

Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

Kathleen Foord, President
kathleen.foord@mnsu.edu 507-389-1607

Bob Utke, Executive Assistant
bobjutke@gmail.com 612-759-7878

Meeting the Needs of Minnesota Schools and Students

As classrooms across Minnesota become increasingly diverse, our teachers need skills, knowledge, dispositions, practices, and resources to effectively reach and teach all learners and must better reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the student population. It is essential that Minnesota schools be staffed by fully licensed teachers who have not only the depth of content knowledge essential for the subject(s) they teach but also an understanding of child development, evaluation, academic planning, and learners with special needs and limited English proficiency. Effective preparation for licensure is the essential first step, followed by on-going learning opportunities through mentoring, induction, and professional development. We need to recognize and support teacher development as an on-going process that begins but doesn't end with licensure.

Key Points:

- **Strong leadership; curricula that prepare students for college and career readiness and life-long learning; safe and appropriately equipped classrooms; and parent participation programs are also necessary components for helping all students achieve to their full potential.** Funding to support these learning components is essential but not sufficient.
- **Minnesota's 2013 mathematics and reading NAEP scores demonstrate significant progress in narrowing the achievement gap between white students and students of color.** Although we must recognize the gains made by *all* learners, efforts to narrow and ultimately eliminate this gap must continue. Diane Ravitch has noted, "If white achievement had stood still, the achievement gap would be closed by now, but of course white achievement has also improved so the gap remains large" (Ravitch, 2013).
- **One factor often cited to promote discussion of the achievement gap (e.g., opportunity gap) is the growth of income disparities across the nation.** Too often, schools serving large numbers of low-income students also have the largest numbers of inexperienced teachers and inadequate resources. Although effective teaching can help address this gap, social and economic policies and funding to support changes for the 23% of US children living in poverty are also essential.

How Minnesota Should Respond:

- The state should support strategies to recruit, support, prepare, license, and retain a more diverse teaching force for Minnesota classrooms through:
 - Financial support and incentives (e.g., loan forgiveness, grants, and scholarships) to enable a more diverse group of individuals to complete licensure.
 - Financial support and incentives to teacher preparation programs to enable them to attract, prepare, and license teacher candidates of color (for example, by providing assistance with the costs of student teaching and test fees).
 - Removal of financial and programmatic barriers to licensure for paraeducators.
 - Outreach and mentoring to middle/high school students as a means to recruit a diverse group of high-quality candidates to teacher preparation programs.
 - Mandate that assessments required for licensure are bias-free.
- The state should offer incentives and professional support (e.g., mentoring) to attract and retain experienced, highly effective teachers to work in the most racially and culturally diverse and economically challenged schools.
- Policies designed to reduce opportunity gaps should address and fund educational, social, and economic needs as a unified approach.