# Cultivating a More Diverse and Effective Workforce: New Pathways Through the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program

**Darcy Fernandes,** Senior Associate Commissioner
**Claire Abbott**, Director of Educator Effectiveness
**Lakia Baymon,** Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program Coordinator

dese MASSACHUSETTS Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

# Partnership

## The program was created through a partnership between:

dese
MASSACHUSETTS
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

MASSACHUSETTS DIVISION OF APPRENTICE STANDARDS

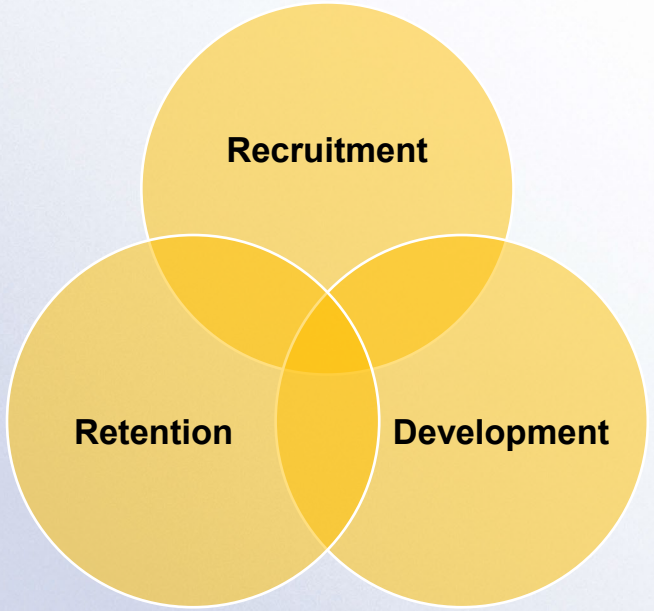
NATIONAL CENTER FOR GROW YOUR OWN

MASSACHUSETTS EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

# DESE Educational Vision

## Strategic Objective 3 - "Diverse and Effective Workforce"

- **Develop** and **sustain** a workforce that is **diverse**, **culturally responsive**, **well-prepared**, and committed to continuous improvement, so that all students have **equitable access to effective educators**.

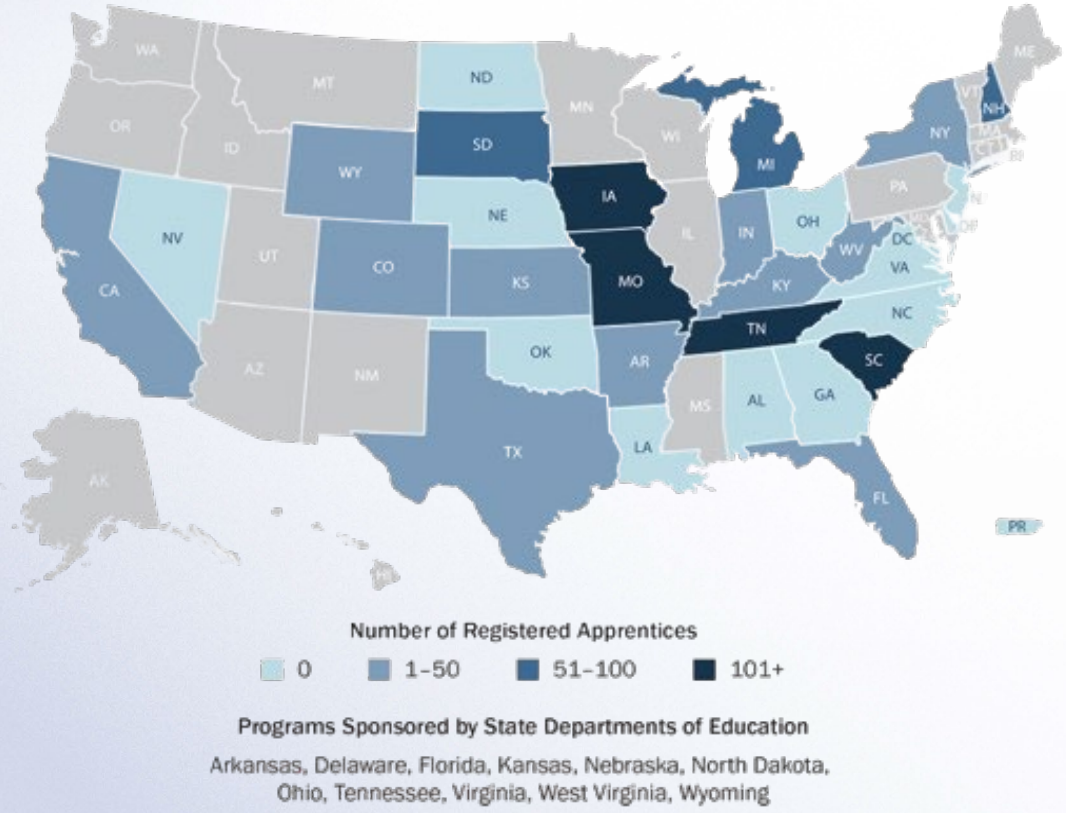



**3.1 Develop an increased and robust pipeline of diverse and well-prepared educators and leaders**

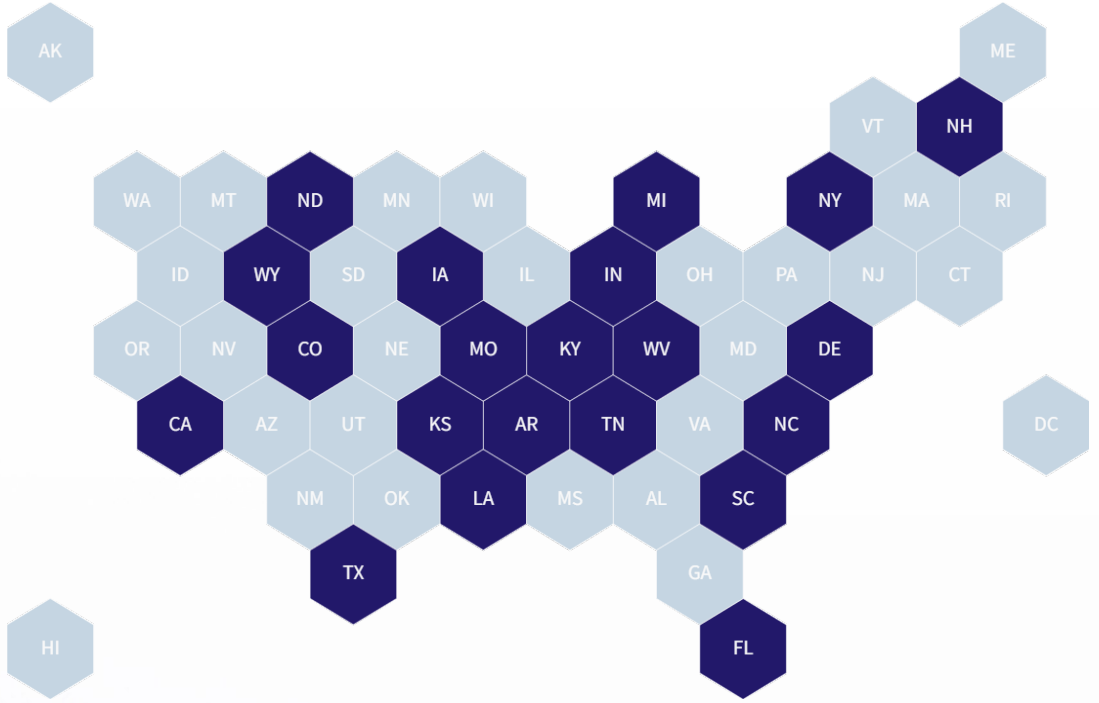
**3.2 Create the conditions to sustain and retain diverse and effective staff, particularly those who entered the field through alternative pathways**

**3.3 Implement opportunities for all staff to engage in a cycle of continuous improvement, utilizing effective teaming structures**

# Apprenticeship Programs Across Country




Source: Apprenticeship USA, U.S. Department of Labor. Data and statistics; Apprenticeship USA, U.S. Department of Labor. Partner finder; Personal email with U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development (2024, February 20).



Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Programs By State in 2023
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor

# What is a Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program (RTAP)?

**This is a clear, articulated pathway for an aspiring educator to become a teacher at little to no cost to them.**

## Apprenticeship is the *best of both worlds...*

Apprentice completes a **degree program** from an EPP

Apprentice gains **hands-on experience** in a K-12 classroom, under the guidance of a **mentor teacher**

Apprentice can **"earn-and-learn"** as a full-time employee

dese MASSACHUSETTS Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

GROW YOUR OWN

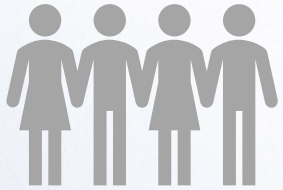
# What is the Massachusetts Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program (RTAP)?

- An innovative pathway into the teaching profession designed to enhance **educator diversity**, **strengthen the educator pipeline**, ensure **equitable access to teacher preparation**, and improve **educator quality**.
- Individuals earn their teaching credentials while gaining hands-on experience in a classroom.
- The program is supported by a partnership between school districts and approved Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs).

# Additional Components of the MA RTAP Program

- Grounded in **culturally and linguistically** sustaining teaching and learning environments
- Embedded in local communities **seeking to close the gap between student and teacher demographics**
- Focused on **high-need, hard-to-staff roles** (e.g., special education, ESL, STEM, early childhood)
- Supported by **sponsoring organizations committed to equity-driven** preparation and supports
- Providing **multiple entry points**, including post-bac paraprofessional pipelines and HS-to-college pathways

# Program Goals



**Educator Diversity**

**Educator Pipeline**

**Educator Quality**

# How does RTAP Support Culturally Responsive Teaching?

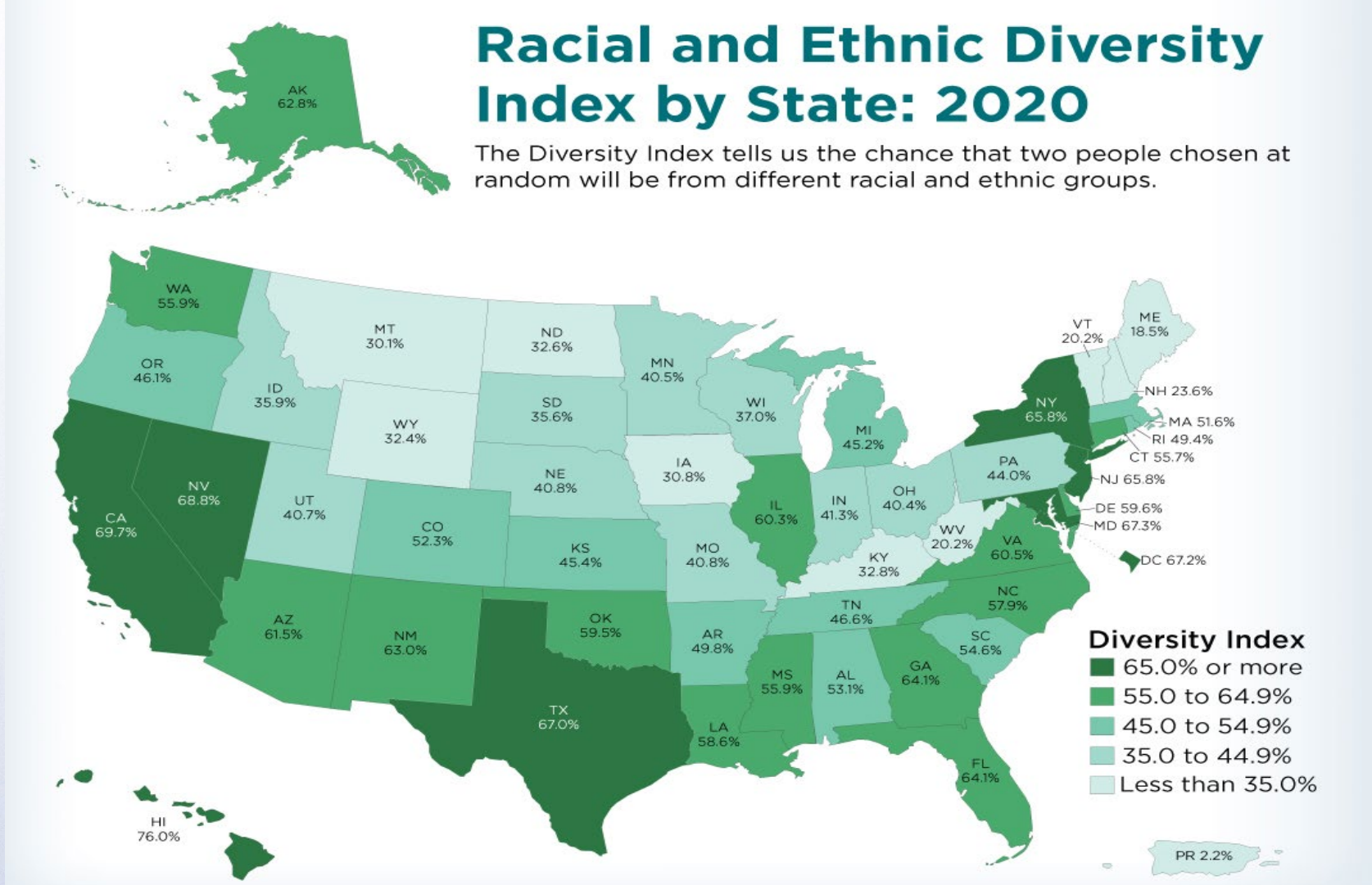
Culturally responsive teaching practices are integral to the program. Apprentices will learn to create classrooms where:

- All students feel included and valued
- The cultures and experiences of students and families are understood, respected, and celebrated

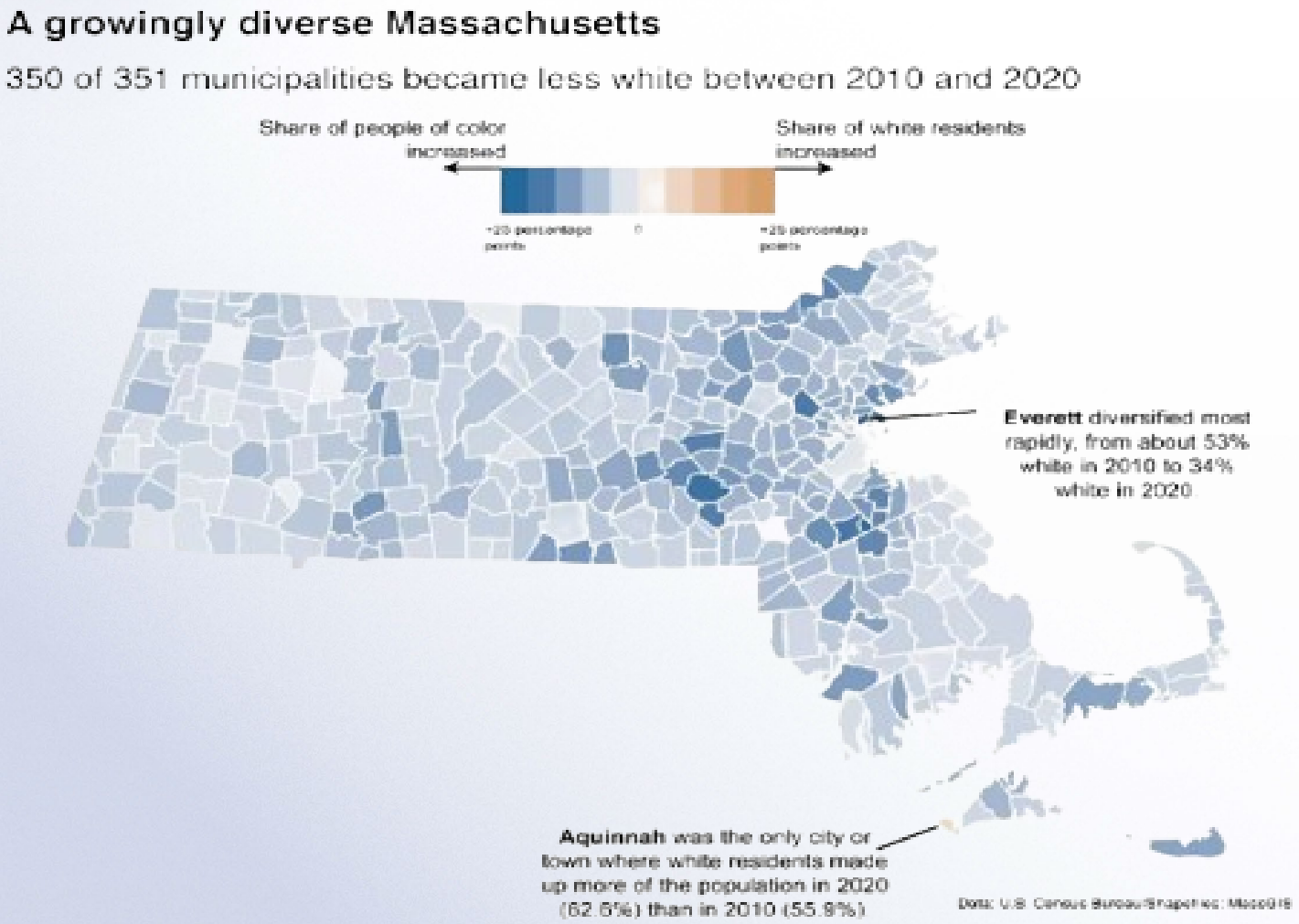
EPPs will need to demonstrate evidence of expertise in cultivating culturally and linguistically sustaining teaching and learning environments.

# Why Do We Need to Diversify?

# National Diversity Trends



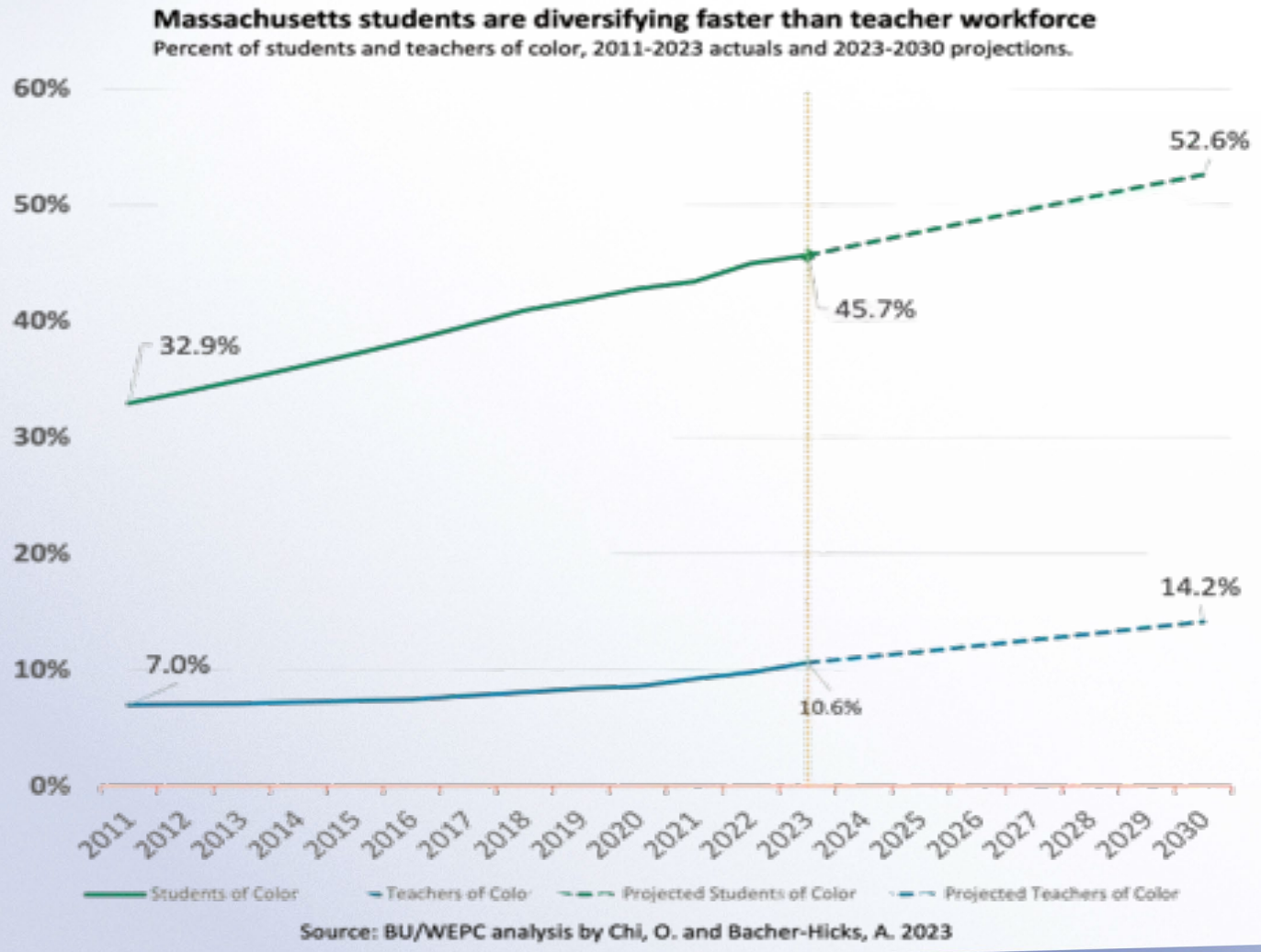
# MA Diversity Trends by County




**All but one Massachusetts community became less White from 2010 to 2020, according to 2020 Census data released last week. (Graphic: Chris Lisinski/SHNS)**

**https://www.wwlp.com/news/massachusetts/over-past-decade-diversity-grew-from-the-cities-to-the-suburbs/**

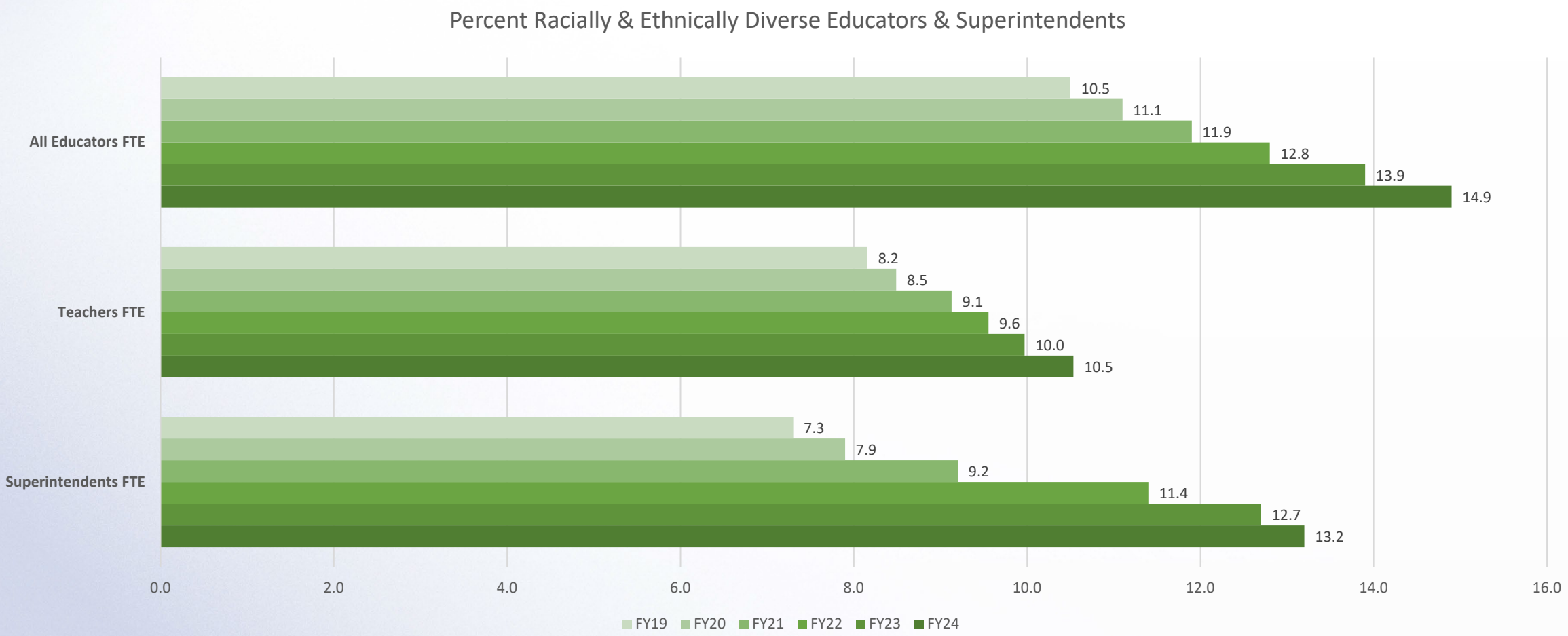
# MA Student and Teacher Diversity Trends




**In 2023, 10% of public-school teachers in the state were teachers of color, up from 8.7% in 2013.**

**[The state of educator racial diversity in Massachusetts | E2C Hub]**

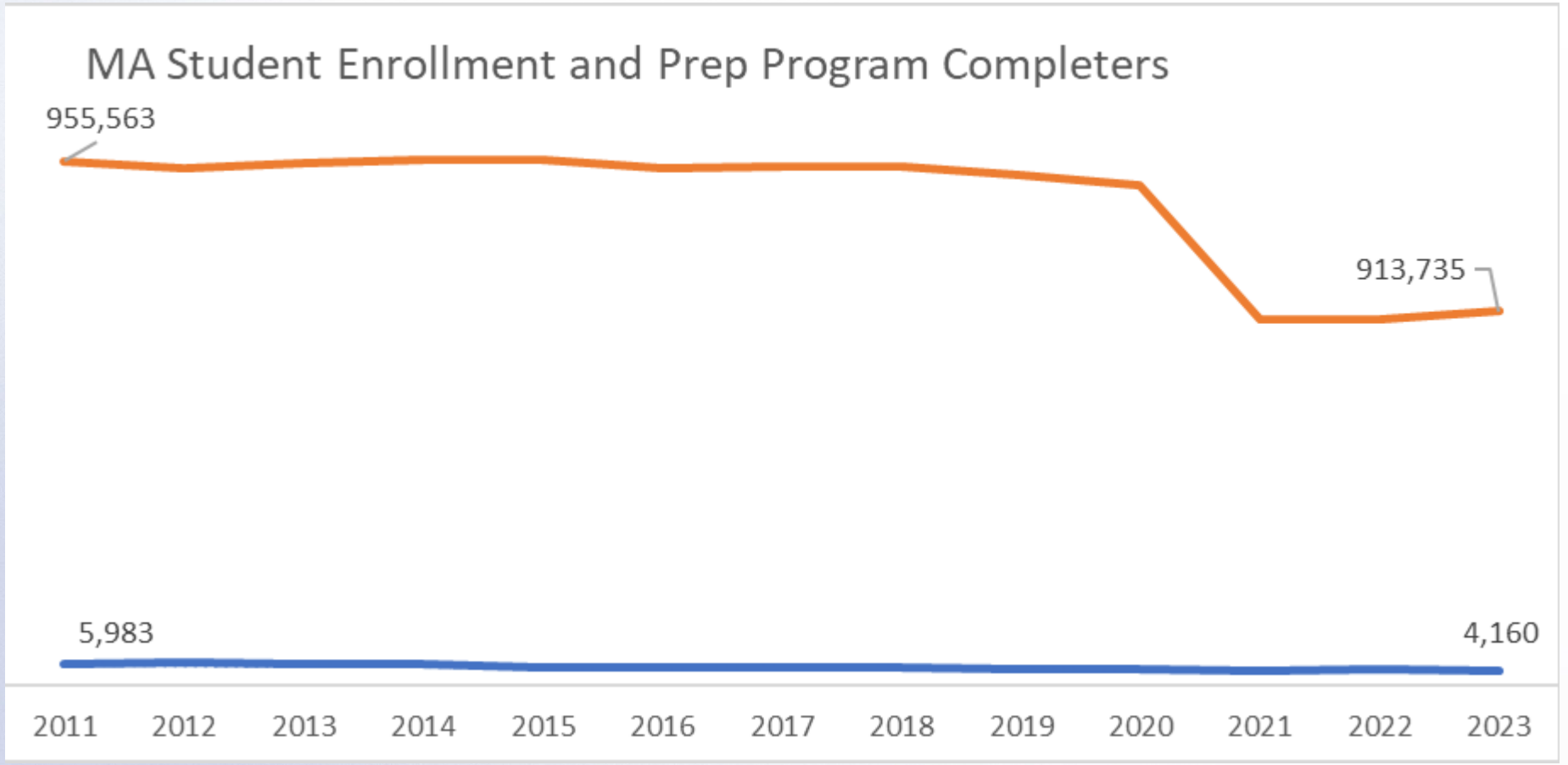
# % Racially & Ethnically Diverse Educators & Superintendents



# Strengthening Pipelines to Hard-to-Staff Roles

dese MASSACHUSETTS Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

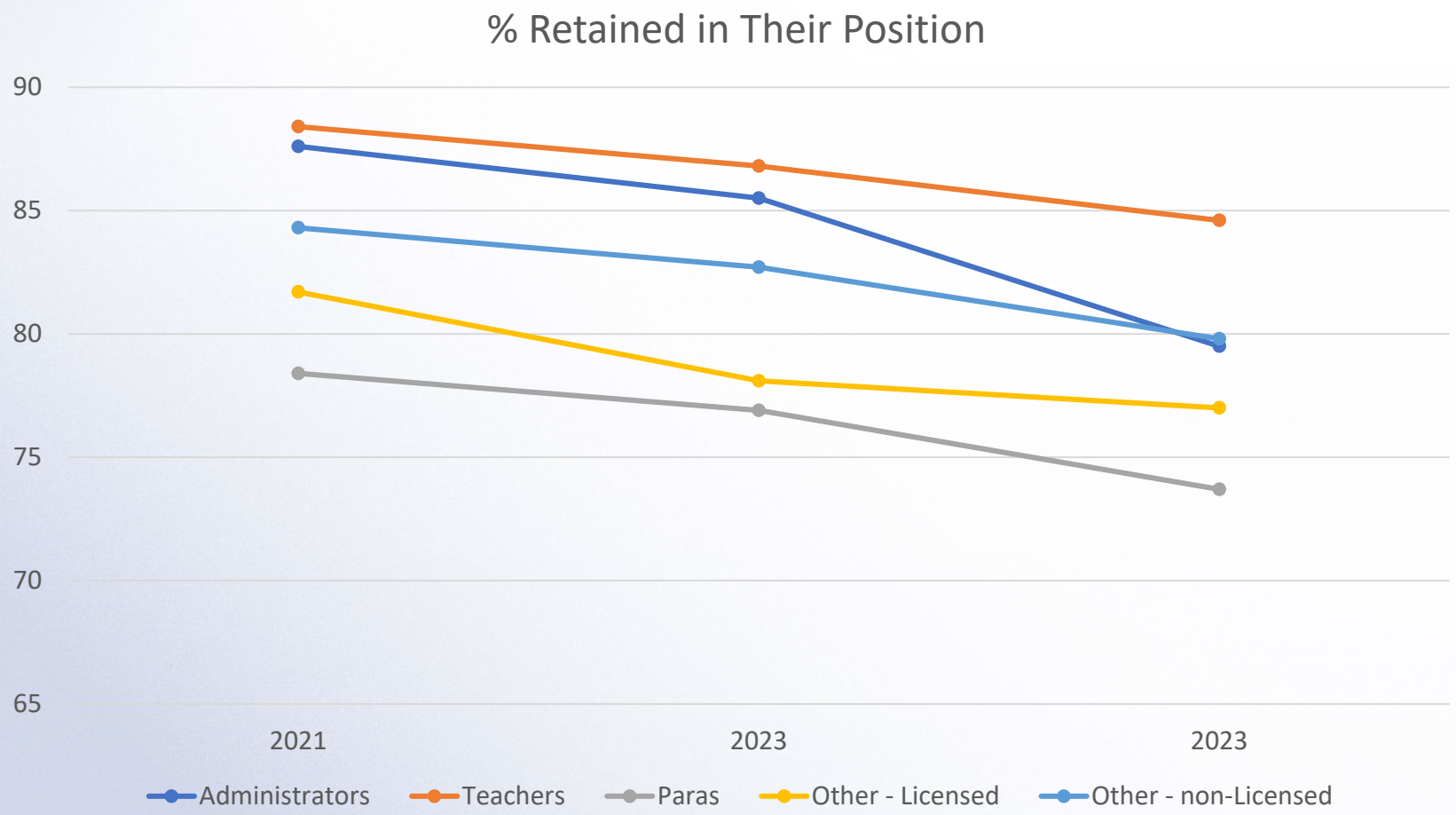
# Is there a statewide teacher shortage in MA? *Not really…*




**-41,828 K12 students**

**-1,823 prep program completers**

# Small but Gradual Decrease in Retention 2021-2023




**The annual percent of educators staying in the same position from one year to the next.**

**Educator Data Dashboard**

# Current Staffing and Vacancy Trends in MA

- **The roles with the highest number of vacancies**
  1. Paraprofessionals (moderate increase)
  2. Moderate Disabilities (big increase)
  3. Elementary
  4. Substitutes (moderate decline)

- **The most difficult-to-fill vacancies are in student support/special education:**
  - Teacher of the Visually Impaired
  - Speech
  - Speech, Language, and Hearing Disorders
  - Teachers of Students with Severe Disabilities

- **LEAs with the most difficulty filling vacancies include:**
  - Western/Central MA
  - Special Education Schools

# Teacher Retention

*High-quality teacher preparation is key to teacher retention. Teachers who enter the field with little preparation are two to three times more likely to leave their schools than those who had comprehensive preparation.*

(Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2012)

# Cultivating an Effective Workforce

dese MASSACHUSETTS Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

# Cultivating an Effective Workforce

- **Building Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices (Gay, 2018)**
- **Mentoring Programs for New Teachers (Hudson, 2013)**
  - Districts establish mentoring programs for new teachers
  - Mentor training to ensure CLSP is in place (DESE as a mentoring handbook)
- **Improving Retention (Simon & Johnson, 2015)**
- **Improving Outcomes for Students (Hammond, 2015)**

# What will RTAPs look like in MA?

- Designed to cultivate a diverse and effective workforce
- Grounded in culturally and linguistically sustaining teaching and learning environments
- Embedded in local communities seeking to close the gap between student and teacher demographics
- Focused on high-need, hard-to-staff roles (e.g., special education, ESL, STEM, early childhood)
- Supported by Sponsoring Organizations committed to equity-driven preparation and supports
- Providing multiple entry points, including post-bac paraprofessional pipelines and HS-to-college pathways

# Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program: Key Elements

- Working with National Grow Your Own and MA's Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development to Establish RTA Standards in MA
- Higher Education and School District Partnerships
- Priority recruiting diverse candidates and focus on positions that are hard to fill (Special Education, ESL and STEM)
- Funding Sources Title 1 and state turnaround funding $2,500,000
- Focus 3-4 districts with large disparity of students of color & White teachers
- Professional development for mentors focusing on Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Instruction
- Significant stipend given to mentors

# Who is eligible to operate an RTAP?

- In Massachusetts, MA DESE approves all district-based RTAPs and serves as the intermediary to the state's Division of Apprentices in the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.
- Districts **must** apply in partnership with an approved Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) serving as the related technical instruction provider to ensure that all participants are fully supported to meet all preparation and licensure requirements throughout the apprenticeship process.

# Which districts should apply?

- RTAP is ideal for districts committed to **fostering a more diverse teaching workforce** and those seeking to **strengthen the pipeline into hard-to-staff roles**.

- Participation is especially encouraged from those looking to cultivate pipelines into **special educator roles, ESL positions, early childhood classrooms, and secondary STEM positions.**

# Considerations for districts…

- Are you attending to the culture and climate of your teaching and learning environment?
- What is the difference between your teacher and student demographics? Is workforce diversity a priority in your district?
- Where are your hardest-to-staff roles?
- To what extent are you already cultivating a local pipeline?

# Which individuals should apply?

The program is ideal for paraprofessionals, recent graduates, career changers, or anyone seeking a low-cost pathway to becoming a teacher.

# Minimum requirements for apprentices

- Candidates must be at least 18 years old.
- They must have a high school diploma or Massachusetts High School Equivalency Credential.
- Candidates must meet the physical requirements set by the Employer and be able to access and navigate all areas of a school.
- Candidates must meet the admission requirements of the Educator Preparation Provider.

# Minimum requirements for apprentices

- Candidates must be at least 18 years old.
- They must have a high school diploma or Massachusetts High School Equivalency Credential.
- Candidates must meet the physical requirements set by the Employer and be able to access and navigate all areas of a school.
- Candidates must meet the admission requirements of the Educator Preparation Provider.

***Appendix A, SELECTION PROCEDURES, provides more information. School districts and EPPs determine all other eligibility requirements. Applicants must meet these qualifications. Individuals can only apply directly with district and EPP sponsorship.***

# Apprentice Role

During the apprenticeship term, Apprentices will be employed in an instructional role while serving in a classroom setting under the supervision of a licensed Journeyworker teacher.

- An Apprentice may not serve as a teacher-of-record during their apprenticeship term.
- An Apprentice must always have access to a supervising Journeyworker teacher(s).
- Apprentices' assigned duties must be performed directly alongside their supervising Journeyworker teacher or align with the intent of the apprenticeship program.

# Apprentice Wage Schedule

- Wage schedules for individual apprentices shall be based on the **Wage Schedule set by the Employer**.
- Wage rate shall be at least **$15.00/hour**, in compliance with the Employer's prevailing wage rate.
- Upon completion of the program and receipt of a license, an individual employed by the host district shall be paid in accordance with the **Employer's existing salary/wage scale for certified teachers.**

# Minimum Requirements for Journeyworker Teachers

Journeyworker teachers must meet the following requirements:

- Be full-time employees of their Local Education Agency (LEA)
- Have at least three full years of experience under an appropriate license
- Have achieved a summative performance evaluation rating of Proficient or Exemplary on their most recent evaluation.

# Expectations of Journeyworker Teachers

Employers should carefully select journeyworker teachers in line with state requirements and shared expectations established with the EPP. Expectations should cover a range of areas, including but not limited to:

- Positive impact on student outcomes, particularly with students from historically marginalized groups
- Culturally responsive and linguistically sustaining proficiency in their instructional practices
- Ability to effectively mentor and coach a diverse set of adult learners

# Ratio of Apprentices to Journeyworkers

Each apprentice is assigned one designated Journeyworker teacher. However, during the apprenticeship term and throughout the school year, an individual apprentice may work with and be supervised by more than one Journeyworker teacher, as long as they are always under the supervision of a fully licensed and qualified Journeyworker teacher.

# How long does it take to complete a RTAP?

## Requirements:

- 2,000 hours of on-the-job learning
- At least 150 hours of related instruction per year

Based on the 180-day school year, the apprenticeship term will likely span two years.

# RTAP Program Completion

Upon successful completion of the program, apprentices are endorsed for their **Initial teaching license** and are eligible for full-time teaching positions in Massachusetts.

# Benefits of RTAP

## For Educator Apprentices:

- Clear pathways to educator credentials and licenses
- "Earn While You Learn" model that helps eliminate lessen the financial burdens of educator preparation programs (EPPs)
- Long-term mentorship beyond student teaching experience
- High-quality new teacher induction and job-embedded professional learning

## For Districts:

- Effective recruitment and retention of high-quality educators
- An expanded pool of individuals eligible to become teachers through increased access to affordable pathways
- Incentive and braided funding streams for program development and implementation

# Benefits of RTAP

## For Unions

- Increased membership by growing the educator workforce
- Expanded scope of bargaining
- Professional growth pathways for their members
- Rigorous training that may improve retention and quality of educators
- Opportunities for labor-management partnerships
- Organizing opportunity

## For Educator Preparation Programs:

- Effective strategy to recruit and support diverse students
- Rigorous instruction combined with intensive on-the-job learning
- Streamlined partnerships with state/district education agencies

# Timeline

## Summer/Fall 2024

Application & Selection

- Summer/Fall Grant Application
- Fall/Winter Vendor Selection
- Winter Selection & Notification

## Winter/Spring 2025

Preparation

- Mentor Selection & Training
- Apprenticeship Recruitment

## Summer/Fall 2025

Cohort 1 Launch

- Summer Coursework
- Fall Employment/ Apprenticeship Launch
- Cohort 2 Grant Application Opens

## SY2025-2026

Cohort 1 Year 1 Implementation

Cohort 2 Application & Selection

# Planned Supports

- RTAP Handbooks for Districts & Educator Preparation Providers
- PLCs for participating K12 districts and EPPs (focused on implementation & change management)
- Supervisor/Mentor Training Programs
- Guidance on State/Federal Funding Sources to Support Sustainable Implementation
- External Implementation & Impact Evaluation

# Resources and Contact Information

For more information about the RTAP program and links to the Registered Apprenticeship standards, please visit the DESE RTAP website.

For questions, email educatorapprenticeships@mass.gov