

Diversity in the Workforce

Issue Brief



Issue Brief
Diversity in the Workforce

Addressing Teacher Shortages and Improving Diversity

Relevant bills to this topic:

Strength in Diversity Act of 2020

- H.R. 2629 & S. 1418: This bill directs the Department of Education (DE) to award grants to specified educational agencies (e.g., local educational agencies) to develop or implement plans to improve diversity and reduce or eliminate racial or socioeconomic isolation in publicly funded early childhood education programs, public elementary schools, or public secondary schools.
 - Passed in the House 9/15/2020
 - Read in the Senate and referred to Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions on 9/16/2020

Why Support This Topic?

- State level
 - 2019-2020 critical teacher shortages reported in Florida
 - This included special education teachers!
- Federal level
 - 18% of special education teachers and 20% special education professors are people of color
 - More than half of students with disabilities are from minority backgrounds!
- Some programs, such as a school district in GA recruit residents to build a workforce that reflects the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the student population?

Definitions

- Critical Shortage Area: Certification areas where students at proportions of teachers who are not certified in the appropriate field are being hired in health math courses, where significant vacancies exist, and where postsecondary institutions do not produce enough graduates to meet the needs of Florida's K-12 student population. Section 1012.07, F.S., requires the State Board of Education to annually identify critical teacher shortages!

Source:
1. Council for Exceptional Children Issue Brief 2020 Shortages of Special Education Teachers and Early Childhood Teachers
2. [NPR](#) 9/18/2020, "We Still Have a Long Way to Go on Teacher Shortages"
3. [Florida Department of Education](#) Critical Teacher Shortage Areas



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What does “critical shortage area” mean?

Critical shortage areas are certification areas where substantial proportions of teachers who are not certified in the appropriate field are being hired to teach such courses, where significant vacancies exist, and where postsecondary institutions do not produce enough graduates to meet the needs of Florida’s K-12 student population. Section 1012.07, F.S., requires the State Board of Education to annually identify critical teacher shortages

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Why support this topic?

- Having too few teachers of color places both students and teachers at a disadvantage.
- Racially diverse role models in the classroom benefit all children, regardless of race.
- Having few teachers of color (or only one, which can often be the case) in a school building can spur feelings of isolation and, subsequently, contribute to teachers of color leaving the profession at a disproportionately higher rate than white teachers.

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Why support this topic?

○ State level

- 2019-2020 critical teacher shortages reported in Florida.
- This included special education teachers.

○ Federal level

- 18% of special education teachers and 10% special education professors are people of color.
- More than half of students with disabilities are from minority backgrounds.

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Ways you can advocate:

- Build a pipeline of educators of color.
- Create and share public examples of your district's support for diversity and equity.
- Partner with external organizations that promote diversity and equity.
- Demonstrate equitable practices in the treatment of students.

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Urge Legislators to support related bills to this topic:

- Strength in Diversity Act of 2020

- H.R.2639 & S.1418: This bill directs the Department of Education (ED) to award grants to specified educational agencies (e.g., local educational agencies) to develop or implement plans to improve diversity and reduce or eliminate racial or socioeconomic isolation in publicly funded early childhood education programs, public elementary schools, or public secondary schools.

- Passed in the House 9/15/2020.

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Urge Legislators to support related bills to this topic:

- Strengthen the Higher Education Act Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, the Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program, and the Loan Forgiveness for Service in Areas of National Need.
- Co-sponsor and support the Educator Preparation Reform Act, S. 969 (Reed, D-RI).
- Co-sponsor and support Supporting the Teaching Profession Through Revitalizing Investments in Valuable Educators Act (STRIVE), S. 1866 (Booker, D-NJ) and H.R. 3139 (Norcross, D-NJ).
- Co-sponsor and support Preparing and Retaining Education Professionals Act (PREP), S. 752 (Kaine, D-VA). • Include education administrators and specialized instructional support personnel in any legislation applicable to addressing education shortages.

Questions?

