



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **State Education Leaders Launch Effort to Foster a Diverse and Culturally Responsive Teaching Workforce**

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) announced a new effort to diversify the education workforce and support future and current educators in effectively teaching students of different cultural backgrounds.

In the United States, 5 of out 10 students in public schools are students of color, yet the diversity of today's educator workforce does not reflect that of students. Research shows that students' race, ethnicity, and cultural background significantly influence their achievement, and that all students benefit from being educated by teachers from a variety of different backgrounds, races and ethnic groups, as this experience better prepares them to succeed in an increasingly diverse society. However, today, more than 40 percent of public schools have no minority teachers on staff.

"CCSSO is proud to launch the Diverse and Learner-Ready Teachers Initiative as we strive to better prepare all teachers to meet the needs of every learner in their classroom," said Carissa Moffat Miller, executive director of CCSSO. "This work is firmly rooted in CCSSO's commitment to providing an equitable education to all students."

CCSSO has worked with state education chiefs over the past five years to transform how educators are prepared, anchored in CCSSO's foundational report *Our Responsibility, Our Promise*. States have made significant progress to improve how educator preparation programs are approved, teachers are licensed, and all key stakeholders receive the necessary data to continuously improve.

Still, as the demographics in our public schools continue to shift, states recognize more work needs to be done to ensure that all teachers be ready on day one to meet the needs of all learners.

The Diverse and Learner-Ready Teacher Initiative is a network of nine states that will connect over the next year with each other and experts in the field to receive individualized support as they create plans to address challenges in their states.

Participating states are Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, and New York.

Through this work, these states hope to revise, enact or remove state policies that will address specific challenges for both diversifying the educator workforce and ensuring all educators are culturally responsive in practice by 2020.

"Nebraska has more than 120 languages spoken by students and families. The future of Nebraska is multi-racial and multi-ethnic. A rich education experience for students will require a teaching population that comes from this base of population growth but that will not happen without intentional efforts of the education system," said Nebraska Commissioner of Education Matthew Blomstedt.

"Nebraska will have to attract, prepare, develop, and retain teachers with purpose and intent to diversify this workforce. Nebraska looks forward to working with the network to build a strategy to engage minority teachers, communities, post-secondary, and school officials to overcome barriers to students entering the teaching profession and overcome systemic racial and ethnic bias in the education of students."

"In Colorado, we are looking for ways to elevate, support and energize the teaching profession so we have the best educators and role models for our students. Anything we can do to learn from other states in increasing achievement and success for all students is exciting," said Colorado Commissioner Katy Anthes.

Mississippi Superintendent and CCSSO Board President Carey Wright said, "This initiative fits perfectly with our State Board of Education's goal of 'effective teachers and leaders in every school.' To make this goal a reality, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) recognizes the importance and urgency of addressing the teacher workforce disparities in the state, which includes encouraging a diverse workforce. The MDE has set a goal of increasing the number of minority teachers in critical shortage school districts by 25 percent by 2025, which will better reflect the student population in these districts. We look forward to learning best practices to diversify our teacher pipeline and to implement strategies to help teachers improve their cultural responsiveness."

"The student population in New York State and across the nation becomes increasingly more diverse by the day, yet our teaching force doesn't come close to reflecting that diversity," said New York State Commissioner of Education MaryEllen Elia.

"Research shows that students do better when they learn from teachers of different races, ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. New York is excited to take an active role in CCSSO's efforts to foster a more diverse and culturally responsive teaching workforce – efforts that dovetail perfectly with New York's ongoing work to foster greater equity throughout the entire educational system."

"Louisiana's public school population is becoming more diverse. Participating in CCSSO's Diverse and Learner-Ready Teacher Initiative is an opportunity to build upon the state's efforts to strengthen teacher preparation by supporting educators in teaching students from different cultural backgrounds and by recruiting a more diverse teacher workforce. We look forward to collaborating with other states seeking to make similar shifts," said Louisiana Superintendent John White.

"The economic and social future of our state and our country depends upon us creating the conditions for children to thrive," said Illinois Superintendent of Education Tony Smith, Ph.D. "Illinois is committed to changing the narrative around teaching and to improving recruitment, preparation, and retention practices. Our goal is a strong and diverse teacher workforce that enjoys viable paths to fulfillment, leadership, and economic success and stability."

"Attracting and retaining a diverse educator workforce has been an historic challenge in Delaware," said Delaware Secretary of Education Susan Bunting. "We appreciate CCSSO bringing states together to address this important collective issue."

"One of the ways we can narrow persistent achievement gaps is by ensuring that teachers have the background knowledge they need to effectively serve all students, regardless of whether they share a common background," said Jeff Wulfson, Massachusetts' Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. "We look forward to collaborating with CCSSO and other states on this initiative while at the same time trying to diversify the teacher pipeline."

"CCSSO's landmark report *Our Responsibility, Our Promise* prompted many states to accept the mission of transforming teacher preparation for our students," said New Mexico Education Secretary Christopher Ruszkowski.

“New Mexico has been at the forefront of building foundational educator quality policies and practices over the past five years, and will further strengthen our schools with upcoming efforts focused on effectively serving our diverse student population with teachers that are truly “Day-One Ready,” Ruskowski added. “Building from our state’s 2015 Excellent Educators For All Plan and our ambitious State Plan under ESSA, this partnership with CCSSO represents a pivotal opportunity to leverage a statewide vision for student access and equity as we collectively prepare a more diverse, talented group of aspiring teachers.”

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*The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.*

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