

## Equitable Access Memo: Year in Review



*~This teacher journey framework was created by TeachMN2020, a statewide initiative under the Minnesota Education Equity Partnership (MNEEP). Used with permission.*

### **Vision: Every student benefits from diverse and excellent educators**

In July 2019, we developed this listserv to communicate our vision for every student benefiting from diverse and excellent educators and to share updates of state activities. In that first message and on [Equitable Access to Excellent and Diverse Educators](#), we describe the current reality that our educator workforce does not reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of our state and that students are systematically prevented equitable access to more effective teachers.

Today, we write a little over a year later to reflect on our accomplishments to date and the work that still needs to happen. When we mapped out the work we wanted to accomplish this past year, none of us could have predicted the generation-defining events we are navigating—the COVID-19 pandemic, the subsequent economic crisis, and the local and national response to the murder of George Floyd. While each event in itself has had a catastrophic impact on communities of color and indigenous communities, the combined impact only further emphasizes the important role education plays in creating a world where students are supported by an educational system that challenges them with educational experiences and teachers that encourage and support the type of thinking and innovation that will bring forth the change, justice, and equality we all deserve.

It is exactly for these reasons that we must persist in dismantling systems that prevent students from accessing an educator workforce that reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of our society and from accessing teachers who have the preparation, experience, skill sets, and dispositions to best serve students.

Please share this message among your educator and community networks. To sign-up to be on the listserv, go to [the listserv signup page](#).

In this “Year in Review” document, we summarize a few state accomplishments in the past year and outline ongoing projects for the current year. Additionally, we are sharing some teacher workforce updates for specific educator groups. Readers may use the following links to skip ahead to sections of interest.

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# All Teacher Groups—Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)

## MDE School Support Division – Educator Workforce Activities

Our team is responsible to support districts and charters to implement educator effectiveness programs, including [teacher development and evaluation \(TDE\)](#), [principal development and evaluation \(PDE\)](#) and other supports for school leaders, [Q Comp](#), and staff development. Since January 2019, we also support Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) efforts to increase, diversify, support and retain our educator workforce and to ensure students have [equitable access to that workforce](#). We are not the only agency staff contributing to this effort, but we have played a leadership role in establishing inter- and intra-agency communications and coordination.

This past year, we took several steps forward in service of our vision that every student benefits from a diverse and excellent educator workforce. Though we did not achieve all we had hoped, we established some foundations upon which to build.

## Stakeholder Partnerships

From the get go, we knew this work needed to be a participant-centered process. We also knew that many organizations and communities were already active in this space, so our team had some catching up to do. Some highlights from those efforts are summarized below.

- Since our initial outreach in April 2019, we have met with over 30 organizations to build relationships, learn more about one another's efforts, and explore how we might partner in the future. We seek to create inclusive and representative spaces in this effort, particularly for those marginalized by inequitable access. In general, we have connected with:
  - Professional organizations and practitioners
  - State racial and ethnic councils and the Tribal Nations Education Committee (TNEC)
  - Advocacy groups and service providers
- We were one of many organizations participating in #TeachMN2020 lead by the Minnesota Education Equity Partnership's (MnEEP). We have deeply appreciated being among this community. In fact, we use (with permission) the same visual of the "teacher's journey" in our messages so that we leverage common language in this shared work. Visit [the Imprint website](#) to see more about the teacher journey, and visit MnEEP's website to learn about their [Big Bold Goal #3 related to teacher diversity](#).
- Several conversations and connections with the [Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers \(TOCAIT\)](#). Most of these conversations centered around legislative bill language (discussed below), but we also played host to about 100 Coalition members for a viewing and discussion of *Love Them First*, the local documentary featuring the incredible staff and students of Lucy Laney Elementary in Minneapolis. Again, to be in community with this organization is an honor.

There are many, many other organizations doing great work in this space, including but not limited to [Education Evolving's blog on teacher retention](#), [Education Minnesota's](#) social justice newsletter among other projects,

[Generation Next](#), [Reimagine Minnesota](#) (and their [Collective Education Roadmap for Action](#)), and multiple charters, districts, teacher preparation providers, advocacy groups and other organizations.

## Communications

State agencies play a key role in communications. One goal for us was to begin messaging the vision for the work, why the work is important, and how state and local agencies can get started and get better. We also recognized a need to work across state agencies and teams to be more strategic and aligned. Finally, it was important that communication was not limited to a one-way direction (state departments to the field); rather, we really worked hard to have reciprocal feedback loops and messages among communities and institutions. While we had some accomplishments in this area, there's a lot more we can do to improve communications overall.

- Our primary vehicles for sending information out to a wide audience are [this Q Comp listserv](#) as well as the [Equitable Access to Excellent and Diverse Teachers website](#).
- The Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB), Office of Higher Education (OHE) and MDE are the three primary state agencies that connect to educator workforce issues. Before this year, intentional communication among these agencies on issues specific to the educator workforce was periodic and largely reactive to problems. This year, we established direct, intentional lines of communication among our agencies and we share a vision for how we support the work.
- An aspect of cross-agency partnership has been MDE's participation in work led by PELSB to diversify the educator workforce. We have participated in retreats, strategic planning and subgroup meetings throughout the year.
- Similarly, MDE has several team members across our agency that have responsibilities to increase and diversify the educator workforce. Prior to this year, there were few opportunities for sharing practices, collaboration, within and across the agency. Since then, we have established a cross-agency work group that meets regularly to share practices, provide updates, and collaboratively plan action items. It is this workgroup that collaborated to publish this document. If not for the pandemic, this team would have been engaged in significant stakeholder outreach.
- MDE has created a similar cross-agency team called the Indigenous Education Action Team, where there is a specific subgroup focused on supporting pathways to recruit, prepare and retain indigenous educators. Both cross-agency teams have aligned messages and deliverables.
- MDE, OHE and PELSB each administer grants that seek to diversify, increase and support the educator workforce. We have used this listserv to share those grant opportunities with the field, and we have had several conversations about how we can improve grants competition, administration and evaluation procedures to be more prepared for the day when additional funds and/or additional grants programs are made available. One product of this collaboration is the [Diversifying the Teacher Workforce: Inventory of Funded Programs](#) document.
- Finally, MDE staff have presented at workshops and conferences, creating space in each session to solicit ideas and feedback from the room to inform next steps. Staff have also participated in numerous meetings and workshops lead by other organizations.

## Legislation

Perhaps the most tangible demonstration of the work this past year happened behind the scenes. The Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers “Increase Teachers of Color Act” (ITCA) was already a well-crafted, community-driven policy proposal when we saw early drafts. We were among many organizations to offer feedback to strengthen the policy language and to put the policy in front of agency and legislative leaders. While most of the Coalition’s proposals did end up in Governor Walz’s education bill, they did not move forward in the regular or special sessions. Despite this set-back, the state is better prepared to move on these policies in future sessions.

## What’s Next

We received an abrupt pause in our plans to engage with stakeholders and partners in person when the breakout of COVID-19 occurred last spring. For now, we are holding for a time when we can safely come together to examine state policies and practices that must be changed in order to ensure all children have access to a diverse and excellent educator workforce.

This does not mean the work is stopping. Instead, we are looking ahead to key areas in the work that we can move on. What follows is a list of actions we are taking while schools are navigating the challenges of teaching and learning during the pandemic. Our plans for the immediate future includes:

- Collaboration with the Wisconsin-Minnesota Comprehensive Center (WMCC), that operates out of the [University of Minnesota’s Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement \(CAREI\)](#). The team at WMCC will be providing support to MDE in a few projects, including teacher diversity, SEL practices, and COVID-19 response. One of the tangible products in development is a Minnesota version of New York’s [Educator Diversity Playbook](#) (note: while we wait for a Minnesota version, please do explore this piece from New York in the meantime). By combining research, concrete actions and examples from Minnesota, our hope is to raise awareness and inspire action at a district and charter level.
- Collaboration with Minnesota’s Regional Centers of Excellence, as they work directly with district and school leaders that were identified for support under Minnesota’s ESSA plan. One of the action items districts and charters with identified schools must take is to examine equitable resource distribution.
- Did you know that the [Minnesota Report Card](#) provides staffing data? Visitors can look up their own school or district or charter and (under the “Who Works Here?” header) learn about staff demographics, data about student access to experienced and in-field teachers and more. With that said, this data reporting system requires continuous improvement. Currently, MDE, PELSB and MN.IT (our statewide IT agency) are working on:
  - adding tiered licensure to the staffing report, and
  - improving how teacher race and ethnicity data is collected and reported.

Like other organizations during this time, we are finding our way forward to identify ways we can pursue our vision during this time. We still desire a participant-centered, public conversation

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## **All Teacher Groups—Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB)**

The Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) sets and maintains standards for teacher preparation, educator licensure, and professional ethics. While much of this work contributes to creating a more diverse and effective teacher workforce, the Board established four specific goals related to equitable access in July 2019.

These four goals are:

1. Grow Minnesota’s educator workforce by expanding high-quality teacher preparation, including new and innovative models.
2. Strengthen Minnesota’s educator workforce by maintaining high-quality standards and elevating the education profession.
3. Increase the racial and ethnic diversity of the educator workforce throughout all regions of Minnesota.
4. Incorporate voices from diverse Minnesota educators and stakeholders in advancing board work and initiatives, including the creation of a long-term strategic plan.

Since then, the Board has worked towards these goals in the following ways:

### **Goal 1**

Through stakeholder engagement and committee work, PELSB drafted revisions to unit and program rule that will increase teacher candidate support, strengthen requirements for teacher preparation providers around candidate diversity and enrollment in shortage area programs, and further support diverse teacher preparation pathways.

### **Goal 2**

PELSB is in the process of revising the Standards for Effective Practice for Teachers (SEPs). In addition to the regular stakeholder engagement that is part of the rulemaking process, the Committee to Increase Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers is reviewing the SEPs with the goal of strengthening standards around culturally responsive pedagogy and cultural competency.

### **Goal 3**

This goal is largely met through the administration of two grants, the Collaborative Urban and Greater Minnesota Educators of Color Grant (CUGMEC) and the Teacher Mentorship and Retention of Effective Teachers Grant (TMRET). To date, PELSB has awarded over \$2 million to higher education institutions to support teacher candidates of color and Indigenous teacher candidates. While these funds help increase the number of teachers of color entering the profession, the Teacher Mentorship and Retention Grant helps ensure they stay there. A little over \$1.4 million has been awarded to date primarily supporting mentorship programs for early career teachers, especially teachers of color and teachers working in state shortage areas.

## Goal 4

In spring 2020, PELSB initiated a strategic planning program which involves meeting and collaborating with four key stakeholder groups to get input on PELSB's long-term goals. The Board's Executive Committee will analyze the input from stakeholders and present major findings to the Board to inform its long-term strategic plan going forward.

Office closures and other responses to the pandemic delayed some of the work outlined above. As PELSB looks forward to the next fiscal year, many of these goals and activities will continue. Specifically, PELSB hopes to adopt changes to unit and program rule, solidify revisions to the Standards of Effective Practice, continue strategic planning meetings, and prioritize recommendations from the newly established Committee to Increase Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. Finally, PELSB awaits 2021 legislation that will renew funding for the CUGMEC and TMRET grants.

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# Career and Technology Education Teachers

## MDE Career and Technical Education Division: Educator Workforce Activities

Minnesota is experiencing a critical shortage of career and technical education (CTE) educators, as are most of the other states in our nation. When focusing on the CTE teacher shortages in Minnesota, two aspects must be addressed: bringing new teachers into the field (recruitment); and keeping the teachers we already have (retention). In fact, federal reauthorization of the *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act* legislation includes a requirement that states focus on the recruitment and preparation of CTE instruction, leadership, and support. In partnership with the Minnesota state colleges and universities system we continue to collaborate on all aspects of Career and Technical Education from fifth grade to college degrees. We also maintain strong partnerships with the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) to stay up to date on developments in legislation, rulemaking, and processes and procedures that impact the CTE workforce. In addition, the importance of diversifying the workforce is a key consideration in all MDE CTE Division activities related to recruitment and retention of educators.

The information below briefly outlines workforce activities which the Minnesota Department of Education and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Career and Technical Education team focus on.

## CTE Knowledgeable Expert Strategic Plan

The Knowledgeable Experts strategic group develops, implements and analyzes professional development priorities designed to advance Career and Technical Education in Minnesota as part of the state's four-year plan for Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (known as Perkins V). Knowledgeable Experts refers to the community of career and technical education stakeholders who would benefit from professional development and resources related to all aspects of career pathways and Perkins administration.

### Recruitment & Retention of CTE Teachers/Faculty Workgroup (RRTF)

Vision: Minnesota CTE programs have the appropriate and qualified staff needed to develop and grow engaging, challenging, relevant and equitable CTE programs.

Mission: This Knowledgeable Experts workgroup supports the recruitment and retention of qualified CTE teachers and faculty, especially educators of color, in order to meet Minnesota's workforce needs.

### Workgroup Objectives and Projects (2020-2024)

Objectives: Increase the number of qualified CTE teachers and faculty in Minnesota. Increase the number of teachers and faculty from communities of color and indigenous populations (POCI) in CTE programs.

Projects: Assess and support initiatives to recruit and retain Minnesota educators from communities of color and indigenous populations (POCI) in secondary and postsecondary CTE programs. Provide recruitment, retention and professional development resources for CTE educators. Leverage ACTE "Teach CTE" resources. Review student outcome data, disaggregated CTE data to know current landscape, secondary and postsecondary.

## New CTE Teacher Initiative

Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) offers a statewide professional development program for new or recently new Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers. The New CTE Teacher Initiative is designed to help teachers with less than four years of experience gain the knowledge and resources they need to be successful in the CTE classroom. It is ideal for new CTE teachers or teachers who are teaching CTE courses for the first time. This initiative focuses on critical information as well as strategies for successful practice. This initiative will help our state's newest CTE teachers promote the value of CTE, contribute to teaching future generations, and implement an educational strategy that focuses on workforce development into high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand careers.

Below are areas of professional development for new teachers provided by MDE staff and Minnesota teacher leaders.

- Teaching CTE in a high school
- Planning and delivering CTE day-to-day
- Managing an effective classroom/lab
- Using career and technical student organizations (CTSOs) to enhance instruction
- Understanding student assessment in CTE
- Employing assessment data for instructional improvement
- Connecting with advisory committee members
- Professional organizations such as Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) and its Minnesota affiliate (MnACTE)

## Careers in Education

CTE contains education careers and includes frameworks for integrating the knowledge of teaching. Career in Education provides the foundation for employment in education and related careers and prepares students for study in higher education. An active learning approach that utilizes higher order thinking, communication, leadership, and management processes is recommended in order to integrate suggested topics into the study of education and related careers. The course of study includes, but is not limited to: the teaching profession, the learner and the learning process, planning instruction, learning environment, and instructional and assessment strategies.

Grow your own programs are also popular in Minnesota as schools are implementing strategies to engage students with education to include exposure, experience, and education strategies. Exposure strategies to build awareness of education careers, experience strategies to provide students with elective classes and work based learning opportunities focused on education careers, and education strategies that ensure the quality of teacher preparation classes and connect learning to postsecondary outcomes.

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## Early Childhood Teachers

### Early Learning Services – Educator Workforce Activities

The field of Early Childhood Education recognizes the urgent need to address the shortage of educators in the state of Minnesota. The early educator shortages that existed before the pandemic have now been exasperated. Now, more than ever, the vital importance of the early childhood workforce is evident, not only for the wellbeing of the students, but for the wellbeing of families, communities, the state, and the country. Our families, businesses, and the economy, cannot get “Back to Better” without early childhood educators to educate and care for the young children of working parents. The Minnesota Department of Education is focusing on activities to support a workforce that is fully prepared, has equitable access to professional development, is adequately and fairly compensated, and represents the diversity of the families being served. We are supporting educators through many activities and specifically within the Preschool Development Grant and the efforts of the Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce Project.

Representatives from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Early Learning Services Division (ELS), serve on the Transforming Minnesota’s Early Childhood Workforce Leadership Team. This team reflects a private and public partnership centered on the goal of advancing the early care and education workforce. The team’s work is guided by the national report, [\*Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation\*](#), which was released in 2015. The report details 13 recommendations that are important and interrelated, Minnesota targeted five recommendations as a starting place.

- Priority Area One: Develop and Enhance programs in higher education for care and education professionals so that Minnesota has a unified, statewide early childhood education system.
- Priority Area Two: Strengthen practice-based requirements, including a supervised induction period, for all lead educators working with children from birth through age 8.
- Priority Area Three: Develop and implement comprehensive pathways with multiple entry points that allow individuals to join the early childhood workforce and continue improving their knowledge and skills through an established educational continuum.
- Priority Area Four: Build a better knowledge base to inform workforce development and professional learning services and systems and collect and used early childhood workforce data.
- Priority Area Five: Support workforce development with coherent funding, oversight and policies.

On September 20, 2019, a group of approximately 30 early childhood faculty and educators came together for a facilitated discussion about early childhood licensure. Attendees got an overview of the current licensure status in Minnesota, a scan of what other states and professions are doing and then had a discussion of possibilities for future options in Minnesota. From this work, recommendations were developed, and shared with the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB), that address concerns from the Early Childhood (EC) workforce regarding the number of standards, alignment with the Knowledge and Competency Framework, and a license configuration that better reflects the developmental needs of young children. Other recommendations included the need for credit for prior learning, creating a more efficient way to process licenses from other states, addressing the impacts of systemic and institutional racism, involving the entire pathway that includes coursework at 2-year colleges as well as other credit and non-credit trainings, and ensuring that data systems talk to each other and support work without duplication of effort.

Current early childhood workforce support being done:

- Three new competencies are being added to the Knowledge and Competency Framework. These address cultural responsiveness, trauma informed practices and multilingual learners.
- Recommendations are being created regarding best practices for field placements in early learning settings.
- A recruitment brochure has been created focusing on sharing information about the importance and opportunities in the early care and education field.
- Efforts are being made to introduce the Child Development Associates Credential (CDA) in high school child development classes through the Family and Consumer Sciences, giving high school students an important stepping stone on the path to advancement in one's Early Childhood Education career and helping to address the EC workforce shortage experienced in many communities.
- The Moving the Needle group, a sub group of the Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce Team, is working to identify a suggested salary scale reflective of the NAEYC Power to the Profession, ECE 1, ECE 2, and ECE 3 structure based on education attained, including the CDA up to a BA or BS in Early Childhood Education and teacher licensure.
- The Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce Finance Committee, a sub group of the Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce Team, is developing financial models based on the drafted salary scales to identify the full cost of quality care, address comparable wages and provide considerations on the affordability of care for parents.

For more information on this work please visit:

The [Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce](#) website and the [Preschool Development Grant](#) website.

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# Special Education Teachers

## MDE Special Education Division: Educator Workforce Activities

Along with most other states in the country, Minnesota is experiencing a critical shortage of special educators. When focusing on the Special Education teacher shortages in Minnesota, two aspects must be addressed: bringing new teachers into the field (recruitment); and keeping the teachers we already have (retention). While the current efforts of the MDE Workforce and Low Incidence Unit team are largely focused on the retention aspect of the teacher shortage, we are also working to learn from and provide support for current recruitment efforts at the district, regional, and educator preparation levels. We maintain strong partnerships with the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) to stay up to date on developments in legislation, rulemaking, and processes and procedures that impact the Special Education workforce. In addition, the importance of diversifying the workforce is a key consideration in all MDE Special Education Division activities related to recruitment and retention of special educators.

The information below briefly outlines workforce activities which the MDE Workforce and Low Incidence team is currently leading or collaborating on in some way.

## Special Education Workforce Strategic Plan

During 2018, the Special Education Division coordinated a Special Education Workforce Workgroup to address issues related to recruitment and retention in Minnesota's special education teacher workforce by identifying opportunities for collaboration across agencies to build on current efforts to address shortages in the special education teacher workforce, and developing evidence-based approaches to recruitment and retention.

Participants in the workgroup included:

- Special Education Division, MDE
- Early Learning Services , MDE
- The Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (formerly the Board of Teaching)
- Minnesota Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (MACTE)
- Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
- Education Minnesota
- Minnesota Administrators for Special Education (MASE)
- University of Minnesota

This group met 5 times, with the help of a facilitator from the Management and Analysis Division of Minnesota Management and Budget, and developed the following goals and strategies to address recruitment and retention of special educators in Minnesota:

- Goal #1: Collect and Utilize Data
  - Strategy: Develop a Special Education Workforce Data Plan and implement a system of data collection and analysis
- Goal #2: Support Evidence-Based Retention

- Strategy: Develop and implement training opportunities to increase knowledge of special education practices for administrators
- Strategy: Gather and disseminate resources to support a state-wide mentoring model
- Goal #3: Increase special education teacher preparation program capacity
  - Strategy: Work with partners to identify needs and promising practices, and to build collaborative efforts

The actions and partners associated with each goal and strategy were finalized in spring 2019. The Special Education Division of MDE, along with its strategic partners have been working on the goals and are considering revisions to the planned strategies to reflect that high levels of change that have occurred in 2020.

### **Minnesota Mentoring Program (MMP)**

Since 2003-2004, most of the MDE low incidence categorical areas have coordinated a voluntary mentoring program. In 2015-2016, each of these efforts were combined into MMP, which is coordinated by MDE Workforce Specialist Becca Jackson, and is available to participants in 5 categorical areas:

- Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)
- Blind/Visually Impaired (BVI)
- Developmental/Cognitive Disabilities (DCD)
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH)
- Physical/Health Disabilities (PHD)

Of the 60 educators who benefited from mentorship through the MMP in the first three cohorts (2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018), 95% were still teaching in Minnesota's schools during the 2018-2019 school year. During the 2019-2020 school year, the MMP was transitioned Metro ECSU and is continuing there in the 2020-2021 school year.

### **Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR) Center**

In 2018, staff from the Special Education Division collaborated with educator preparation programs at Minnesota State University-Mankato, Minnesota State University-Moorhead, and Winona State University to apply to the [CEEDAR Center](#) for technical assistance. The application was accepted, and Minnesota began the 5-year process of intensive technical assistance from the CEEDAR Center. The Special Education Division is represented on both the Steering Committee and the State Leadership Team for the CEEDAR Center work. This work focuses on reforming teacher and leader preparation programs, revising licensure standards to align with reforms, refining personnel evaluation systems, and realigning policy structures and professional learning systems. The State Leadership Team has met several times to develop a blueprint for the goals and strategies of the CEEDAR work. Steering Committee meetings continue biweekly and State Leadership Team meetings that were planned for spring 2020 are being rescheduled as virtual meetings for fall 2020.

In addition, staff from the Special Education Division participate in CEEDAR's cross-state Shortages Topical Action Group, which meets monthly to discuss current and emerging research related to the educator

workforce, and supports CEEDAR states in working through the CEEDAR resource [Educator Shortages in Special Education: A Toolkit for Developing Local Strategies](#).

## Collaboration with the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB)

- Throughout 2018, staff from the Special Education Division participated in the work to address the 2017 legislative charge: Special Education License Review (Article 3, section 31) – PELSB must conduct a review of all the available teacher of special education licenses and determine the options for cross-categorical licenses for teachers of special education. The [Teacher of Special Education License Review report](#) was submitted to the Legislature in November 2018.
- Staff from the Special Education Division routinely attend PELSB Board meetings, and participate in rulemaking events related to special education.
- Staff from the Special Education Division participated in the Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH) and Oral/Aural (O/A) PELSB Subcommittees.
- Staff from the Special Education Division are participating in activities related to planning for the 2021 Minnesota Teacher Supply and Demand Report.

## Low Incidence Special Education Workforce Activities

The MDE Special Education Division monitors several aspects of the special education workforce, particularly in the low incidence areas of Blind/Visually Impaired (B/VI), Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH), Physical/Health Disabilities (PHD). There are currently no licensure programs for BVI, only one program for DHH licensure, and one program for PHD licensure in Minnesota. In addition, there may be a higher level of teacher retirements in these assignment areas. In a 2015 MDE analysis of the average age of teachers by special education assignment, the three groups of teachers with the highest average age were (in descending order):

- Blind/Visually Impaired (51.1 years average age);
- Physically Impaired (49.1 years average age); and
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing (45.9 years average age)

The 2015 Report of Teacher Supply and Demand included Blind or Visually Impaired (BVI), DHH, and PHD in its list of the top 15 most difficult to fill vacancies. The 2017 report did not include a similar 'top 15' analysis, but each of these three areas was again described as difficult to fill based on the same survey that was used in the 2015 report. For the 2019 Teacher Supply and Demand Report, school districts were asked about positions that were budgeted for the 2018-19 school year, but were not filled because of a lack of qualified applications. The top two areas with the most unfilled teaching positions were Deaf or Hard of Hearing and Blind or Visually Impaired.

In addition to some of the activities noted in the PELSB section above, the Special Education Division is involved in the following activities specific to BVI, DHH, and PHD:

- Researching options for development of a BVI teacher preparation program in Minnesota

- Providing tuition supports through the Statewide [Low Incidence Project](#) grant for individuals seeking licensure in Blind/Visually Impaired (BVI) or Physical/Health Disabilities (PHD) in conjunction with Barbara Lhotka, Facilitator of MN Low Incidence Tuition Support/Teacher Training Project TVI-PI
- Coordinating with the Statewide Low Incidence grant to provide monthly face-to-face meetings for students in TBVI programs. These sessions include demonstrations, discussions, and presentations related to coursework and caseloads for that semester as well as opportunities for hands-on work with materials and equipment. Coordinating with the BVI teacher preparation program at the University of North Dakota to offer an online course to meet the birth-five requirement in Minnesota.

## Additional Workforce Activities

- The Special Education Division collaborated with Minneapolis Public Schools in 2016 to apply for a Graves Family Foundation grant to develop a [Minneapolis Special Education Residency Program \(MSTR\)](#) pathway to licensure. The grant was awarded and the program is currently accepting applications for its third cohort. The first MSTR cohort began the program in fall 2017 and consisted of 16 candidates. Of these 16, 68.7% identified as people of color. Fifteen of the first cohort completed the full residency year and obtained their teaching license in K-12 Academic and Behavior Strategist. As of January 2019, all 15 were employed as teachers of record in Minneapolis Public Schools.
- Staff from the Special Education Division coordinate and participate in a quarterly Special Educator Preparation Program Forum that brings together representatives from educator preparation programs and advocacy organizations (e.g., Minnesota Administrators of Special Education, Learning Disabilities Association of Minnesota) around the state to discuss relevant topics and share information. These meetings allow for ongoing communication between the Special Education Division and educator preparation programs, and other stakeholders groups on issues related to educator preparation, licensure, and unit and program approval requirements. During spring 2020 meetings, the group decided to actively broaden participation in the group to reflect recent changes in the educator preparation landscape in Minnesota, including [Alternative Pathways](#) programs, 2+2 programs, and transfer pathways programs. Participation has already expanded based on word of mouth efforts, and staff from the Special Education Division are collaborating with PELSB and with the Minnesota Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (MACTE) to continue this work.
- Staff from the Special Education Division have been participating in meetings and activities related to [Teach MN 2020](#), an initiative of the [Minnesota Education Equity Partnership](#), to increase the number of teachers of color in Minnesota.

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