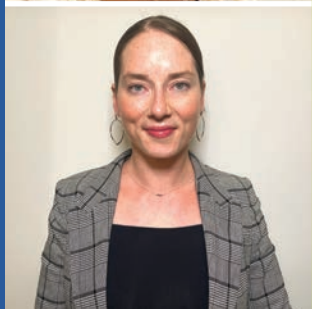# PREPARING
CULTURALLY AFFIRMING EDUCATORS:

TEACH PLUS PENNSYLVANIA TEACHER LEADERS ON INTEGRATING CULTURALLY RELEVANT & SUSTAINING EDUCATION INTO PENNSYLVANIA EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS

TEACH +PLUS

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INTRODUCTION

Pennsylvania's teachers serve an increasingly diverse student population; the proportion of students of color in our state has increased from 31 to 37 percent between 2013-14 and 2020-21,[1] with over 61,000 English learners who speak more than 200 different languages.[2] As Pennsylvania students have become rapidly more diverse, the teaching workforce has remained more homogenous, with only six percent of teachers identifying as people of color in 2020-21.[3]

Research has found that teachers have similar levels of racial bias as the general population, and that this bias correlates with differences in expectations, instruction, respect, and discipline for students of color, impacting achievement & engagement.[4] At the same time, culturally responsive teaching practices have been found to facilitate brain processing, increase student motivation and engagement, cultivate critical thinking and problem-solving skills, strengthen students' racial and ethnic identities, and promote a sense of safety and belonging.[5] Culturally affirming school environments have also been linked to retention of teachers of color.[6]

In spring 2022, the Pennsylvania State Board of Education finalized updates to Chapter 49, the state's educator certification regulations, including culturally relevant and sustaining education for the first time.[7] Culturally relevant and sustaining education is defined as "education that ensures equity for all students and seeks to eliminate systemic institutional racial and cultural barriers that inhibit the success of all students in this Commonwealth – particularly those who have been historically underrepresented. Culturally relevant and sustaining education encompasses skills for educators including, but not limited to, approaches to mental wellness, trauma-informed approaches to instruction, technological and virtual engagement, cultural awareness and any emerging factors that inhibit equitable access for all students in this Commonwealth."

The new Chapter 49 regulations require educator preparation programs to integrate culturally relevant and sustaining education throughout their preparation programs. The Pennsylvania Department of Education will identify culturally relevant and sustaining educator competencies and associated standards, which educator preparation programs will be required to address through both coursework and field experiences, as they prepare future educators to become certified and enter Pennsylvania's classrooms.

We are a group of seven Teach Plus Pennsylvania Policy Fellows from urban, suburban, and rural districts across the Commonwealth who are working on reimagining teacher preparation to produce a more equitable education system. As teachers, we have seen firsthand the need for culturally relevant and sustaining education as our student populations grow more diverse and our country becomes more polarized, and as our schools seek to better meet the needs of students of color while recruiting and retaining more teachers of color. As the Department prepares to develop competencies and implementation guidelines around culturally relevant and sustaining

education for educator preparation programs to follow, we wanted to understand what educator preparation programs were already doing to prepare future teachers as culturally relevant and sustaining educators, as well as what further support they would need to fully integrate culturally relevant and sustaining education into their programs. To understand the current status of the educator preparation landscape as well as its needs in regards to culturally relevant and sustaining education, we gathered input from over 100 faculty and staff from Pennsylvania's educator preparation programs.

From our survey, we found that while many programs have already begun taking steps toward integrating culturally relevant and sustaining education into their programs, there is still a long way to go and significant barriers to overcome in order to prepare every future educator in Pennsylvania to be culturally relevant and sustaining. Programs will need significant and strategic support if the vision of culturally relevant and sustaining education outlined in Chapter 49 is going to be realized across Pennsylvania. In this report, we present findings and recommendations to guide policymakers, educator preparation programs, and others in the field as Pennsylvania moves from vision to implementation of culturally relevant and sustaining education.

FINDINGS

1. Pennsylvania educator preparation programs have a foundation on which to build culturally relevant and sustaining education.

2. Integration of culturally relevant and sustaining education throughout program curricula and field experiences is inconsistent and incomplete, with significant work still needed and some mismatch between perception and reality.

3. Barriers exist to fully incorporating culturally relevant and sustaining education, particularly lack of capacity and expertise within educator preparation programs.

4. Educator preparation programs need specific training and support from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and others to integrate culturally relevant and sustaining education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Pennsylvania Department of Education should champion culturally relevant and sustaining education and consistently message its importance.

2. The Pennsylvania Department of Education should work to provide clarity and guidance for educator preparation programs for how culturally relevant and sustaining education will be integrated and assessed throughout programs.

3. The Pennsylvania Department of Education and other leaders in the field should provide professional development, communities of practice, and sample materials to support educator preparation programs in integrating culturally relevant and sustaining education.

4. Educator preparation program leaders should model commitment to culturally relevant and sustaining education and hold faculty and staff accountable for its implementation.

5. Educator preparation programs should work to diversify their faculty and staff and become more culturally relevant and sustaining themselves to model and support this work.

METHODOLOGY

To better understand the current state of culturally relevant and sustaining education in Pennsylvania educator preparation programs, we conducted an online survey of educator preparation program faculty and staff. The survey was distributed through various channels; it was shared with members of the Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium (PEDC), the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators (PAC-TE), and the Pennsylvania Deans' Forum through emails and at events. Additionally, the Pennsylvania Department of Education shared the survey with educator preparation program faculty and staff by email.

Overall, a total of 103 faculty and staff members participated, representing 62 total educator preparation programs in Pennsylvania. Fifty-one percent of respondents held a leadership role within their program as a dean, department chair, associate dean, or director; 43 percent held a faculty position as a professor, associate professor, adjunct, or instructor; and seven percent held other roles.[8] Of the 30 largest educator preparation programs in Pennsylvania, which collectively produced 76 percent of all Instructional I certificates issued in 2020-21,[9] all but three programs had at least one faculty or staff member complete the survey, and 100 percent of the ten largest programs were represented.

Our survey was designed to help us answer the following research questions:

- To what extent are educator preparation programs already incorporating culturally relevant and sustaining education into their programs, including coursework and field experiences?

- What barriers exist to further and fully integrating culturally relevant and sustaining education into programs?

- What support do programs need to overcome these barriers and fully integrate culturally relevant and sustaining education into their programs in order to develop the next generation of educators to be culturally relevant and sustaining educators?

FINDINGS

FINDING 1. Pennsylvania educator preparation programs have a foundation on which to build culturally relevant and sustaining education.

While the State Board of Education's updated teacher certification regulations that include new definitions and requirements for culturally relevant and sustaining education were only finalized in April 2022,[10] educator preparation programs are not starting from scratch in integrating culturally relevant and sustaining education into their programs. Our survey indicates that many faculty and staff have already begun building expertise in culturally relevant and sustaining education and incorporating it into their programming. When asked how familiar they were with the term culturally relevant and sustaining education, 74 percent of respondents rated themselves "very familiar" with the term,[11] with several pointing to specific evidence of their personal expertise in this area.

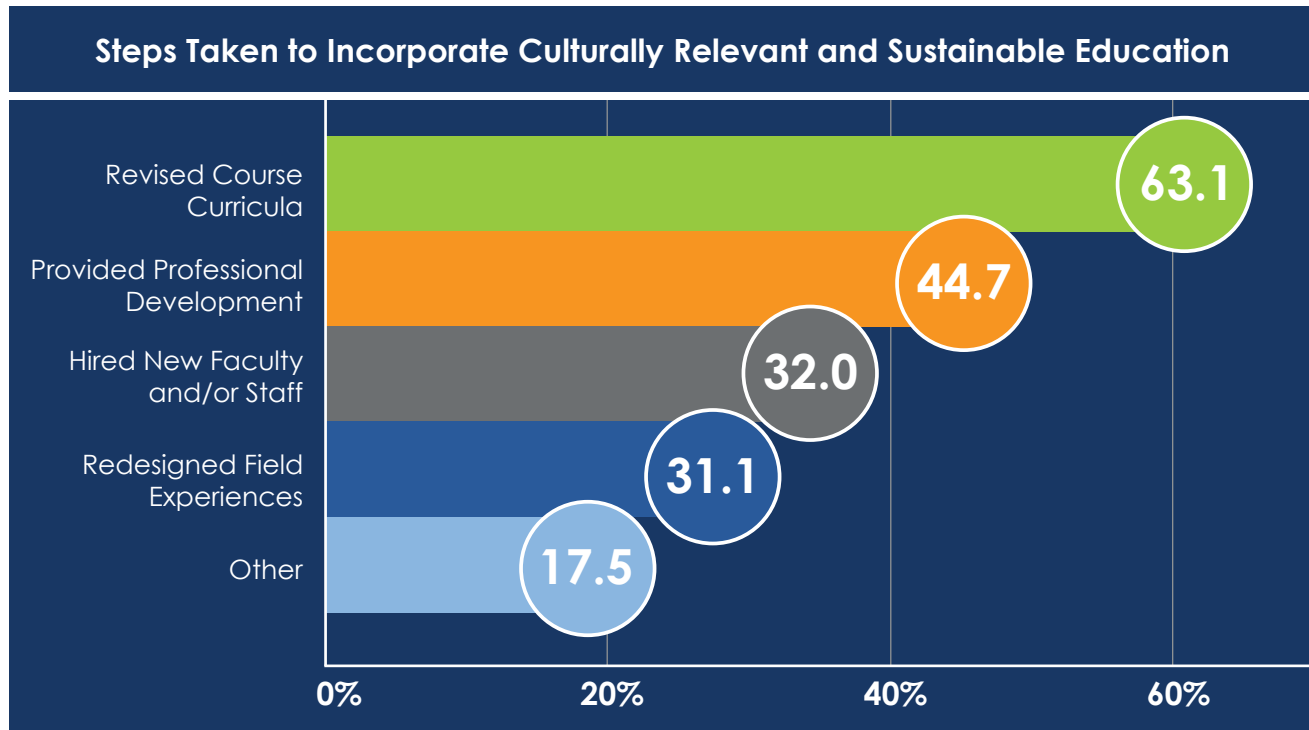> *"I have a degree in Anti-Racist Theory."*

> *"One of my areas of specialization as an historian is in race and urban education since WWII, and I published a book on an African-American educator who was a pioneer of what later came to be called culturally relevant education. I teach a course called 'Education and Inequality.'*[12]

Additionally, faculty and staff expressed confidence in their own competence when it comes to culturally relevant and sustaining education; 51 percent of respondents said they were "very confident" in their own ability to support pre-service and in-service educators in becoming culturally relevant and sustaining educators, while 40 percent were "somewhat confident" and only 10 percent were "slightly confident."[13]

> *"All of my publications have been in this area; I have written extensively about the development of racial literacy."*[14]

Beyond personal expertise, respondents also identified more tangible ways that their programs have begun incorporating culturally relevant and sustaining education into their programs. Sixty-three percent of respondents reported that their programs have already begun revising course curricula to incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education. Additionally, 45 percent of respondents said that their school has provided professional development opportunities for current faculty and staff to learn about culturally relevant and sustaining education, and 31 percent of respondents reported redesigning field experiences to incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education. Nearly a third of respondents also reported their programs have hired new faculty or staff with expertise in culturally relevant and sustaining education.[15]

Some respondents shared how their programs have formed committees focused on diversity and inclusion, begun reviewing the culturally relevant and sustaining education competencies, and attended conferences focused on culturally relevant and sustaining education.

Steps Taken to Incorporate Culturally Relevant and Sustainable Education

Category	Percentage
Revised Course Curricula	63.1
Provided Professional Development	44.7
Hired New Faculty and/or Staff	32.0
Redesigned Field Experiences	31.1
Other	17.5

"Our faculty, School of Education, and University have had ongoing and explicit professional development and conversations about these topics for the past 3 years."

"We are undergoing a self-study focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging which I hope will be a start at integrating culturally relevant and sustaining education standards for our department and ultimately for our whole teacher preparation program."
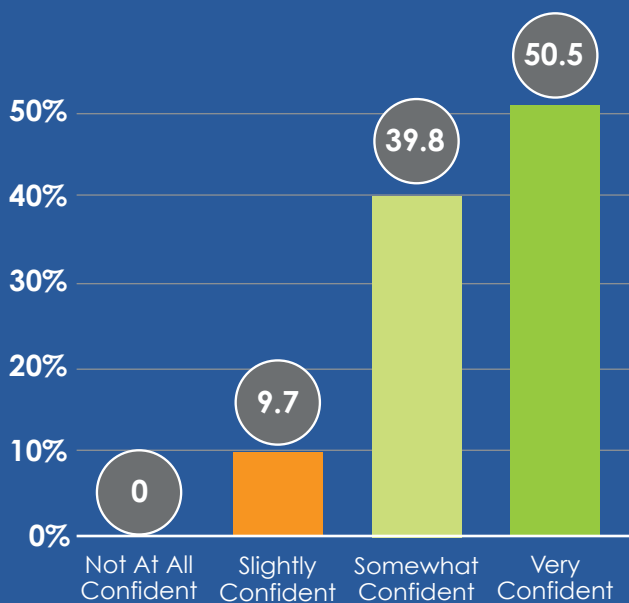
As educator preparation programs work to further integrate culturally relevant and sustaining education into their programs in accordance with Chapter 49, it will be important to build upon this foundation and draw upon the expertise of those faculty and staff who have already begun the work within their programs and spheres of influence.

FINDING 2. Integration of culturally relevant and sustaining education throughout program curricula and field experiences is inconsistent and incomplete, with significant work still needed and some mismatch between perception and reality.
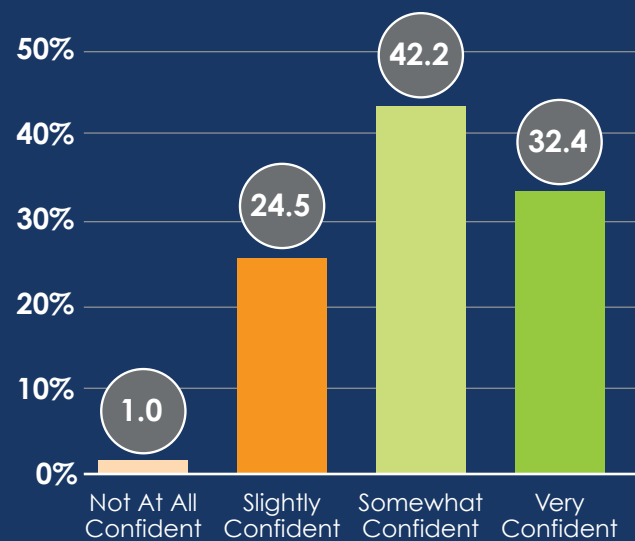
Although many of Pennsylvania's educator preparation programs have solid foundations in culturally relevant and sustaining education, survey respondents reported that there is much work to be done in order to integrate culturally relevant and sustaining education more completely and consistently throughout their programs' curricula and field experiences. While many respondents reported familiarity with the concept of culturally relevant and sustaining education, many believe that their programs still have much more work to do before they are fully able to prepare their future teachers to create classrooms where culturally relevant and sustaining education is evident and impactful.

Interestingly, while respondents reported high levels of confidence in their own ability to support educators in becoming culturally relevant and sustaining, they were much less confident in the abilities of their programs as a whole. When asked how confident they were in the ability of their programs' faculty and staff as a whole to support pre-service and in-service educators in becoming culturally relevant and sustaining educators, only 32 percent reported feeling "very confident,"[16] compared to 51 percent who reported feeling "very confident" in their own abilities.[17] This may reflect a tendency to rate oneself less critically than others, or it may reflect a self-selection bias of faculty and staff with a greater interest in culturally relevant and sustaining education opting into the survey.

How confident are your own ability to support pre-service and in-service educators in becoming culturally relevant and sustaining educators?

Confidence Level	Percentage
Not At All Confident	0
Slightly Confident	9.7
Somewhat Confident	39.8
Very Confident	50.5

How confident are you in the ability of your faculty and staff as a whole to support pre-service and in-service educators in becoming culturally relevant and sustaining educators?

Confidence Level	Percentage
Not At All Confident	1.0
Slightly Confident	24.5
Somewhat Confident	42.2
Very Confident	32.4

Across multiple questions, respondents described integration of culturally relevant and sustaining education as partial, inconsistent, and variable depending on course instructors or cooperating teachers. Seventy percent of respondents said that culturally relevant and sustaining education was either "somewhat" or "slightly" integrated throughout educator preparation program coursework, with only 28 percent reporting it "very well integrated."[18]

"We have a number of faculty who are deeply committed to [culturally relevant and sustaining education]. There's growing interest and momentum, but a ways to go before achieving what we hope to. Additionally, this energy isn't shared by the full program (though the contingent is growing!)."[19]

"It is a hallmark of one course and embedded to more or less degrees in other courses. The program would benefit from a systematic review of syllabi and cohesion."[20]

Only 23 percent of respondents stated that culturally relevant and sustaining education competencies are directly taught and assessed throughout their respective programs, with a majority of respondents reporting that culturally relevant and sustaining education was taught in some courses and assessed in few or no courses.[21]

Providing field experiences that incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education was a particular area of concern for respondents. Only 26 percent of survey respondents indicated that most or all of their program's field experiences are designed with culturally relevant and sustaining education in mind.[22] Many respondents highlighted the difficulties of identifying cooperating teachers with expertise in culturally relevant and sustaining education when their programs struggled to find any placements at all for their students, and others expressed difficulty with finding culturally relevant and sustaining mentor educators in culturally and racially homogenous regions.

"While we would love to have [culturally relevant and sustaining education] meaningfully integrated into our field experiences, and at least one is specifically aimed at providing diverse experiences, the size and location of our program makes it such that we're really not able to be as intentional as we'd like — we're just begging for placements at this point."[23]
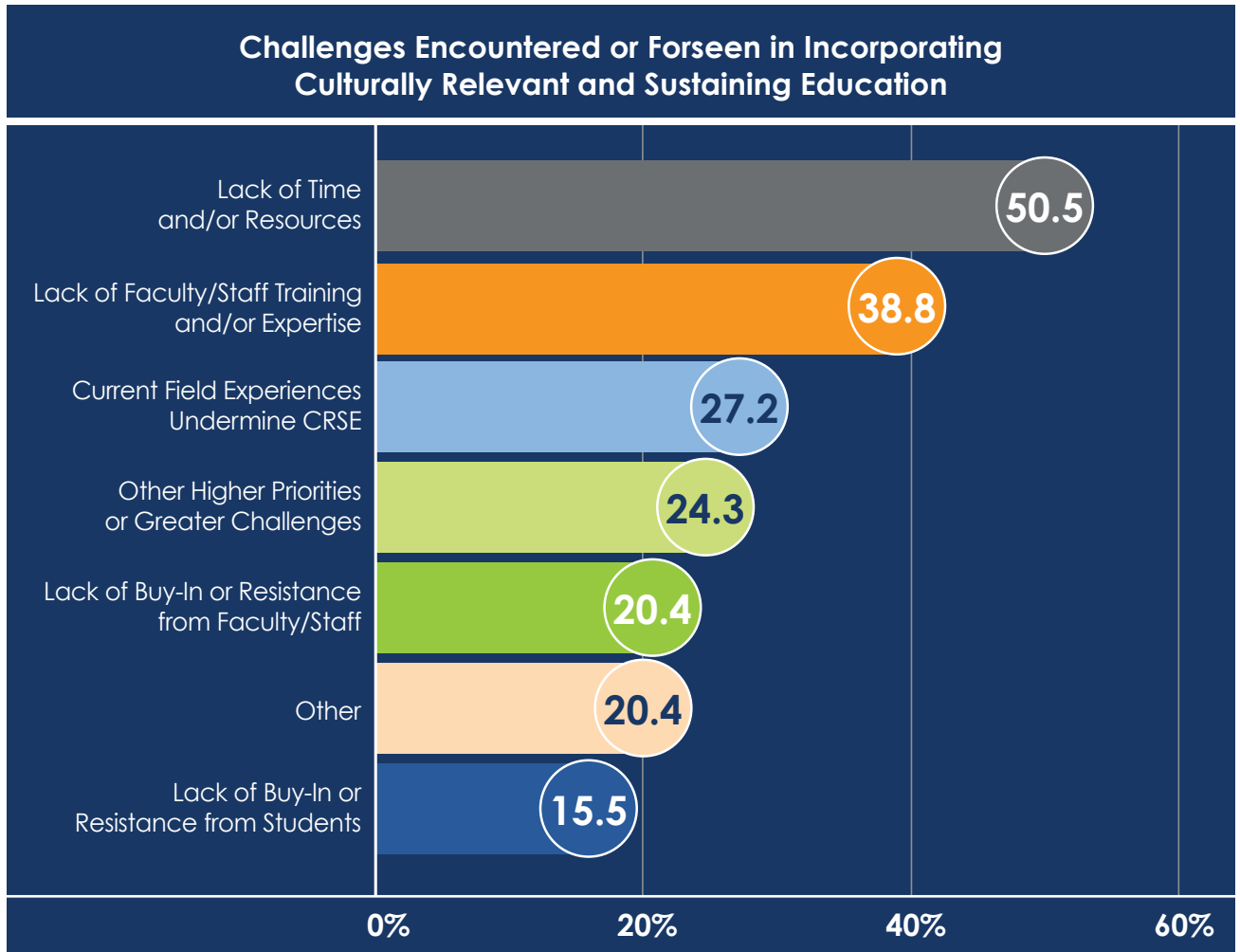
"Cooperating teachers in our area do not often model culturally relevant teaching practices."[24]

"I am concerned about the field experience part, because we have little or no control over that. Examples of exemplary practice in culturally relevant pedagogy are all too rare, unfortunately. It is hard enough to obtain quality field experiences as is, since the schools have no concrete incentive to prioritize us."[25]

"While we ask students to recognize cultural and economic differences, our area is very homogenous as are the majority of the teachers in our area."[26]

FINDING 3. Barriers exist to fully incorporating culturally relevant and sustaining education, particularly lack of capacity and expertise within educator preparation programs.

Educator preparation program faculty and staff acknowledged the existence of serious barriers to fully integrating culturally relevant and sustaining education across their programs. In particular, three core barriers emerged.[27]

Challenges Encountered or Forseen in Incorporating Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education

Challenge	Percentage
Lack of Time and/or Resources	50.5
Lack of Faculty/Staff Training and/or Expertise	38.8
Current Field Experiences Undermine CRSE	27.2
Other Higher Priorities or Greater Challenges	24.3
Lack of Buy-In or Resistance from Faculty/Staff	20.4
Other	20.4
Lack of Buy-In or Resistance from Students	15.5

The largest perceived barrier to successful incorporation of culturally relevant and sustaining education into programs was lack of capacity. Fifty-one percent of respondents indicated that "lack of time and/or resources to incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education" into their programs was a challenge they have encountered or foreseen.[28]

"Overall time to sustain initiatives [is a challenge]."

"We need financial resources to continue with several aspects of this work."

"Even though this is a priority for us, we are extremely short staffed right now."[29]

Respondents also pointed to the challenge of continuously trying to add content into programs where there are "only so many credit hours and curricular spaces" to work with.

Additionally, a lack of expertise among existing faculty and staff is a barrier to the integration of culturally relevant and sustaining education; in many cases, program faculty and staff are being asked to train pre-service and in-service educators in techniques that they themselves were not trained in as educators. Almost 40 percent of respondents expressed that "lack of faculty/staff training and/or expertise in culturally relevant and sustaining education" was a challenge for their institution.[30]

Some respondents indicated that their schools have only a few instructors who are well versed in culturally relevant and sustaining education and that they are heavily relied upon to deliver all the professional development and coursework around it. Relatedly, several respondents pointed to a lack of diversity amongst program faculty and staff, which might itself be a hindrance to fully incorporating culturally relevant and sustaining education.

"It is not possible to really do this work well with a mostly white faculty."[31]

"I think that this is an area where I can do a pretty good job, but I do not believe that a middle-class white woman is the voice that should be the talking head for much of this content."[32]

Finally, internal and external resistance to culturally relevant and sustaining education was identified explicitly by many respondents and was also implicit in many open-ended responses. Some respondents themselves seemed to question the importance of culturally relevant and sustaining education with comments such as "the integration [of culturally relevant and sustaining education] is distracting from many important needs," suggesting a lack of will to prioritize it over competing priorities. Several others pointed to resistance from students and colleagues.

"A subset of the students we have attracted over the past ten years has not been interested in doing this work."[33]

"The folks who understand the need for [culturally relevant and sustaining education] are working reflectively within their scope of influence to make change. These people are not in the majority."[34]

"Attempts to get a few faculty to redesign courses that have a field component have been met with resistance."[35]

Several respondents specifically expressed concern about the current political climate and that culturally relevant and sustaining education will or has already become wrapped up in the debate about critical race theory.
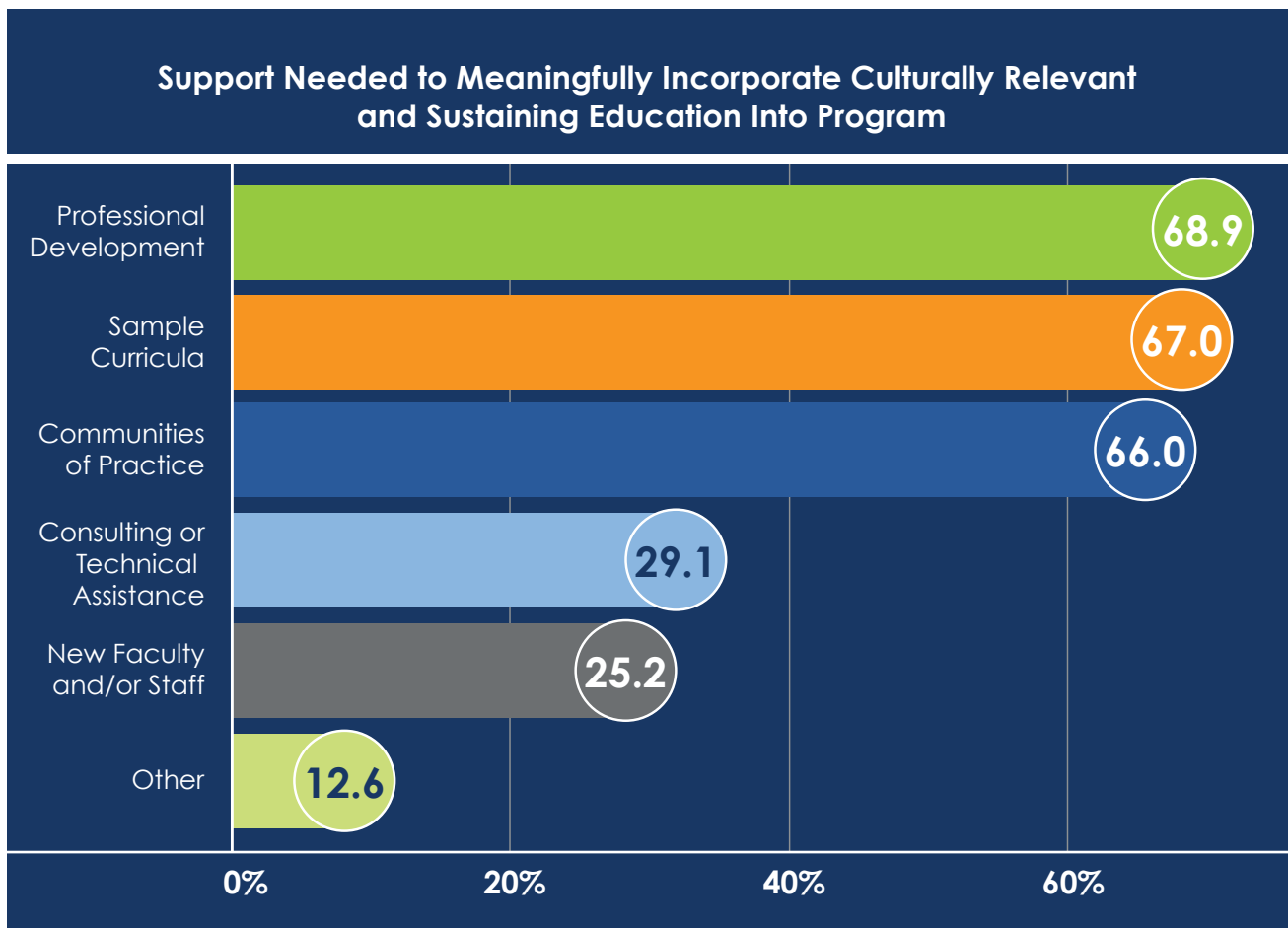
"Current political climate makes it challenging for preservice teachers to adopt [culturally relevant and sustaining education] practices (and many practicing teachers too)."

"I think the biggest concern about implementing [culturally relevant and sustaining education] is the potential pushback from some students and community members. We need to change the present narrative that is aggressively challenging anything that has to do with [diversity, equity, and inclusion] or social justice."

FINDING 4. Educator preparation programs need specific training and support from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and others to integrate culturally relevant and sustaining education.

When asked what supports their institutions will need to meaningfully incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education into their programs, educator preparation program faculty and staff were very clear on the kinds of support they will need from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and others. In particular, two-thirds of the respondents expressed a desire for three specific types of support: more professional development on culturally relevant and sustaining education; communities of practices to collaborate and problem-solve across institutions; and sample course curricula and materials from institutions further ahead of them in integrating culturally relevant and sustaining education.[36]

Support Needed to Meaningfully Incorporate Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education Into Program

Category	Percent
Professional Development	68.9
Sample Curricula	67.0
Communities of Practice	66.0
Consulting or Technical Assistance	29.1
New Faculty and/or Staff	25.2
Other	12.6

Nearly 70 percent of respondents expressed a desire for "professional development opportunities for current faculty and staff to learn about culturally relevant and sustaining education."[37] In open-ended comments, respondents explained that they felt a need for more training, even if they had

already begun learning about and implementing culturally relevant and sustaining education.

> *"Would like additional training to make sure I am current."*[38]

> *"I think we all could do with some professional development from PDE."*[39]

Respondents to the survey also championed collaboration with other institutions that train educators. Sixty-six percent of respondents named "communities of practice to learn from and problem-solve with peer institutions" as a needed support.[40]

> *"I think it is always a good idea to look at other models and seek to improve."*[41]

> *"Honestly, I think we just need some time to intentionally incorporate this."*[42]

In addition to professional development and communities of practice, many respondents want shared resources and expertise. Sixty-seven percent of respondents asked for "sample course curricula and other materials from institutions that have already incorporated culturally relevant and sustaining education into their programs."[43] In the open-ended responses, respondents expressed particular interest in resources related to assessment of culturally relevant and sustaining education and field experiences.

> *"Materials and training would be very helpful!"*[44]

> *"[We] need better textbooks/resources AND standard assessment rubrics."*[45]

> *"Examples of assessments to measure the [culturally relevant and sustaining education] competencies would be very useful."*[46]

> *"Support for field placement sites to improve their [culturally relevant and sustaining education] practices and provide models for our students."*[47]

Finally, 25 percent of respondents called for "new faculty and/or staff with expertise in culturally relevant and sustaining education."[48] Perhaps relatedly, several respondents specifically named a need to hire more faculty and staff of color at their institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the educator preparation program survey, we offer the following recommendations to policymakers and leaders in the field for how to successfully integrate culturally relevant and sustaining education into educator training:

RECOMMENDATION #1.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education should champion culturally relevant and sustaining education and consistently message its importance.

While some institutions have taken steps toward promoting culturally relevant and sustaining education within their programs—often at schools where the dean or department chair has championed the work and taken the lead—educator preparation program faculty and staff pointed to the need for the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to become a more public champion of culturally relevant and sustaining education, messaging its importance and accelerating its forward progress across the educational ecosystem in Pennsylvania. For programs whose leaders have not been actively engaged around culturally relevant and sustaining education, a strong message from the state about its importance will help galvanize those leaders into action, and support faculty and staff in their internal work to champion it. This leadership is particularly needed in light of the political backlash against critical race theory (CRT), which could threaten the progress of culturally relevant and sustaining education without courageous efforts to combat misinformation and unapologetically affirm the department's commitment to this work.

> *"There is a growing pushback against teaching about diversity (under the misguided notion of 'CRT' and political ugliness). We need PDE to publicly back a push for diversity and mandate it in the schools."[49]*

It is important for PDE to emphasize that culturally relevant and sustaining education is not just for students of color but for all students, and that it can be practiced not only by teachers of color but by all teachers. Many educators, including some survey respondents, seem to view culturally relevant and sustaining education as something that is only relevant or needed in urban schools or for historically marginalized students, while the truth is that culturally relevant and sustaining education is essential for all students in all schools, regardless of their exposure to racial diversity amongst their peers and teachers.

Several respondents reported that their institutions' efforts to advance culturally relevant and sustaining education were being hampered by PDE's slow progress on finalizing its competencies and implementing relevant guidelines. Many programs have waited to revise curricula and move

forward with other efforts until the competencies are finalized; one respondent indicated that their program had not taken any steps yet to incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education because they were "waiting on standards" and respondents expressed concern that those might not be made official in time for their efforts to remain on schedule.

> *"Higher education needs many of the kinds of support you outline, but first we need the competencies so that we know where we are heading. We are working on integrating the competencies into our curriculum – but if the competencies aren't made official, then I think it will be difficult to complete the projects that we have lined up."*

It is therefore important that PDE shows that culturally relevant and sustaining education is a priority by prioritizing finalizing the competencies and implementation guidelines by fall 2022.

RECOMMENDATION #2.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education should work to provide clarity and guidance for educator preparation programs for how culturally relevant and sustaining education will be integrated and assessed throughout programs.

In addition to finalized culturally relevant and sustaining education competencies, educator preparation program faculty and staff made clear that they need additional clarity and guidance from PDE on what integration of culturally relevant and sustaining education throughout their programs looks like, and how they will be evaluated on this integration. A need for clear expectations was expressed repeatedly:

> *"Our faculty are highly qualified, but we need clarification on the expectations."[50]*

> *"We believe [culturally relevant and sustaining education] is integrated, but need additional clarification on the expectations."[51]*

> *"Clear expectations on the timeline for integration and components to be integrated [are needed]."[52]*

Based on the feedback collected, we believe that the following resources from PDE would be most helpful in providing clarity for programs:

- A clear timeline for the roll-out of culturally relevant and sustaining education in programs, including the timing of the release of competencies and implementation guidelines, the amount of time programs will have to incorporate changes into their programs, and when programs will be held responsible for changes as part of major review or other evaluative processes;

- Clear rubrics and look-fors to allow programs to understand how they will be assessed for integration of culturally relevant and sustaining education across curricula and field experiences; this will also allow for self-assessment and reflection within programs prior to any external evaluative process.

The department should work to develop these implementation guidelines quickly and collaboratively in order to continue the positive momentum that has already developed around culturally relevant and sustaining education and to prevent any confusion or resistance that may be caused by unclear expectations or a lack of transparency around accountability.

RECOMMENDATION #3.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education and other leaders in the field should provide professional development, communities of practice, and sample materials to support educator preparation programs in integrating culturally relevant and sustaining education.

Based on our survey results, faculty and staff of Pennsylvania's educator preparation programs feel more confident in their own abilities to support pre-service and in-service educators to become culturally and relevant sustaining educators than they do in their program faculty and staff, and have identified many areas where integration of culturally relevant and sustaining education is incomplete as well as barriers to implementation. In order to fully incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education into coursework and field experiences, educator preparation programs will need specific aid and collaboration from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and other leaders in the field.

Fortunately, respondents have also identified clear, actionable supports they need to further their own learning about culturally relevant and sustaining education and continue integrating it throughout their programs. Based on the survey results, we recommend that PDE prioritize providing the following three supports to institutions over the coming year:

- Professional development opportunities for current faculty and staff to learn about culturally relevant and sustaining education;

- Communities of practice to learn from and problem-solve with peer institutions;

- Sample course curricula and other materials from institutions that have already incorporated culturally relevant and sustaining education.

As we approach a new gubernatorial administration and PDE faces many urgent priorities, particularly in the wake of the pandemic, it is possible that the Department will not have the internal capacity to provide all of the recommended supports on their own; the Department might also choose not to identify exemplar curricula or materials out of respect for the intellectual freedom of institutions. However, given the clear requests from the field for these supports, there is also a role for organizations such as the Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium, the Pennsylvania Association

of Colleges and Teacher Educators, and others to develop these resources and materials, perhaps with the support of the Department or philanthropy.

Regardless of who steps up to provide these supports, it is clear that they will be critical to the ultimate success of culturally relevant and sustaining education in educator preparation programs and ensuring that its integration is not superficial and compliance-driven but deep, meaningful, and long-lasting.

RECOMMENDATION #4.

Educator preparation program leaders should model commitment to culturally relevant and sustaining education and hold faculty and staff accountable for implementation.

While external support from the state and the field are helpful in ensuring educator preparation programs have clear expectations and resources related to implementation of culturally relevant and sustaining education, this does not mean that educator preparation programs should passively wait to be told what to do. It is also the responsibility of educator preparation program leaders to serve as models of commitment to culturally relevant and sustaining education for their faculty and staff, and to hold their faculty and staff as well as themselves accountable for both learning and action. Several respondents, especially those who were more confident in the direction of their programs, pointed to the importance of their deans or department chairs leading the work of integrating the competencies into their programs and being proactive rather than reactive in embracing culturally relevant and sustaining education as a priority.

"We are very fortunate to have our School of Education led by [dean name]...Since her arrival and with her leadership, we are now revising all teacher prep programs [to incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education]."[53]

"The dean and all faculty have set the tone and actively look for solutions when issues arise."[54]

Faculty and staff look to their program leadership to signal what is important through both words and actions. Educator preparation program leaders can demonstrate to their colleagues that culturally relevant and sustaining education is a priority by participating in committees and teams focused on integrating the competencies into their programs, updating their own courses and practices to incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education, and devoting time in faculty meetings and other department-wide communications and gatherings to discussing plans, updates, and progress related to this work. Additionally, many of the supports respondents requested from the state, such as professional development, communities of practice, and exemplar resources, could also be proactively pursued by educator preparation program administrators, as some have already done. Deans and department chairs should actively seek out and create these opportunities, using forums such as the Dean's Forum to share ideas and best practices on how to demonstrate commitment to culturally relevant and sustaining education from the top.

RECOMMENDATION #5.

Educator preparation programs should work to diversify their faculty and staff and become more culturally relevant and sustaining themselves to model and support this work.

Finally, as educator preparation programs work to develop teachers to become culturally relevant and sustaining and to serve the needs of a diverse student population, it is essential that these programs simultaneously work to make their own faculty and staff more reflective of the student population of Pennsylvania and to ensure that they themselves are modeling the mindsets and practices they expect from the educators they train.

Research has shown that exposure to teachers of color has a positive impact on students of all races, and particularly for students who have been historically marginalized;[55] these benefits presumably extend to the higher education space as well. Additionally, diversity among faculty and staff affords programs the opportunity to elevate various racial perspectives, which is critical to faculty and staff developing their own cultural competency and critical consciousness. Also, it is important for leaders in institutions of higher education to consider the psychological and socio-emotional impact that a person of color may carry if the labor of creating culturally relevant and sustaining spaces rests solely on their shoulders. This is more likely to occur when there are only a few staff of color within the institution.

Although people of color, just like their white counterparts, can and should model this work, people of color should not be tokenized or a proxy to substantiate the racial equity and culturally relevant

goals of the institution. It is also important to consider that it is challenging for faculty and staff to become more culturally relevant and sustaining as well as model and support the work if they are not in diverse settings. In racially homogenous spaces, filter bubbles and echo chambers are more common than in spaces with more diversity. Consequently, faculty and staff are more susceptible to being overly confident in their own abilities to support pre-service and in-service educators in becoming culturally relevant and sustaining educators when there is a lack of diversity among them, which may help explain why respondents were so much more confident in their own abilities related to culturally relevant and sustaining education than they were in their programs as a whole.

"It is not possible to really do this work well with a mostly white faculty and student body; we have to diversify our faculty and students and we need to form much stronger connections with our community partners."

To this end, it is paramount for educator preparation programs to analyze their own recruitment and retention strategies; this is a critical step to supporting and strengthening faculty and staff's skills, abilities, knowledge and capacity to effectively model and lead the work of culturally relevant and sustaining education.

CONCLUSION

The Pennsylvania State Board of Education and Department of Education should be applauded for taking initial steps toward codifying culturally relevant and sustaining education into teacher preparation through Chapter 49, and Pennsylvania's educator preparation programs should likewise be acknowledged for the work they have already undertaken to begin embedding culturally relevant and sustaining education into their programs. However, the next year will be critical in determining the ultimate success of this endeavor, as we move from the initial high-level policymaking to the more challenging period of implementation and adaptive change. Without strong leadership from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, clear and high expectations paired with meaningful and differentiated support for programs, and a continued effort to diversify the educator workforce at every level, these efforts may flounder or stall. But with PDE as a champion of culturally relevant and sustaining education, swift development of clear implementation guidelines, resources and training aligned with programs' needs, and a commitment to supporting faculty and staff of color, Pennsylvania can emerge as a national leader in culturally responsive and sustaining education, ensuring that every Pennsylvania teacher is equipped to meet the needs of all our Commonwealth's diverse learners.

Endnotes

1. Cabral, L. et al. (2022). Research for Action. The Need for More Teachers of Color. Retrieved from https://www.researchforaction.org/research-resources/k-12/the-need-for-more-teachers-of-color/.

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8. Question: "What is your title/role within your educator preparation program?" Response: (n=103)

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11. Question: "How familiar are you with the concept of culturally relevant and sustaining education?" Response: (n=103) "Very familiar" (73.8 percent), "Somewhat familiar" (23.3 percent), "Slightly familiar" (2.9 percent).

12. Ibid.

13. Question: "How confident are you in your own ability to support pre-service and in-service educators in becoming culturally relevant and sustaining educators?" Response: (n=103) "Very confident" (50.5 percent), "Somewhat confident" (39.8 percent), "Slightly confident" (9.7 percent).

14. Ibid.

15. Question: "Please describe what steps your program or institution has already taken to incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education into your program." Response: (n=103) "Revised course curricula to incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education" (63.1 percent), "Redesigned field experiences to incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education" (31.1 percent), "Provided professional development opportunities for current faculty and staff to learn about culturally relevant and sustaining education" (44.7%), "Hired new faculty and/or staff with expertise in culturally relevant and sustaining education" (32.0 percent), "Other - Write In" (17.5 percent).

16. Question: "How confident are you in the ability of your faculty and staff as a whole to support pre-service and in-service educators in becoming culturally relevant and sustaining educators?" Response: (n=103) "Very confident" (32.4 percent), "Somewhat confident" (42.2 percent), "Slightly confident" (24.5 percent), "Not at all confident" (1.0 percent).

17. Question: "Currently, how well integrated would you say that culturally relevant and

sustaining education is throughout your educator preparation program coursework?" Response: (n=103) "Very well integrated" (28.4 percent), "Somewhat integrated" (45.1 percent), "Slightly integrated" (24.5 percent), "Not at all integrated" (2.0 percent). .

18. Question: "How confident are you in your own ability to support pre-service and in-service educators in becoming culturally relevant and sustaining educators?" Response: (n=103) "Very confident" (50.5 percent), "Somewhat confident" (39.8 percent), "Slightly confident" (9.7 percent).

19. Question: "Currently, how well integrated would you say that culturally relevant and sustaining education is throughout your educator preparation program coursework?"

20. Ibid.

21. Question: "How would you describe the teaching and assessment of culturally relevant and sustaining education competencies within your program?" Response: (n=103) "Culturally relevant and sustaining education competencies are directly taught and assessed throughout our program" (23.3 percent), "There are one or two courses where culturally relevant and sustaining education competencies are intentionally taught and assessed along with many courses where culturally relevant and sustaining education is intentionally integrated but not directly assessed" (27.2 percent), "There are many courses where culturally relevant and sustaining education is intentionally integrated, but the competencies are not assessed anywhere in our program" (25.2 percent), "There is at least one course where culturally relevant and sustaining education is a primary focus and where culturally relevant and sustaining education competencies are assessed" (17.5 percent), "Culturally relevant and sustaining education competencies are not intentionally taught or assessed in a meaningful way in our program" (6.8 percent).

22. Question: "How would you describe the inclusion of culturally relevant and sustaining education into field experiences within your program?" Response: (n=103) "At least one substantive pre-student teaching or student teaching experience is intentionally designed with culturally relevant and sustaining education in mind" (35.0 percent), "Few or no field experiences are intentionally designed with culturally relevant and sustaining education in mind" (11.7 percent), "Most or all field experiences are intentionally

designed with culturally relevant and sustaining education in mind" (26.2 percent), "Only early program observational experiences are intentionally designed with culturally relevant and sustaining education in mind" (4.9 percent), "The inclusion of culturally relevant and sustaining education into field experiences is inconsistent and dependent on the particular program instructor/staff and/or cooperating educator" (22.3 percent).

23. Question: "How would you describe the inclusion of culturally relevant and sustaining education into field experiences within your program?"

24. Ibid.

25. Question: "What support will you, your colleagues, and/or your institution need in order to meaningfully incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education into your programs?".

26. Question: "How would you describe the inclusion of culturally relevant and sustaining education into field experiences within your program?"

27. Question: "What challenges have you encountered or do you foresee as your institution works to incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education into your program?" Response: (n=103) "Lack of time and/or resources to incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education into your program" (50.5 percent), "Lack of faculty/staff training and/or expertise in culturally relevant and sustaining education" (38.8 percent), "Current field experiences and placements undermine culturally relevant and sustaining education" (27.2 percent), "Other higher priorities or greater challenges demanding attention" (24.3 percent), "Lack of buy-in or resistance from faculty and/or staff about the importance of culturally relevant and sustaining education" (20.4 percent), "Other - Write In" (20.4 percent), "Lack of buy-in or resistance from students about the importance of culturally relevant and sustaining education" (15.5 percent).

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Question: "How confident are you in the ability of your faculty and staff as a whole to support pre-service and in-service educators in becoming culturally relevant and sustaining educators?"

32. Question: "How confident are you in your own ability to support pre-service and in-service educators in becoming culturally relevant and sustaining educators?"

33. Question: "What challenges have you encountered or do you foresee as your institution works to incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education into your program?"

34. Question: Ibid.

35. Question: "Please describe what steps your program or institution has already taken to incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education into your program."

36. Question: "What support will you, your colleagues, and/or your institution need in order to meaningfully incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education into your programs?" Response: (n=103) "Professional development opportunities for current faculty and staff to learn about culturally relevant and sustaining education" (68.9 percent), "Communities of practice to learn from and problem-solve with peer institutions" (66.0 percent), "Sample course curricula and other materials from institutions that have already incorporated culturally relevant and sustaining education" (67.0 percent), "New faculty and/or staff with expertise in culturally relevant and sustaining education" (25.2 percent), "Consulting and/or technical assistance from an external source on program needs and recommended next steps" (29.1 percent), "Other - Write In" (12.6 percent).

37. Ibid.

38. Question: "How confident are you in your own ability to support pre-service and in-service educators in becoming culturally relevant and sustaining educators?"

39. Question: "How confident are you in the ability of your faculty and staff as a whole to support pre-service and in-service educators in becoming culturally relevant and sustaining educators?"

40. Question: "What support will you, your colleagues, and/or your institution need in order to meaningfully incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education into your programs?"

41. Question: "What support will you, your colleagues, and/or your institution need in order to meaningfully incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education into your programs?"

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Question: "What challenges have you encountered or do you foresee as your institution works to incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education into your program?"

46. Question: "Please share additional successes, challenges, concerns, questions, support needed, or comments related to culturally relevant and sustaining education in your program."

47. Ibid.

48. Question: "What support will you, your colleagues, and/or your institution need in order to meaningfully incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education into your programs?"

49. Question: "Please share additional successes, challenges, concerns, questions, support needed, or comments related to culturally relevant and sustaining education in your program."

50. Question: "How confident are you in the ability of your faculty and staff as a whole to support pre-service and in-service educators in becoming culturally relevant and sustaining educators?"

51. Question: "Currently, how well integrated would you say that culturally relevant and sustaining education is throughout your educator preparation program coursework?"

52. Question: "What support will you, your colleagues, and/or your institution need in order to meaningfully incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education into your programs?"

53. Question: "What challenges have you encountered or do you foresee as your institution works to incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education into your program?"

54. Ibid.

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ABOUT TEACH PLUS

Teach Plus is dedicated to the mission of empowering excellent, experienced, and diverse teachers to take leadership over key policy and practice issues that advance equity, opportunity, and student success. Since 2009, Teach Plus has developed thousands of teacher leaders across the country to exercise their leadership in shaping education policy and improving teaching and learning, to create an education system driven by access and excellence for all.
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