

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

- 3 Foreword
- 4 Executive Summary
- 6 A Profession in Crisis
- 7 The Four Challenges
 - Problem 1: Return on Investment
 - Problem 2: Reaching New Populations
 - Problem 3: Making Programs More Accessible While Retaining Rigor
 - Problem 4: Creating Accessible Pathways for Advancement
- 12 The Inflection Point and Potential Paths Forward
 - Paths Forward
 - Solving the Four Challenges
 - Demonstrate Return on Investment
 - Expand Reach to Populations Who May Not Have Previously Considered Teaching or Leadership
 - Balance Rigor and Time-to-Completion
 - Create Accessible Opportunities for Advancement
- 19 Moving Forward Together: Partnerships in Teacher Prep

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nearly [half](#) of all schools in America were understaffed when students went back to school in 2022.⁵

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both the challenge of retaining teachers in the profession as well as the shrinking talent

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A PROFESSION IN CRISIS

Ask nearly anyone to recall a favorite teacher, and they'll come up with someone. Teachers play a crucial role in forming our academic and

social experiences. (3-N-12-54 K-5 End (year) (42) (38) 2 (i) 33 (1) 18) -64 (6) i) 6-4. 6 (3) (3. 1) (h) 34 58 (g) 5d



THE FOUR CHALLENGES

The teacher shortage doesn't hinge on one particular issue — it is a conglomeration of a wide range of issues across different regions and specialties. Many school districts serving students from historically marginalized communities are also more likely to face overall teacher shortages.¹²

Filling these gaps will require new approaches to sourcing and retaining talent. School districts new programs can begin by considering four challenges that face the teacher talent pipeline:

- Financial return on investment: The cost of higher education is rising, but teaching salaries are not rising in tandem. Paying more to earn less means that today there is a growing economic disincentive for joining the profession.
- Reaching new populations: There simply aren't enough individuals in traditional education.

Problem 1: Return on Investment

When it comes to the cost of teacher training, it's not hard to see why many students are opting into other careers. In the last 40 years, the costs associated with college have [skyrocketed](#)

Problem 2: Reaching New Populations

Women have historically faced occupational segregation, working primarily in a small handful of occupations.¹⁸ For many decades, this was a boon to the teaching profession. Teaching has been one of the top three most common occupations for women for half a century.¹⁹

In the 1950s, nearly 70% of working women worked in one of 10 occupations. Among those were stenographers, teachers, nurses and waitresses. Today, although teaching is

Problem 3: Making Programs More Accessible While Retaining Rigor

Over the past few years, school districts have loosened teaching requirements out of ³⁰ But this can't come at the expense of quality. Districts urgent needs quickly. Those partners, then, must ensure that teachers enter the classroom prepared and set up for success.

Expanding the pipeline of educators and meeting urgent school district needs means balancing time-to-completion, rigor and accessibility.

"Making teacher preparation programs more accessible is an essential, but not exhaustive, step to strengthen the teaching profession," says Peter Shulman, CEO of Urban Teachers and former deputy commissioner for the New Jersey Department of Education. "Accessibility needs to be married with extensive, high-quality, relevant programming to support our aspiring teachers' growth into skilled novice teachers

THE INFLECTION POINT AND POTENTIAL PATHS FORWARD

Teacher shortages are a multifaceted problem. Many challenges that impact the sector — including school safety and culture war political pressures — are largely outside of school districts' control.

School districts are also at the mercy of budgets driven by tax revenues and, to a lesser extent, state and federal policy priorities. As pandemic-era stimulus funds dry up, school district budgets will tighten in the coming years, which may cause the teacher shortage to get worse before it gets better. It may further limit school districts' ability to raise teacher pay or even force districts to cut staff.

The threat of teacher layoffs, coupled with _____ (where teachers laid off) may create a chilling effect for recruiting teachers. After all, why would a paraprofessional or early childhood educator choose to invest time and money for a job that may not be there by the time they graduate or that might last only a few years?⁴⁰ "If we're going to be in a tight budget environment," says Liz Cohen, policy director for FutureEd at _____

Grow-your-own programs focus on expanding the pool of potential teachers by tapping into local talent (including graduating K-12 students and paraprofessionals). These individuals earn a salary while learning how to become teachers. Teacher apprenticeships are likewise [gaining momentum](#) as states begin to register their apprenticeship with the Department of Labor in 2022. Fifteen more states have followed suit since then.⁴³

Alternative pathways that open up the teaching profession

Demonstrate Return on Investment

School districts may feel they are between a rock and a hard place when it comes to the value proposition of teaching. They cannot control the rising costs of college. And they often face budget limitations or collective bargaining agreements that control the salaries they offer teachers. The result is that would-be teachers have little incentive to invest substantial time and money in pursuing a career choice that could leave them in serious debt. Teaching is a labor of love for many. Yet, for the profession to sustain itself, it must also be a rational career choice. Passion alone doesn't pay the bills. School districts cannot reasonably ask teaching candidates to take on multiple loans they may never be able to fully repay.

Controlling costs may be the only feasible way to control return on investment (ROI) for would-be educators. Like school districts, teacher prep programs can't control teacher salaries. But they

Balance Rigor and Time-to-Completion

The time requirements for obtaining the degree or credentials necessary for teaching entry for many prospective educators. What's more, the length of traditional teacher training

Every educator entering the profession, via every pathway, deserves to be a part of an enabling environment that creates the conditions where they thrive, and teaching is grounded in the full context of students' social, emotional and intellectual

students do half of their coursework in the classroom. They do the other half online. This enables students to hold a job continuously as students and have those working hours count toward their degree completion. In this way, Reach provides the means for teachers to engage in meaningful skills-building with a minimal time and financial cost.

ACE's accelerated program is skills-based and rooted in practices teachers will encounter every day in their careers. In addition to essays

Create Accessible Opportunities for Advancement

Many teachers are unable or unwilling to step away from their classroom careers to obtain the degree or credential necessary to advance to leadership positions.

Enabling teachers to access advancement opportunities can help keep them in the education profession. It can also help school districts rebuild a consistent leadership corps that can steer the profession forward.

Western Governors University (WGU) doesn't advance students through courses based on traditional time-based credit hours. Rather, it offers competency-based degrees that allow

ENDNOTES

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