does teacher diversity have to do with retention?
- What are some policies and practices that could help make teacher diversity an integral part of retention?
- What does culturally responsive practice (CRP) have to do with teacher retention?
- What are some policies and practices that could help make CRP an integral part of teacher retention?

Our hope is that together with Congress, state legislatures, other national organizations, and state education agencies, we can collaboratively support changes to policy and practice that change the face and nature of the educational experiences each child has in our nation’s public schools. □

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