

Leveraging ESSER Funds to Diversify Your Educator Workforce

Resources for Local
Education Agencies in
Pennsylvania



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The Time Is Now: Invest in Educator Diversity!

With school districts and charter schools making decisions about how best to spend ESSER funds from the three federal stimulus packages, there has never been a better time to invest in building a strong and diverse teacher workforce in order to:

- **Address looming teacher shortages:** Districts across Pennsylvania face growing shortages (particularly in STEM and special education) that have been exacerbated by retirements, attrition, and sharp declines in enrollment in Pennsylvania's educator preparation programs.¹
- **Address teacher diversity gaps:** Teachers of color make up only 6% of Pennsylvania's workforce, compared to 36% of students who are students of color. 50% of Pennsylvania's public schools and 37% of all school districts employ no teachers of color.²
- **Improve student outcomes:** Educators of color are good for all students, and they have been found to improve test scores, graduation rates, college aspirations, attendance, and suspension rates for students of color.³
- **Save money:** Reduce the high and growing costs of staff turnover and reliance on substitutes to fill vacancies, especially in hard-to-staff schools, which disproportionately serve students of color.⁴

Using ESSER funds to grow a diverse educator workforce is an **allowable** and **recommended** strategy for increasing student success according to the US Department of Education.⁵ The Pennsylvania Department of Education has specifically identified this as a priority in its state ESSER plan and calls on LEAs to use ESSER funds to promote diverse educator recruitment and retention.⁶ Below are **recommended strategies** (including examples and suggested next steps), **frequently asked questions**, and **additional resources** for how to invest these dollars effectively.

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Recommended strategies:

1. **Develop or expand teacher residency programs and other high-retention preparation pathways in partnership with educator preparation programs.**
2. **Develop or expand dual enrollment opportunities for high school students to begin coursework in education and teacher preparation.**
3. **Invest in direct-to-candidate incentives with a particular focus on diversifying the workforce and reducing barriers to entry and retention.**
4. **Invest in Grow Your Own pathways for paraprofessionals, out-of-school-time staff, and other staff to become certified to teach.**
5. **Invest in supports for in-service teachers to promote their retention and help them develop as culturally relevant and sustaining educators.**

1. Fuller & Pendola (2020), [K-12 Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in Pennsylvania](#).

2. Research for Action (2020), [Teacher Diversity in Pennsylvania from 2013-14 to 2019-20](#).

3. Learning Policy Institute (2018), [Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color](#).

4. Bank Street Prepared to Teach (2021), [Using ESSER Funds to Support Teacher Residencies](#).

5. U.S. Department of Education (2021), [Frequently Asked Questions: ESSER & GEER](#); see Section D, p. 46.

6. Pennsylvania Department of Education (2021), [Pennsylvania ARP ESSER State Plan](#), pp. 56-57.

1

Develop or expand teacher residency programs and other high-retention preparation pathways in partnership with educator preparation programs.

- **Teacher residency programs** allow aspiring teachers to earn a salary or stipend while working alongside a cooperating teacher in a year-long clinical experience, while simultaneously earning a teaching credential. Residencies attract more diverse candidates than traditional teacher preparation programs, lead to higher retention,⁷ and can be specifically designed to meet local needs, such as targeting shortage subjects. Thoughtfully designed residency programs can also become self-sustaining after initial up-front investments:

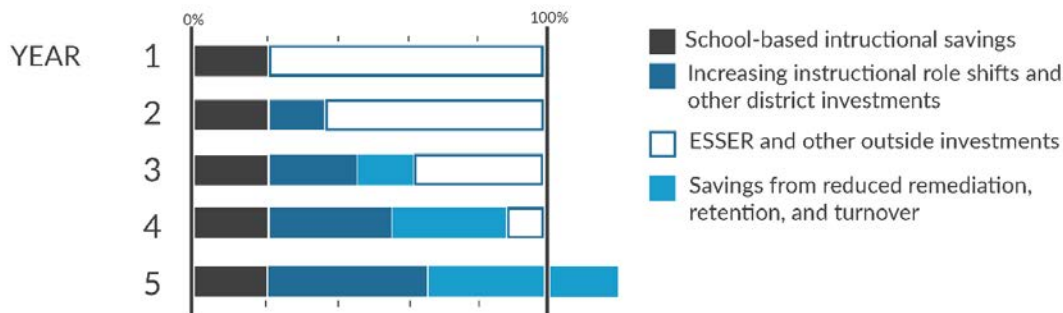


Image: Bank Street Prepared to Teach (2021), [Using ESSER Funds to Support Teacher Residencies](#), p. 4.

- Through **innovative partnerships supporting pre-service teachers**, teacher preparation programs and districts/CMOs can leverage pre-service teaching candidates to boost student achievement while compensating them for their time. For example, a school might partner with a teacher preparation program to create substitute teaching opportunities for teacher candidates. For more creative examples, see Bank Street College of Education's [Simple Shifts](#) report.

Pennsylvania Examples:

- [School District of Philadelphia Teacher Residency](#) (with Temple University, Drexel University, and Relay Graduate School of Education)
- [Propel Teacher Residency](#) in Pittsburgh (with Point Park University)
- [Mastery Charter School Teacher Residency Program](#) (with Relay Graduate School of Education)

Other Resources:

- Bank Street Prepared to Teach: [Using ESSER Funds to Support Teacher Residencies](#)
- Bank Street College of Education: [Simple Shifts: Paying Aspiring Teachers With Existing Resources](#)
- Partnership for the Future of Learning: [Teaching Profession Playbook](#), p. 45
- Learning Policy Institute: [Sustainable Strategies for Funding Teacher Residencies: Lessons From California](#)

Recommended Next Steps:

- Reach out to your local educator preparation program to explore the possibility of designing a residency program or other partnership that meets your school's or district's needs.
- Involve your head of talent/human resources and school business official/CFO in conversations to identify shortage areas as well as potential future savings from a well-designed residency program or other creative partnership.

7. Partnership for the Future of Learning (2021), [Building a Strong and Diverse Teaching Profession Playbook](#), p. 45.

2

Develop or expand dual enrollment opportunities for high school students to begin coursework in education and teacher preparation.

Offering high school students the opportunity to begin their undergraduate course requirements, including education-specific courses, while still in high school through dual enrollment opportunities is one way to make teaching a more affordable and attractive career pathway, particularly for low-income students and students of color.⁸ Dual enrollment opportunities allow students to graduate from high school with college credits (saving money and time) and have been shown to increase college enrollment and persistence, credit accumulation, and college GPAs for high school students who participate, particularly for groups that struggle in college, including low-income, lower achieving, and male students. Developing or expanding dual enrollment opportunities that are specifically targeted toward educator preparation is a smart way to begin a Grow-Your-Own program within your district while also improving college access more generally.

Pennsylvania Examples:

- [Temple Education Scholars](#)
- [West Chester University Teacher Educator Scholars Dual Enrollment Program](#)
- [Social Action and Justice Education \(SAJE\) Program at Arcadia University, in partnership with the Center for Black Educator Development](#)
- [Cheyney University Aspire to Educate Program](#)
- [Community College of Philadelphia Advance at College](#)

Other Resources:

- U.S. Department of Education: [Dual Enrollment: Accelerating the Transition to College](#)
- Pennsylvania Department of Education: [Dual Credit Program Toolkit for Pennsylvania School Entities](#)

Recommended Next Steps:

- Reach out to your local educator preparation program to explore the possibility of developing dual enrollment opportunities within their school of education. Make sure courses offered to high school students fulfill education requirements and are transferable to other institutions. Ask if a discounted rate is possible.
- Explore additional supports for enrolled students, such as tutoring and mentoring.



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3

Invest in direct-to-candidate incentives with a particular focus on diversifying the workforce and reducing barriers to entry and retention.

Research has shown that financial barriers disproportionately stop teachers of color from entering the teaching profession (even after completing education coursework) or from staying in the classroom. Districts should consider the following types of financial incentives to prospective candidates to support their entry and retention:

- Create and/or support **educational assistance programs that pay off student loans** for new hires who commit to teaching in the district for a certain number of years. These loan forgiveness programs could be targeted toward specific high-needs areas or schools.
- Pay for the **cost of certification tests and applications** for prospective hires; this may also extend to support for test preparation.
- Offer **supplemental financial support** for educators who commit to working in a high-need field or school.

Pennsylvania Examples:

- [Pittsburgh Public Schools & Point Park University Para2Teacher Program](#)
- [Urban Teachers - Free Praxis Core Prep \(awaiting approval to place teachers in Philadelphia\)](#)
- [Teach for America Philadelphia - Black Educators Promise Program](#)

Other State Examples:

- [Jefferson County \(Kentucky\) Multicultural Teacher Recruitment Program](#): offers one-on-one coaching, student networking and support, community partnerships, certification testing assistance and resources, job placement support, and \$2,000 in annual scholarship funding.
- Districts offering signing bonuses for new hires in high-demand areas using ESSER funds: [Guilford County, NC](#); [DeSoto, TX](#); [Durham, NC](#)
- Districts, charter networks, and teacher prep programs offering support with certification test prep: [Teachers Test Prep Partners](#)

Other Resources:

- Pennsylvania Department of Education: [Ready to Learn Block Grant](#) - note that “providing financial incentives to highly qualified tenured teachers to work in academically challenged schools or providing financial incentives to aid in recruitment of certified teachers in math, science, language arts or ELL” is an allowable use of these funds.
- US Department of Education: [Frequently Asked Questions: ESSER & GEER](#) - see Section D, p. 46 for more details on using stimulus funds on the educator workforce.
- Education Commission of the States: [Mitigating Teacher Shortages: Financial Incentives](#)

Recommended Next Steps:

- Connect with your talent development office to discuss the main shortage areas and what might incentivize teachers to teach in those schools. Also consider interviewing teacher candidates and paraprofessionals in your district about what incentives would be most meaningful to them.
- Partner with your local teacher preparation program to offer teacher certification prep for current staff looking to become certified teachers.

4

Invest in Grow Your Own pathways for paraprofessionals, out-of-school-time staff, and other staff to become certified to teach.

Grow Your Own (GYO) programs utilize recruitment and retention strategies that help community members, career changers, school-based staff who are not teachers of record, high school students, and others enter the teacher career pathway. The range of programs allows local schools to design programs that best meet the needs of their community and the LEA's specific workforce goals. Some examples of programming strategies include:

- Develop **high school academies** to support high school students interested in a teaching career to explore teaching as a career, learn pedagogical skills, and earn credentials toward teaching.
- Offer **paid work-based experience** for potential teacher candidates structured with the necessary support aligned with the goals for educator preparation.
- Partner with teacher prep programs to offer a **route for paraprofessionals** to become certified teachers, including offering career counseling, teacher preparation and scholarships.

Pennsylvania Examples:

- [Pittsburgh Public Schools Brashear High School Teaching Academy](#)
- [Pittsburgh Public Schools & Point Park University Para2Teacher Program](#)
- [Center for Black Educator Development Liberation Academy](#)
- [Parkway West Early Childhood Education CTE Program](#)

Other State Examples:

- [Recruiting Washington Teachers](#): A group of high school teaching academies in Washington state.
- [Leap to Teacher](#): A program through CUNY in NYC that offers career counseling, teacher certification prep, and scholarships to paraprofessionals.
- [Oakland Unified School District Grow Your Own Program](#): Offers multiple pathways to certification, including tuition assistance and certification test support, for populations including paraprofessionals and after-school teachers.

Other Resources:

- Partnership for the Future of Learning: [Teaching Profession Playbook](#), Ch. 1-2 - *Includes additional examples of Grow Your Own programs focusing on high school students, paraprofessionals, and other populations.*
- New America: [Grow Your Own Educators](#) - *Grow Your Own explainers (including videos), state policy overview, and examples of programs and policies.*
- [Grow Your Own Collective](#) - *A group of diverse partners dedicated to creating a notional model for recruiting and retaining diverse teachers of color with a focus on Grow Your Own Programs.*
- Education Trust: [A Natural Fit: Supporting After-School Staff of Color in Teacher Pipelines](#)

Recommended Next Steps:

- Work with your talent/HR office to identifying current staff who would be good candidates for a Grow Your Own program.
 - Reach out to organizations providing after-school programming to see if there are opportunities to build a Grow Your Own program with staff that would like to be certified teachers.
 - Identify a cohort of high school students interested in teaching and build additional programming, including paid work-based learning, to allow them to explore teaching.

5

Invest in supports for in-service teachers to promote their retention and help them develop as culturally relevant and sustaining educators.

High-quality support for teachers is key to retaining all educators, and especially educators of color, who leave the classroom at higher rates than their white peers. Some strategies to note are:

- Quality **induction** and **mentoring programs** that pair effective veteran educators with new educators for up to three years. This also provides mentor teachers with leadership opportunities, making this a multi-pronged retention strategy. ESSER dollars can be used to compensate mentor teachers. Similarly, LEAs might choose to invest in compensation and training for mentor or cooperating teachers supporting student teachers within their schools.
- Ongoing and high-quality **professional development** on topics such as culturally relevant and sustaining education, including trauma-informed care, recognizing and mitigating bias, and diversity, equity, and inclusion; these trainings help educators feel better prepared and supportive while also contributing to more welcoming and affirming environments for students and teachers of color.
- Affinity groups allow members of a shared identity (race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) to meet in a safe space to connect, support and inspire each other. Affinity groups for educators of color have been used as a retention tool across the country.
- PEDC's Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educator (CR-SE) competencies provide a framework for developing culturally responsive professional development.

Pennsylvania Examples:

- [Teach Plus T3 Program](#) - teacher-led ongoing professional learning with a focus on equity and instructional improvement
- [Villanova Educators of Color Coalition](#)
- [The Fellowship: Black Male Educators for Social Justice](#)
- [The Center for Educator Development Professional Learning](#)
- [Teach For America Greater Philadelphia - The Collective: Alumni of Color Association](#)

Other Resources:

- Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium: [Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educator Competencies](#)
- Center on Great Teachers & Leaders: [Mentoring & Induction Toolkit 2.0](#)
- Partnership for the Future of Learning: [Teaching Profession Playbook, Ch. 3](#) - Includes resources on induction and mentoring, opportunities for PD and growth, and working conditions/ school climate
- Education Commission of the States: [Mitigating Teacher Shortages: Induction and Mentorship](#)
- Great Schools Partnership: [Racial Affinity Groups: Guide for School Leaders](#)

Recommended Next Steps:

- [Contact PEDC](#) to be connected to resources and consultants who can help facilitate professional development related to the CR-SE competencies, antiracism, and bias.
- Work with your talent/HR office to explore models of mentorship by pairing veteran quality teachers with incoming teachers, ensuring that mentors receive compensation and training.
- Create affinity groups for teachers that allow each group to explore their own identities and the impact their views can have on their teaching practice and students. Consider hiring an outside facilitator with ESSER dollars to lead the groups and arrange scheduling.
- Ensure access to after-school or weekend professional development by providing child care for staff (ESSER dollars can be used for this purpose).

Frequently Asked Questions

Why would I want to invest in a diverse educator workforce?

Educators of color are good for all students, and they have been found to improve test scores, graduation rates, college aspirations, attendance, and suspension rates for students of color.⁹ A goal of ESSER funding is to mitigate the significant learning loss students have experienced due to COVID, and this can only be done with highly-effective educators who identify with the diverse student populations they serve.

How will this meet the requirements that I invest my ESSER dollars on specific high-need populations?

Investing in educators and staff who support high-need populations will lead to increased student outcomes among these students.

What is the legality of offering benefits specifically for educators of color?

LEAs will always want to hire the best candidate for the position. However, schools and districts can invest in recruitment and retention strategies that are known to support a diverse educator workforce. For example, an LEA can invest in recruitment efforts at HBCUs or invest in “non-traditional” teacher certification programs (such as residencies) that tend to allow more diverse candidates to participate because of the reduced cost burden for the candidates.

The ESSER dollars go away - how can this be sustained?

Many of the strategies outlined to recruit and retain educators are one-time costs including: engagement of consultants to provide culturally relevant professional development, short-term hiring bonuses or compensation to educators serving in high-need areas, loan forgiveness for effective teachers to ensure their continued service. Many of these strategies could also serve to seed pilot programs that could show evidence towards future savings. For example, the investment in a high-quality teacher residency program builds the coordination infrastructure at a district that yields recruitment and retention savings in future years. Finally, the federal and state investments in education are increasing to approach the level of equitable funding needed by LEAs to educate students for the 21st century. ESSER funding is available until September 30, 2024,¹⁰ giving LEAs several years to build effective educator recruitment and retention models, reallocate funding accordingly, and advocate for sustainable funding at the state and federal levels for this work.



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9. Learning Policy Institute (2018), [Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color](#).

10. Pennsylvania Department of Education (2021), [ARP ESSER Fund FAQs, Timeline](#).

Additional Resources

- **Pennsylvania Department of Education**
 - [PA Department of Education's State Plan for ARP Funding](#) - See p. 56-57 for details about teacher diversity.
 - [PA ARP ESSER FAQs](#) - See "Teacher Certification/Training/Responsibilities" for details related to teacher recruitment and retention.
- **Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium (PEDC)**
 - [Homepage](#) - Learn more about this consortium of organizations across Pennsylvania working to diversify the educator workforce.
 - [Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educator \(CR-SE\) Competencies](#) - Competencies to guide educator professional development and learning.
 - [Diversifying the Teacher Pipeline: A Toolkit for Recruiting More High School Students of Color into Pennsylvania Teacher Prep Programs and Schools](#) - Contains strategies and case studies focused on the pre-college space.
 - [Respecting Educator-Activists of Color: The Anti-Racist Guide to Teacher Retention](#) - Outlines strategies for school and district leaders to improve teacher-of-color retention.
- **US Department of Education ESSER Guidance**
 - [Frequently Asked Questions: ESSER & GEER](#) - see Section D, p. 46 for more details on using stimulus funds on the educator workforce
 - [ED COVID-19 Handbook, Volume 2](#) - see pp. 38-41 for guidance on stabilizing a diverse and qualified educator workforce.
- **Partnership for the Future of Learning Teaching Profession Playbook**
 - [Full Playbook](#)
 - [Chapter 1: High Impact Recruitment Strategies](#) - Includes resources around high school-focused Grow Your Own models (including teacher academies and dual enrollment), service scholarships and forgivable loans, and targeted recruitment/support for teachers of color
 - [Chapter 2: High-Retention and Culturally Responsive Preparation](#) - Includes resources on teacher residencies (graduate and undergraduate models) and Grow Your Own models (including paraprofessional pathways and 2+2 models)
 - [Chapter 3: Effective Retention Strategies](#) - Includes resources on induction and mentoring, opportunities for professional learning and growth, and working conditions/ school climate
 - [Messaging](#) - Useful research and messages for communicating the importance of educator workforce and diversity efforts to stakeholders
- **Learning Policy Institute**
 - [Supporting the Educator Pipeline: How States and Districts Can Use Federal Recovery Funds Strategically](#) - Includes strategies around teacher residencies, Grow Your Own, and special educator recruitment and specific examples of programs funded by GEER & ESSER funds
 - [Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color](#) - Identifies promising strategies, including examples.

Additional Resources (cont.)

- **Education Commission of the States: Mitigating Teacher Shortages**
 - [Full Set of Briefs](#) - A series of briefs that looks at research on teacher shortages and highlights strategies states are using to address shortages.
 - [Alternative Certification Brief](#) - Explains alternative teaching certification pathways, provides a summary of research and identifies state examples of policies to support these programs.
 - [Financial Incentives Briefs](#) - Outlines some of the types of financial incentives that could be offered to teachers to recruit and retain them. Includes state examples and policy recommendations.
 - [Evaluation and Feedback](#) - Explains the importance of consistent, quality feedback in the evaluation process for teachers.
 - [Teacher Leadership](#) - Outlines how teacher leadership roles are an effective recruitment and retention strategy.
- **American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)**
 - [Ed Prep Toolkit for ARP Dollars](#) - Includes examples of educator preparation programs partnering with districts using ESSER funds.
- **Research for Action**
 - [Teacher Diversity in Pennsylvania from 2013-14 to 2019-20](#) - Look up the diversity of your district's teachers and students.
 - [Patching the Leaky Pipeline: Recruiting and Retaining Teachers of Color in Pennsylvania](#) - Pennsylvania-specific data and case studies.
- **K-12 Dive**
 - [How schools are using ESSER funds to attract, retain teachers](#) - Additional examples from state ARP plans on how states are using ESSER funds to stabilize the educator workforce.

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The Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium is a grassroots organization of PK-12, higher education, non-profit, and government leaders striving to increase the number of teachers of color as well as culturally-responsive and sustaining educators in Pennsylvania.

www.paeddiversity.org

TEACH +PLUS

The mission of Teach Plus is to empower excellent, experienced, and diverse teachers to take leadership over key policy and practice issues that advance equity, opportunity, and student success.

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