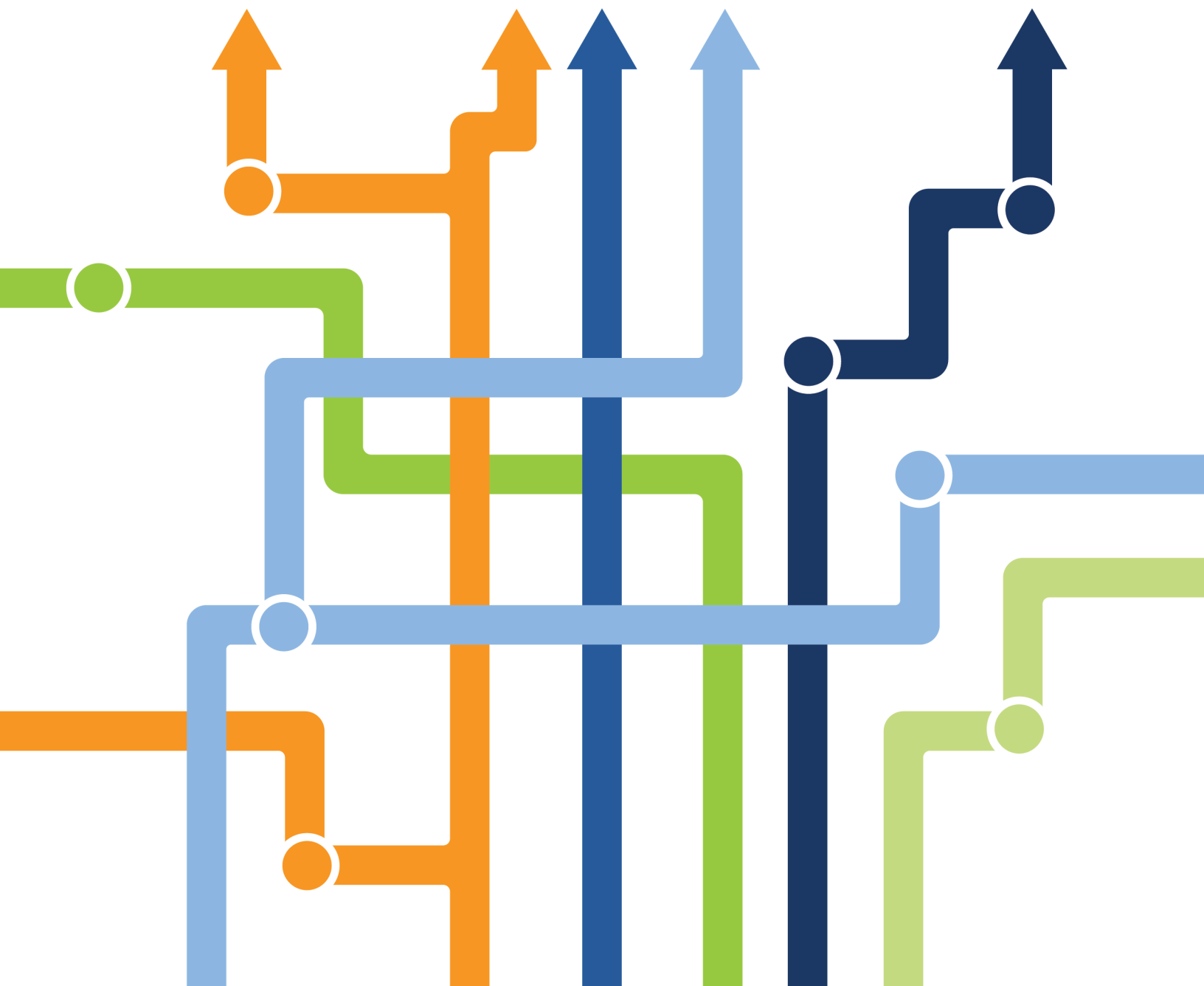


Building a Roadmap for a **Diverse, Sustainable** Educator Workforce in California



Introduction

Why #CABuildingBridges Summit

Highly qualified, diverse teachers are essential to student learning. Studies consistently show that teachers of color matter for all students, and especially for students of color in whose lives they play a pivotal role.¹ California decision makers at every level of the system have acknowledged that our students should have access to ethnoracially and linguistically diverse and effective educators. Yet, state leaders continue to struggle with how to best address teacher shortages, inequitable access to fully credentialed teachers, and a lack of diversity within the workforce. Even with so many thought and systems leaders exploring strategies to recruit, develop, and retain a diverse educator workforce, we still do not have a comprehensive vision for the future of the teaching force in California.

This is why, on April 10, 2023, Latinos for Education, One Million Teachers of Color Campaign, Teach Plus, EdTrust-West, TNTP, and UCLA's Center for the Transformation of Schools brought together educators, policymakers, K-12 leaders, higher education leaders, non-profit leaders, researchers, and advocates from across California for a teacher-designed summit called “#CABuildingBridges: Setting the Vision for Sustaining BIPOC Educators in California.” The summit's goal was to develop a shared understanding of the root causes for why educators of color and multilingual educators enter, stay, and leave the profession and co-create a roadmap for building and supporting a diverse and sustainable teacher workforce in California.

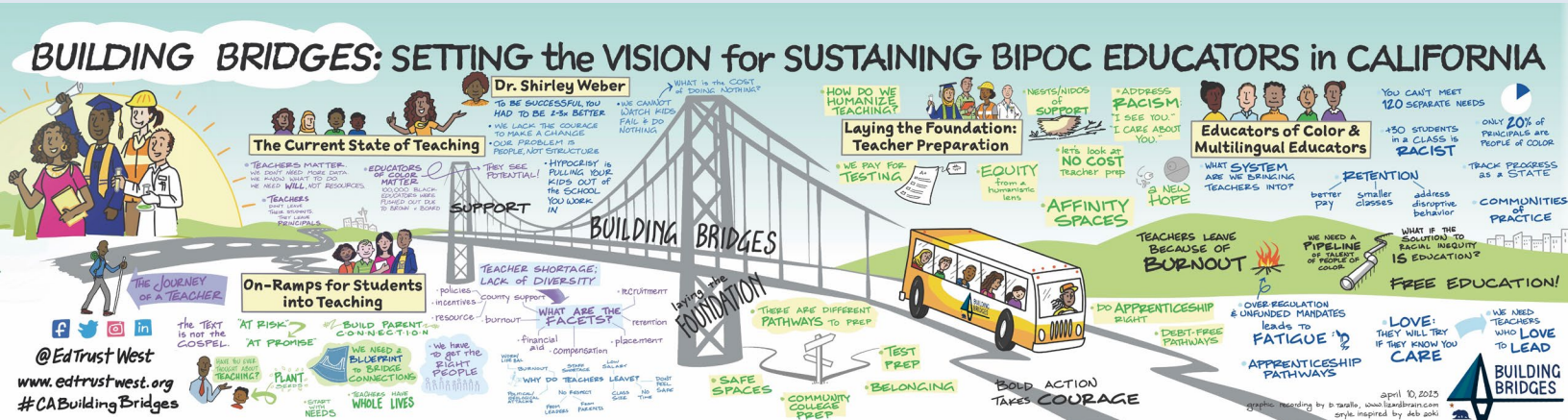


Image created by Brian Tarallo, Lizard Brain

Background

Why California Needs a Shared Vision for a Sustainable and Diverse Educator Workforce

California is home to one of the largest and most diverse populations in the country yet our schools do not reflect that same diversity. While only 20 percent of kids in California identify as non-Hispanic white, 61 percent of public school teachers identify as non-Hispanic white.² At the same time, teacher preparation programs in the state show a drop in degrees and certifications, and districts and charter networks are finding it challenging to recruit and retain educators of color.³

Creating a sustainable, diverse teacher workforce in California is essential to prepare our students for postsecondary success. By promoting teacher diversity, we can provide students with role models who reflect their identities and backgrounds, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment. By equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and perspectives necessary to thrive in an interconnected world, we empower them to become resilient, adaptable, and empathetic individuals. Building a diverse teacher workforce is a critical step in ensuring that our students are prepared to tackle the challenges and seize the opportunities of the future with confidence and competence.

#CABuildingBridges Summit

Creating the Vision Through Shared Understanding

In July 2022, EdTrust-West and Teach Plus California supported a team of educators of color to attend the Building a Movement Convening in Philadelphia. This convening, which was hosted by The Education Trust and co-sponsored by the [One Million Teachers of Color Campaign](#) partners, brought together educators of color from across the country to coordinate and engage in advocacy in their respective states to increase educator diversity. Over the subsequent months, the California team of educators determined that one of the key issues limiting progress on educator diversity in the state was a lack of a clear, comprehensive vision for a diverse, sustainable educator workforce, coupled with an absence of a clear sense of responsibility from the state for enacting this vision.

The #CABuildingBridges Summit focused on developing this shared vision for the role of the state in supporting and sustaining an educator workforce that reflects California's students. It was important to the educators planning the summit that the blueprint for the profession be informed by the perspectives of educators, policymakers, researchers, advocates, representatives of higher education, and others across the education system.

The #CABuildingBridges Summit embraced a commitment to inclusivity by actively seeking and amplifying the voices of those traditionally underrepresented or marginalized in educational spaces. This intentional diversity created a vibrant and dynamic environment, fostering rich and robust discussions. The cross-pollination of ideas and collaborative approach in the summit's working group spaces fostered a sense of collective ownership and responsibility in addressing the pressing issue of teacher diversity, setting the stage for transformative change in California's education system.

“Recruiting and sustaining BIPOC educators in California is a complex challenge with high stakes for our diverse student population. We have the resources and the desire, but do we have the will to take bold action to bring this vision about? Bold action requires courage that faces our fears rather than be frozen by them. With that we can all commit in our spheres of influence, great and small, to build and support a diverse and sustainable teacher workforce in California.”

—Jason Morgan, math teacher at Dominguez High School in Compton, Teach Plus California Policy Fellowship alumnus and summit participant



“The work of building a diverse and sustainable teacher workforce for our students in California is challenging. I’m inspired by so many in our educational community who bring their ideas, their passion, and their support to the #CABuildingBridges effort. I know that together we can change the system so that our teachers reflect the diversity of our students in California.”

—Meghann Seril, 3rd grade teacher in the Mandarin dual language program at Broadway Elementary in Venice, Teach Plus California Policy Fellowship alumna and summit participant



Summit Structure

Maximizing Collaboration and Learning

The summit kicked off with a welcome and keynote by Dr. Shirley Weber, California Secretary of State. In subsequent sessions, attendees dove into a range of issues, learning directly from teachers and students of color about their experiences in the K-12 system, and how these experiences affected their social and emotional well-being and academic success.

To maximize learning and collaboration, teacher leaders created an agenda that explored the different phases of an educator’s journey and brought together experts to share their experiences, research, and questions on panel discussions within four different frames:

1. Understanding the Current State of the Teaching Profession
2. On-ramps for TK-12 Students into the Teaching Profession
3. Laying the Foundation: Teacher Preparation
4. Supporting and Sustaining Educators of Color and Multilingual Educators

Between each presentation and panel discussion, teacher facilitators at the fifteen table working groups led their cross-sector participants in a discussion of the issues. Attendees reflected on the ideas presented and shared their perspectives. After the summit, research staff from EdTrust-West reviewed the table notes and coded the responses for key themes and representative quotes. In addition, summit participants completed a survey, sharing reflections and recommendations. Teacher leaders then reviewed the analysis and summarized common themes and ideas. These are below.

Overall Theme

An Urgent Need for Clarity and Action

When asked “What emerged from today’s conversation that you see as the greatest opportunities for the state to foster a more robust infrastructure for a sustainable, diverse educator workforce,” a consistent throughline was the need for clear statewide goals and a coordinated effort to advance them. As one participant responded, *“State goals! We need to create a coalition to advocate for real, actionable state goals with policies and resources to support them. Diversity is California’s greatest asset; we must have state teacher diversity goals!”* Many participants also called out the value of diverse experts coming together as part of that coordinated effort. *“I loved the mix of incredible experts — from teachers to higher ed chancellors to nonprofit leaders. And I loved that it both addressed the many parts of this complex system and how we can all work together,”* said another participant.

There was a clear sense of urgency among the participants. During the state-of-the-profession discussion, participants illustrated how consistent certain challenges for teachers have been in the past 20 to 30 years and the fact that these challenges have not been addressed.

Several ideas emerged to help move the state to action:

1. Transform the teacher workforce by creating structures that uplift and value the teaching profession.
2. Reimagine the teaching role to ensure that it is sustainable and humane.
3. Clarify its responsibilities, support, and oversight for ensuring a sustainable, diverse educator workforce for California’s students.

Call to Action

1. Transform the teacher workforce by creating structures that uplift and value the teaching profession.

A major theme of the summit was the need to uplift the teaching profession as a whole. Panelists emphasized that the ability of the state to recruit and retain teachers is connected to our society’s expectation of what it means to be a teacher. Participants stressed that the narrative of the teaching profession must be about more than meeting standards or teaching to tests. While teachers must be able to focus on student outcomes, educators are shifting the narrative that their work is focused on social justice.

To ensure teachers are prepared and stay in the profession, participants agreed that the teacher pipeline should mirror other career pathways. Considering the financial burdens of entering the profession, there should be a direct route from community colleges to the teaching profession. While there was a lot of excitement about this as a policy lever to explore, there was also confusion about how this might happen with the lack of connection between the TK-12, community college, and other higher education segments and about who is, can, or should be advancing this work.

Many teachers, who faced some of the toughest years of their career due to the COVID-19 pandemic, weighed the costs and benefits of staying in the profession and came up short. Compensation was a key point in the discussion. All teachers, and especially teachers of color, must be adequately compensated for additional work they often take on at their school sites. Teachers should have the opportunity to take on leadership roles that empower them to shape the schools within which they work, as well as outcomes and opportunities for students. When students see their teachers thriving, they will be inspired to enter the profession.

2. Reimagine the teaching role to ensure that it is sustainable and humane.

As teacher panelists and participants shared their experiences, they elevated the humanity of the professionals in schools and painted a picture of a job with expectations that can tax their very humanity. Participants asked the question, “How do we humanize teaching?” If we are to attract strong, diverse candidates into the profession and develop and retain them, then the state must take the lead in building structures and providing support to ensure that teaching is sustainable.

Participants stressed that the quality and efficacy of school administrators is a major contributor to teacher retention. This is true for early career educators who need mentorship to become experts, and key for mid- and late-career educators who need support to continually develop and sustain themselves over the years. Administrators also have great influence over school climate and culture, which impacts both staff and students. One participant wondered if accountability measures for administrators at the school and district levels should be modeled after the metrics and qualitative evaluations used for teachers to ensure that administrators are leading with a humanizing lens. As one panelist commented, *“Teachers don't leave schools, they leave principals.”*

Discussion of on-ramps for students of color and multilingual students into teaching was richly informed by the personal experiences of the participants. Many shared that they had been inspired by a teacher to become one or to get involved in the education space. One best practice mentioned by multiple groups was encouraging teachers to foster a supportive classroom in which the students' whole being is affirmed and celebrated. When teachers are intentionally supported and sustained, they can in turn support their students to also enter the profession.

3. Clarify their responsibilities, support, and oversight for ensuring a sustainable, diverse educator workforce for California's students.

When wrestling with potential policy solutions, participants kept coming back to the question of the state's role in supporting the educator workforce. California's decentralized education accountability model has long been a source of pain points within the state's educational landscape. The model results in the fragmented nature of decision-making and resource allocation. With numerous local education agencies operating independently, there is limited coordination and alignment of efforts, hindering the development and implementation of cohesive policies and practices. Another byproduct of this system is the uneven distribution of resources, exacerbating existing inequities in access to quality education. Additionally, this fragmented model leads to many of the decision-making bodies' lack of understanding of the full power they can exercise to shift the narrative and solve the challenges for their students and communities. As one participant put it: *"Overall, the decentralized accountability model in California has created a complex and disjointed educational landscape, marked by inconsistent measures, fragmented decision-making, and inequitable resource allocation. These pain points highlight the urgent need for a more centralized problem-solving network and cohesive approach that can effectively address the challenges facing the state's education system."*

Participants stressed that teaching should be a profession that can recruit and retain teachers based on the merits of the job. Financial barriers were consistent concerns, including the cost of credentialing, teacher salaries, loan forgiveness, and housing support. These costs were seen as prohibitive, ensuring that only candidates with certain backgrounds would be able to not only enter the profession but remain in it, as well. Numerous suggestions of how the state could be involved were floated, such as a GI Bill for educators, housing and student loan supports, and a statewide compensation floor. Yet participants were stymied as to why these solutions had not been attempted in the past.

As policy and higher education leaders listened to various teachers discuss their on-ramps to teaching, many participants applauded the different on-ramps that teachers had created throughout California. But they questioned what the state could do to change the full narrative of a California teacher.

What To Do and Who Should Do It

The #CABuildingBridges Summit fostered robust conversations on many of the most intractable issues related to educator diversity and created a sense of shared purpose among disparate leaders. As one participant shared: *"The summit was not only empowering but induced productive discomfort that led to thoughtful and innovative approaches to increasing and sustaining BIPOC educators. This summit was indicative of the necessary changes that must happen if we want to create systemic change in a system that oftentimes feels like it was designed to stifle us and keep us out. Change must occur. I am excited about this collective effort to "build bridges."* While the summit elevated key concepts of a shared vision, it is just the beginning. **We need to leverage this momentum with ongoing work, conversations, and policy levers to foster collective problem solving that ultimately results in a diverse, sustainable educator workforce for California's students.**

Let's Get to Work

The California Educator Diversity Action Network (CEDAN), led by Teach Plus California and EdTrust-West, is ready to continue capitalizing on the momentum generated at the #CABuildingBridges Summit. The network aims to build tables big enough to hold educators, families, advocates, community members, researchers, and policy makers so that everyone can be heard. This is reflected in the core partnership of UCLA's Center for the Transformation of Schools, TNTP, Latinos for Education, Public Advocates, Californians Together, and Californians for Justice, who will guide CEDAN's work to reach its North Star:

The education profession is built to last and lead in California because educators are:

- + More representative of the communities served by California public schools
- + Working within humane, well-resourced, and sustainable roles and conditions
- + More trusted and empowered to positively impact students, colleagues, communities, and the future of public education.

Through community engagement, actionable and sound research, and transformative innovation, CEDAN will ensure California develops and fully realizes the vision of public education that teachers demand and students deserve. This begins with having data on the state of diversity, racial and linguistic equity, and sustainability so state leaders can make future projections about the profession and track progress toward solving current issues. This means an improvement in perceptions of the teaching profession bolstered by improved recruiting, hiring, representation, retention, and satisfaction for educators of color and multilingual educators. The state will prioritize educator diversity, equity, and sustainability with greater and targeted financial investment, as well as education policy that emphasizes sustainable implementation. We will have reached our North Star when we are no longer discussing the challenges of the past 20 to 30 years, but looking forward to better and more innovative ways to meet the needs of the community through public education. As one of our network members said, *"We know we've won when our students see themselves and their potential reflected in a thriving education profession."*

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To learn more about the Building Bridges Summit, visit the following webpage.
<https://teachplus.org/resource/building-a-roadmap-for-a-diverse-sustainable-educator-workforce-in-california/>

#CABuilding Bridges summit in the Media

- + [California's shortage of diverse teachers is hurting students, educators say](#) (Los Angeles Times)
- + [Summit in Sacramento takes a look at teaching from the perspective of teachers of color](#) (KCRA-TV)

Los Angeles Times



Educator Op-Eds

- + [We Need a Diverse and Sustainable Teaching Force in California](#) (Manuel Rustin, What's the Plus)
- + [California needs better support for students and teachers of color](#) (Allison Zamora, EdSource)

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Dee, T. (2004). Teachers, race and student achievement in a randomized experiment. The Review of Economics and Statistics, 86(1), 195–210
- 2 California Department of Education, DataQuest. Retrieved from: <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dataquest.asp>.
- 3 Lambert, D. (2023). Number of new California teacher credentials declines after seven years of increases. EdSource. <https://edsource.org/2023/number-of-california-teacher-credentials-down-after-seven-years-of-increases/692024>

ABOUT 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. In pursuing our mission, Teach Plus is guided by our Student Opportunity Mandate: All students should have the opportunity to achieve their potential in an education system defined by its commitment to equity, its responsiveness to individual needs, and its ability to prepare students for postsecondary 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 for students.



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