

Date of Hearing: April 7, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
Patrick O'Donnell, Chair  
AB 520 (Gipson) – As Amended March 25, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Teacher recruitment and retention: California Diversifying the Teacher Workforce Grant Program.

**SUMMARY:** Establishes the California Diversifying the Teacher Workforce Grant Program, administered by the California Department of Education (CDE) to provide one-time competitive grants to local educational agencies (LEAs) to develop and implement new, or expand existing, programs that address a local need to develop a teacher workforce that serves all pupil populations, including Black pupils. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the California Diversifying the Teacher Workforce Grant Program (Program) to be administered by the CDE to provide one-time competitive grants to LEAs to develop and implement new, or expand existing, programs that address a local need to develop a teacher workforce that serves all pupil populations, including Black pupils.
- 2) Defines “applicant” to mean a school district, a county office of education, or a charter school.
- 3) Authorizes grant funding to be used for local efforts to recruit, develop support systems for, provide outreach and communication strategies to, and retain, teachers. States that these efforts can include recruitment and retention solutions that address a local need for teachers that can serve all pupil populations, including Black pupils.
- 4) Defines allowable grant activities to include any of the following:
  - a) Collaborating with existing California State University (CSU) teacher education programs or existing regional teacher coaching programs, or developing new support and coaching networks for teachers;
  - b) Providing professional learning for teacher educators. Requires that funding support programs for three-year intensive, mentored, and clinical teacher preparation programs dedicated to preparing and retaining teachers;
  - c) Designing and implementing a comprehensive recruitment strategy with the goal of developing and maintaining a teacher workforce that serves the entire student body;
  - d) Efforts to transform the LEA’s or schoolsite’s culture to one that values diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds;
  - e) Creating career pathways to encourage teachers to pursue administrative positions;
  - f) Implementing practices to create a positive school climate, including restorative justice;

- g) Strategically planning communications and outreach to engage stakeholders in activities to create positive school climate through community engagement;
  - h) Offering structured feedback and coaching systems organized around social-emotional learning, including, but not limited to, promoting teacher self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships, and responsible decision-making skills, improving teacher attitudes and beliefs about one's self and others, and supporting learning communities for educators to engage in a meaningful classroom teaching experience; and
  - i) Other recruitment and retention solutions that address a local need for a pool of teachers that can serve the entire student body.
- 5) Requires the CDE to prescribe rules regarding the timing, manner, and the information required to be included in grant applications.
- 6) Requires the CDE, when selecting grant recipients, to require applicants to demonstrate all of the following:
- a) Difficulty recruiting teachers, specifically teachers in high-need schools;
  - b) Significant turnover of teachers;
  - c) Receipt of federal Title I funds at the time of the application;
  - d) A disproportionate number of novice teachers compared to the statewide average;
  - e) A commitment to developing culturally responsive teachers with a special emphasis on improving outcomes of high-needs, low-performing pupil populations; and
  - f) Experience with social and emotional learning practices and restorative justice.
- 7) Requires the CDE, when administering the Program, to:
- a) Provide technical assistance and guidelines on the recruitment of teachers, social and emotional learning, school climate, and restorative justice, for purposes of professional development. Requires that these core competencies be published on the CDE's website and be made available to LEAs;
  - b) Determine the number of grants to be awarded and the total amount awarded to each grant applicant; and
  - c) Require grant recipients to submit annual reports on the status and progress of the grant program and to submit a final implementation report within three years of receiving a grant award that describes the outcomes and effectiveness of the grant program.
- 8) Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) and the CDE to submit a report to the Legislature and the Governor on or before June 30, 2026, on the results of the Program.

- 9) Requires the CDE to conduct an evaluation of the Program to determine the effectiveness of the various initiatives in recruiting, developing support systems for, and retaining teachers, and submit a report to the Department of Finance and the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the Legislature on or before June 30, 2026.
- 10) Makes implementation of the Act contingent on an appropriation being made for its purposes by the Legislature in the annual Budget Act or another statute.
- 11) Makes funding for the program available for encumbrance until June 30, 2026, and for liquidation until June 30, 2027.
- 12) Requires that, of the funds appropriated, \$175,000 be made available annually until June 30, 2027, for the CDE to administer the Program.
- 13) Sunsets the provisions of the bill on January 1, 2027.
- 14) Makes findings and declarations relative to the importance of diversifying the teacher workforce in California schools.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the Golden State Teacher Grant program, administered by the Student Aid Commission, to provide one-time grant funds of up to \$20,000 to each student enrolled on or after January 1, 2020, in a professional preparation program within an accredited California institution of higher education leading to a preliminary teaching credential, approved by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), if the student commits to working in a high-need field at a priority school for four years after the student receives the teaching credential. (Education Code (EC) 69617)
- 2) Requires a recipient of a grant through the Golden State Teacher Grant program to agree to teach in a high-need field at a priority school for four years and shall have five years, upon completion of the recipient's professional preparation program, to meet that obligation. Requires a grant recipient to agree to repay the state 25% of the total received grant funds annually, up to full repayment of the received grant funds, under specified conditions.
- 3) Defines "high-need field" for purposes of the Golden State Teacher Grant program to mean:
  - a) Bilingual education;
  - b) Mathematics or science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), including computer science and career technical education in STEM areas;
  - c) Science;
  - d) Special education; and
  - e) Multiple subject instruction.

- 4) Defines, for purposes of the Golden State Teacher Grant program, a “priority school” to mean a school with a high percentage of teachers holding emergency-type permits over the last three years.
- 5) Establishes the Teacher Residency Grant Program, to provide funding to programs that partner with one or more teacher preparation programs accredited by the CTC, in which a prospective teacher teaches at least one-half time alongside a teacher of record, who is designated as the experienced mentor teacher, for at least one full school year while engaging in initial preparation coursework. (EC 44415)
- 6) Establishes the Bilingual Teacher Training Assistance Program (BTTP), administered by the CDE in consultation with the CTC and representatives of bilingual educators, for teachers who are granted waivers and who are enrolled and participating in a program leading to a bilingual specialist credential or a certificate of competence for bilingual-crosscultural competence. (EC 52181)
- 7) Establishes the California Classified School Employee Teacher Credentialing Program for the purpose of recruiting classified school employees to participate in a program designed to encourage them to enroll in teacher training programs and to provide instructional service as teachers in the public schools. (EC 44393)
- 8) Establishes the Local Solutions Grant program in the 2018-19 state budget, which provided \$125 million to the CTC to administer in the form of grants to address teacher shortages. \$75 million in grants was provided to support teacher residency programs to prepare new special education, science, mathematics, or bilingual teachers. An additional \$50 million was made available to recruit, prepare, and retain special education teachers.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:**

***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, “Student success is amplified when they are taught by teachers who reflect the diversity of those students. In addition to academic benefits, students of color experience social-emotional gains to having teachers who look like them, also lessening the likelihood of chronic absenteeism and suspension. Assembly Bill 520 seeks to create a program that will prepare and invest in the recruitment and retention of a larger and diverse pool of teachers. It will assist California with addressing the racial and ethnic disparities that exist throughout the state, helping to reduce the equity gap.”

***Already weak teaching pipeline further damaged by COVID-19 education disruptions.*** A March, 2021 report by the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) raised concerns about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the teacher shortage in California:

- *Teacher shortages remain a critical problem.* Most districts have found teachers to be in short supply, especially for math, science, special education, and bilingual education. Shortages are especially concerning as a return to in-person instruction will require even more teachers to accommodate physical distancing requirements. Most districts are filling hiring needs with teachers on substandard credentials and permits, reflecting a statewide trend of increasing reliance on underprepared teachers.

- *Teacher pipeline problems are exacerbated by teacher testing policies and inadequate financial aid for completing preparation.* Many districts attributed shortages to having a limited pool of fully credentialed applicants, with more than half reporting that testing requirements and lack of financial support for teacher education pose barriers to entry into teaching.
- *Teacher workload and burnout are major concerns.* The transition to online and hybrid learning models has had a steep learning curve and poses ongoing challenges that have been a primary contributor to some teachers' decisions to retire earlier than previously planned. With district leaders estimating that teacher workloads have at least doubled, many were concerned that the stressors of managing the challenges of the pandemic on top of the challenges of an increased workload could lead to teacher burnout and increased turnover rates.
- *Growing retirements and resignations further reduce supply.* In some districts, retirements and resignations are contributing to shortages, while in others, these retirements and resignations offset the need for anticipated layoffs due to expected budget cuts this school year. District leaders anticipate higher retirement rates next year, which could exacerbate shortages.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure of testing sites for assessments used in teacher credentialing, such as the state's test of basic skills (CBEST). As of February 2021, testing sites were open at about 50% capacity. The basic skills and subject matter competence exams have been deferred for teacher candidates affected by COVID related testing center closures during the period from mid-March 2020 until August 31, 2021. Student teaching hours have been redefined by the necessary shift to distance learning, which may result in fewer candidates earning their credentials during the pandemic.

In February, 2021, the California State Teachers Retirement System (CalSTRS) reported an increase in retirements related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the second half of 2020, the number of retirements (3,202) increased 26% over the same period in 2019.

In a survey of 500 members, CalSTRS learned that 62% of those surveyed retired earlier than planned. The top three reasons given by respondents were:

- 56%: Challenges of teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 35%: Did not want to continue working remotely
- 35%: Did not want to risk exposure to COVID-19

CalSTRS reported that the largest number of CalSTRS service retirements was in fiscal year 2009–10, during the global financial crisis and recession. More than 16,000 members filed for retirement. CalSTRS estimates that, as a result of the pandemic, California is poised to experience our second highest year of retirements. If current trends continue, the total for 2020–21 will be just under 16,000.

A 2021 RAND Corporation survey found that almost half of the teachers who voluntarily stopped teaching in public schools after March 2020 and before their scheduled retirement left because of the COVID-19 pandemic. RAND also found that “early leavers” could be lured back

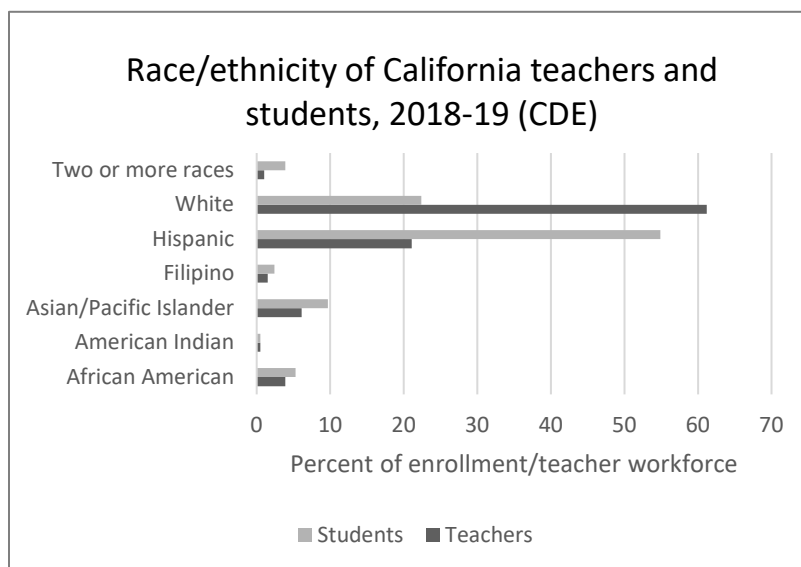
to public school teaching. Over half of the teachers who voluntarily left the profession early primarily because of the pandemic indicated that they would be somewhat or definitely willing to return to public school teaching once most staff and students are vaccinated.

There are some signs that a policy change related to the pandemic has increased enrollment in teacher preparation programs. According to a report in the *New York Times*, enrollment in the teacher preparation program at CSU Long Beach increased 15% percent this year, according to the system’s preliminary data, partially attributed to an executive order which temporarily allowed candidates to enter preparation programs without meeting basic skills requirements. Other teacher preparation programs report seeing the similar trends.

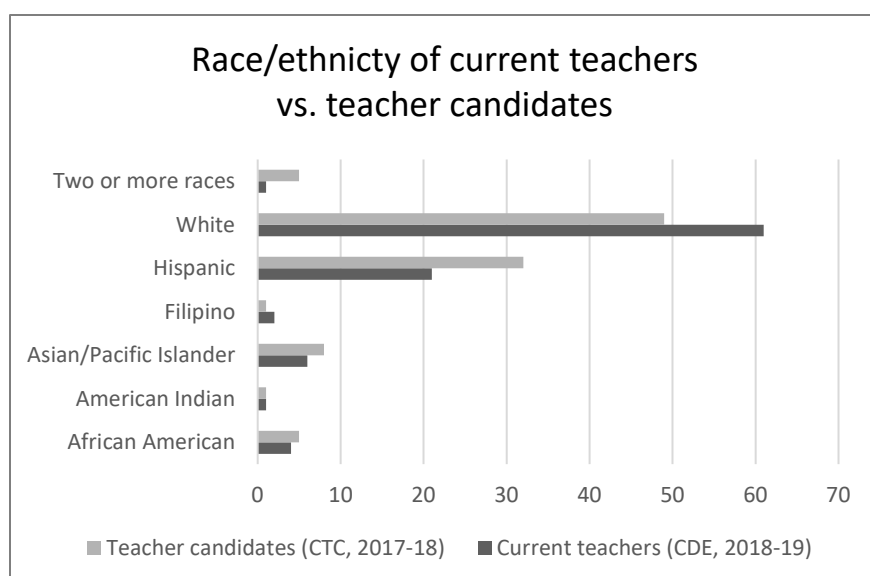
***California teaching force is less diverse than student population, but gradually becoming more so.***

California’s teaching force is significantly less diverse than the student population, but is becoming more diverse as retiring teachers are replaced by a more diverse generation of new teachers.

According to the CDE, 23% percent of the student population is white, while 63% of the teacher population is White. 54% of students are Latino, but only 20% are. (CalEdFacts, 2016-17 and 2017-18).



The CTC’s 2019 Annual Report Card on California Teacher Preparation Programs for 2017-18 demonstrates that California’s teaching force is becoming more diverse. As shown in the adjacent chart, teacher candidates as a group are less white than the current teaching force (49% vs. 71%), more Hispanic (32% vs. 21%) and slightly more African American (5% vs. 4%).



***Research on the effect of teacher diversity on student achievement.***

According to the LPI, research indicates the following benefits of a diverse teaching workforce:

- Teachers of color boost the academic performance of students of color, including improved reading and math test scores, improved graduation rates, and increases in aspirations

to attend college.

- Students of color and white students report having positive perceptions of their teachers of color, including feeling cared for and academically challenged.
- Greater diversity of teachers may mitigate feelings of isolation, frustration, and fatigue that can contribute to individual teachers of color leaving the profession when they feel they are alone.

***Progress undermined by higher rates of turnover among teachers of color.*** Data from the National Center for Education Statistics indicates the number of teachers of color entering the profession has risen significantly in recent decades, outpacing growth in both the number of white teachers and the number of students of color. But this growth has been undermined by high rates of turnover among teachers of color. Teachers of color leave the profession at the rate of 19% vs. 15% for white teachers, and African American teachers have one of the highest rates of turnover. Research indicates that this higher rate of turnover is strongly tied to working conditions these teachers' schools (Ingersoll, 2019).

The LPI noted in 2017 that although African American teachers were once more likely to stay in teaching than white teachers, nationally, the current rate current African American teacher turnover rate, at 22%, is nearly 50% greater than that of other teachers. LPI notes that African American teachers, like other teachers of color, are more likely to have entered teaching through alternative pathways, and are 3.5 more likely to have not had a student teaching experience. LPI notes that teachers of color are more likely to teach in schools where turnover rates are higher for all teachers.

***What does research say about strategies to diversify the teaching workforce?*** A 2018 report by the LPI points to the following barriers to the development of a diverse teacher workforce:

- Inadequate teacher preparation when teachers enter through alternative routes and try to teach while they are in training, along with lack of ongoing support for new teachers, which drive high teacher turnover rates.
- Teacher licensure exams that disproportionately exclude teacher candidates of color despite little evidence that these exams predict teacher effectiveness.
- Poor working conditions and low salaries that discourage teachers from staying in their schools and in the profession.
- Displacement from the high-need schools they teach in, where accountability strategies have often resulted in staff reconstitution or closing schools rather than investing in improvements.

The LPI notes that to increase the number of teachers of color requires intentional preparation and hiring, providing ongoing support, and addressing college affordability. They point to the following promising practices:

- *High-retention, supportive pathways into teaching*, through strategies such as underwriting the cost of teacher preparation through service scholarships and loan forgiveness, funding teacher residencies, recruiting teacher candidates from

nontraditional populations, intensive teacher preparation support programs offering ongoing mentorship, tutoring, exam stipends, job placement services, and other supports to ensure teachers of color successfully complete preparation programs, and making adjustments to state teacher licensure requirements to allow teaching candidates to demonstrate their competency through rigorous but more authentic performance assessments, creating state data systems that monitor and reward the racial diversity of enrollees in teacher preparation programs,

- *Hiring and induction strategies*, such as hiring earlier in the year, partnering with local teacher preparation programs to coordinate student teaching and vet candidates, including teachers of color in the hiring process in meaningful ways, and offering comprehensive induction to support teachers of color in their first years of teaching. Induction often includes being matched with a veteran mentor teacher and can also include seminars, classroom assistance, time to collaborate with other teachers, coaching and feedback from experienced teachers, and reduced workloads.
- *Improve school teaching conditions through improved school leadership* by supporting improved principal preparation, using the federal Title II's optional 3% leadership set-aside funds that can enable states to strengthen the quality of school leaders, developing partnerships at the district level with local universities and teachers of color to actively recruit talented teachers into administrator preparation, and providing ongoing professional learning opportunities for school leaders to develop the skills to support teachers effectively.

A 2019 report on the retention of teachers of color by the Education Trust West and TeachPlus, *If You Listen, We Will Stay*, found, based on focus groups and case studies, that teachers of color are challenged by antagonistic school cultures, feeling undervalued, being deprived of agency and autonomy, navigating unfavorable working conditions, and bearing the high cost of being a teacher of color. The report recommended:

- Valuing teachers of color by providing loan forgiveness, service scholarships, loan repayment incentives, and relocation incentives for teachers coming into the field.
- Collecting and disaggregating data (by race/ethnicity) on teacher recruitment, hiring, and retention.
- Investing in the recruitment, preparation, and development of strong, diverse leaders committed to positive working conditions for a diverse workforce.
- Empowering teachers of color by ensuring curriculum, learning environments, and work environments are inclusive and respectful of all racial and ethnic groups.

***Governor's proposals.*** The Governor's Budget for 2021-22 proposes \$225 million to improve the state's teacher pipeline, specifically:

- \$100 million investment in the Golden State Teacher Grant Program, which provides grants to students enrolled in teacher preparation programs who commit to working in high-need fields and at schools with high rates of under-prepared teachers.
- \$100 million to expand the Teacher Residency Program, which supports clinical teacher preparation programs dedicated to preparing and retaining teachers in high-need



communities and subject areas, including special education, bilingual education, and STEM.

- \$25 million to expand the Classified School Employees Credentialing Program, which provides grants to local educational agencies to recruit non-certificated school employees to become certificated classroom teachers.

***Recommended Committee amendments. Staff recommends that the bill be amended to:***

- Strike references to recruitment as an eligible activity for grant funding.
- Replace reference to the CSU with institutions of higher education, including those designated as minority serving institutions under federal law.
- Strike the requirement that professional development funds be used for three-year intensive, mentored, and clinical teacher preparation programs, and replace with an allowable use of professional development funding for intensive mentoring programs dedicated to retaining teachers.
- Combine the report and evaluation requirements of the bill into a single requirement.

***Related legislation.*** AB 1623 (Robert Rivas) of the 2019-20 Session would have established the Golden State Teacher Grant Program to provide one-time grant funds of \$20,000 to each student enrolled on or after January 1, 2020, in a professional preparation program leading to a preliminary teaching credential, if the student commits to working in a high-need field for four years after he or she receives a teaching credential. This bill was held in the Senate Education Committee.

AB 169 (O'Donnell) of the 2017-18 Session was substantially similar to AB 1623. It was held in the Senate Education Committee.

AB 1624 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 319, Statutes of 2016, established the California Classified School Employee Teacher Credentialing Program for the purpose of recruiting classified school employees to participate in a program designed to encourage them to enroll in teacher training programs and to provide instructional service as teachers in the public schools.

AB 2122 (McCarty) of the 2015-16 Session would have established the California Classified School Employee Teacher Credentialing Program to recruit classified school employees to participate in a program to encourage them to enroll in teacher training programs and to provide instructional service as teachers in the public schools. This bill was held in the Senate Education Committee.

AB 99 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 15, Statutes of 2017, established the Bilingual Teacher Professional Development Program and required the CDE to allocate grant funding for purposes of providing professional development services to specified teachers and paraprofessionals to provide instruction to English learners.

AB 952 (Reyes) of the 2017-18 Session would have established the Bilingual Teacher Professional Development Program, to provide professional development to teachers seeking to

provide instruction in multilingual settings. This bill was held in the Senate but \$5 million in one-time funding for the program was included in the 2017-18 budget.

*Arguments in support.* California Association of Black School Educators writes, “By having role models that look like and have similar backgrounds as their students, we help create a positive campus climate for all. Students should only experience positive and reinforcing school environments that promote success and life-long learning. That is why AB 520 is so important. It requires grant applicants to demonstrate their commitment, especially around developing culturally responsive and sensitive teachers. Further, it helps many LEAs overcome the difficulty in recruiting teachers in high-needs schools by providing assistance to overcome these kinds of challenges.”

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

California Association of Black School Educators  
Compton Unified School District

**Opposition**

None on file

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