



# Project FIRST

Factors Impacting Retention and  
Sustainability for Teachers

A Project by Western Oregon University sponsored  
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# Project Team



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# Chapter 4: Retention Within the Program

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# Background & Research

**High quality teacher preparation programs housed within colleges and universities promote retention, resilience, and sustainability in the field.**

Research shows...

alternative routes that fall outside of the institutions of higher education's internship, residency, and/or student teaching models towards teacher licensure have significantly lower rates of teacher retention between 0-5 years (Larkin et al., 2022).



# Challenges Experienced by Teacher Candidates



## Financial Constraints

Research findings indicate that teacher **candidates of color disproportionately must have second jobs** while working or pursuing licensure (Black & Rice, 2020; Dixon et al., 2019)



## Academic Workload

**Heavy workload** was **considered** a challenge for most participants. **Language demands** also played a role in increasing these challenges.

# Financial Constraints

“The barrier for me was I was working full-time and attending my undergrad classes, they're full-time as well. And so it was really hard...”

In-service teacher

“It was really hard though because you had to go to work all day long and then get off, pick up your kids, drop them off to another daycare, go to class, and then pick them up and go back home. And then by the time you got home, it was a lot.”

Pre-service teacher



“It was difficult having to work and go to school at the same time, unfortunately, I was not able to get a lot of financial support from home, so I had no choice but to have a job. [...] Another struggle was having enough food, but the food pantry was a great resource for me.”

—Survey Response





# Academic Workload



“We had a lot on our plates. It was a lot of classes, it was **a lot of going on**...Even though they were super flexible with the **deadlines**, I felt overwhelmed.”  
(Pre-service teacher)



“The [Teacher Performance Assessment] was hard. I felt lost the whole time until maybe three weeks or four weeks into it... I wish I could ask more at the beginning...”  
(Pre-service teacher)



“As an **English language learner**, I am still not fully there to understand all the **language and the vocabulary** [...] So that was an obstacle.”  
(In-service teacher)



# Successes Experienced by Teacher Candidates



**Financial  
Support**



**Program  
Flexibility**



**Affinity  
Supports**



**Peer/Cohort  
Supports**






**Professor/  
Advisor  
Support**



**High Quality  
Curriculum**

# Successes Experienced by Teacher Candidates

	Financial Support	<p>“I had a lot of questions about money and scholarships and how I was going to pay, and I know [my advisor] was always someone who gave me resources for scholarships to apply.”</p> <p>(Survey Response)</p>
	Peer/Cohort Supports	<p>“The bilingual [program] support was my biggest support. Any question I had they would go out of their way to help me navigate or support me through my needs.”</p> <p>(Survey Response)</p>
	Professor/ Advisor Support	<p>“Professors went above and beyond for students and were very understanding of situations and were willing to work with you.”</p> <p>(Survey Response)</p>



“Just having advisors that were BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, and people of color] helped me, because I feel like they [could] relate to us. I feel like if we didn't have that, I would have struggled a lot because it's hard to tell somebody that you're struggling, and them just not know[ing] what to say or what to do to help you.”

In-service teacher



# Research findings indicate that...

Engaging Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies in teacher preparation programs supports persistence.

(Landertinger et al., 2021)



Student teaching in a high-quality teaching and learning context with a highly impactful clinical teacher positively influences retention.

(Bastian & Drake, 2023)



# Recommendations



## Peer Mentoring

“Having access to someone who has been through the program to ask questions about how they balanced work, school, and family would have been beneficial.”  
(Survey Response)



## Increased Classroom Experiences

“It is completely different when you [are] student teaching versus you have your own classroom. I wish I had more training in that.”  
(In-service teacher)



## Reduced Workload

“[Some] classes could have been offered before getting into the [clinical practice] phase of the program, [which would help] out just a little bit with the load of the stress.”  
(Pre-service teacher)

“Having some mentors like us that are here right now, being able to check in with people that are going through the program, so we can give them advice and say, “Hey, if you’re doing this, make sure that you’re doing this.” Just giving them advice and encouraging them to go through the program, I think, would be super helpful. Having someone that already went through it, that can tell me what specific thing that [they] did.”

— In-service teacher



“I have realized being able to teach in Spanish takes a lot of practice including using the language very frequently. Being [in the program] taught me a lot about the language but actually being able to teach and use it takes a lot more than just taking classes. Something that would help would be to have more service learning classes where students have to practice using the language in real settings.”


—Survey Response





# Chapter 4 Toolkit

Title and Link	Description
<p><b><u>Diversifying the Teaching Profession Through High-Retention Pathways</u></b></p>	<p>More and more states and districts are recognizing that recruiting and retaining teachers of color can help meet the needs of their students, while at the same time helping to curb critical teacher shortages that continue to worsen across the country.<sup>1</sup> Prospective teachers of color encounter unique barriers to entering the profession and continuing to teach for the long haul. But high-retention pathways—combining high-quality clinically rich preparation with financial support—can be especially effective at reversing those trends.</p>



LEARNING POLICY INSTITUTE RESEARCH BRIEF APR 2018

## Diversifying the Teaching Profession Through High-Retention Pathways

Desiree Carver-Thomas

**Abstract**

Research illustrates the importance of greater teacher diversity because of the additional benefits teachers of color provide to all students, and to students of color in particular. Studies also show that policies must focus more effectively on retention of teachers of color if diversity in the teaching profession is to be sustained. While some teachers of color are being recruited more in years past, their turnover rates are high, in part due to inadequate preparation and mentoring, poor teaching conditions, and displacement from the high-need schools in which they teach. Increasing the number of teachers of color in the workforce requires building high-retention pathways into the field that offer high-quality preparation and financial supports, including service scholarships, loan forgiveness programs, teacher residencies, Grow Your Own programs, creating mentorship, and other policies and strategies that improve teacher incomes, bring professional growth, and teaching conditions for current and aspiring teachers of color.

The full report can be found online at <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/publications/diversifying-teaching-profession>.

More and more states and districts are recognizing that recruiting and retaining teachers of color can help meet the needs of their students, while at the same time helping to curb critical teacher shortages that continue to worsen across the country.<sup>2</sup> Prospective teachers of color encounter unique barriers to entering the profession and continuing to teach for the long haul. But high-retention pathways—combining high-quality clinically rich preparation with financial support—can be especially effective at reversing those trends.

**Why Teacher Diversity Matters**

A growing body of research demonstrates that teachers of color provide benefits to all students, especially to students of color. For example:

- Studies have found that teachers of color boost the academic performance of students of color. Teachers' influences include improved reading and mathematics test scores, improved graduation rates, and increased aspirations to attend college.<sup>3</sup> One such study found that the benefit to Black students of having a Black teacher for just 1 year in elementary school can persist over several years, especially for Black students from low-income families.<sup>4</sup>
- Students of color also experience social-emotional and nonacademic benefits to having teachers of color, such as fewer unexcused absences and lower likelihoods of chronic absenteeism and suspension.<sup>5</sup> Students of color and White students also report having positive perceptions of their teachers of color, including feeling cared for and academically challenged.<sup>6</sup>

# Next Time



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