

Preparing Wisconsin Teachers

Research and Recommendations for Licensure and Program Approval

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Executive Summary

Advances in the science of learning and development, along with the increasing demands of life and work in the 21st century, are raising expectations for schools and educators. Policy levers that affect the teacher workforce will play a key role in meeting these expectations. This report, one of a series of state policy studies produced by the Learning Policy Institute in collaboration with the Council of Chief State School Officers, examines teacher licensure and preparation program approval systems in Wisconsin. This study was designed to assess how these systems are advancing the preparation of a stable, diverse, well-qualified, and equitably distributed teacher workforce to support all students' deeper learning and social, emotional, and academic development.

This report draws upon multiple sources, including state teacher and student data, analyses of statutory and regulatory frameworks and policy activities, and interviews with educators and state agency staff. It opens with a description of the state policy context, including challenges in public education and the teacher workforce. After a description of the recent policymaking activity that has created current systems, the report lays out the workings of licensure and program approval in detail. Finally, the report draws on contemporary research and state policy examples to provide recommendations aimed at systemic improvement and intended to help policymakers move closer to Wisconsin's teacher workforce goals.

State Context: Achievement Gaps, Teacher Shortages, and Disparities in Opportunity

Wisconsin has long been known for quality public schools, high k–12 student academic achievement, and a well-prepared teacher workforce. Although Wisconsin's performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has declined over time relative to other states, the 2019 results still put Wisconsin's 8th-graders ahead of most and its 4th-graders near the U.S. average, avoiding the nationwide drop in scores that has occurred since 2017. Yet the state is beset by troubling inequities. Wisconsin has the largest achievement gap between Black and White students of any state in the nation. Indeed, the state's NAEP scores show multiple achievement gaps in both reading and math and at the 4th- and 8th-grade levels. These have persisted for decades alongside similarly large gaps in graduation rates.

Teacher shortages, a contributor to achievement gaps, are also a long-standing challenge for Wisconsin. Shortages have been most severe in high-need subjects, particularly the STEM fields and special education, and in high-need schools in urban and rural areas. Related challenges include teacher attrition, which is around 8% per year—double that of high-achieving countries—and a 36% decline in educator preparation program (EPP) enrollment over the past decade. Over that same period, the number of emergency-style teaching credentials, issued to teachers who have not met full state requirements, has doubled. In special education, use of these credentials is up 175%, and in 2016–17 the state issued more emergency licenses than regular licenses for special education teachers.

As is the case across the country, achievement gaps, teacher shortages, and disparities in opportunity intersect in Wisconsin in the inequitable distribution of qualified and experienced teachers. The gaps are stark. While the statewide percentage of teachers with emergency-style credentials is around 3.4%, it is over 10% in some urban and rural districts. In Milwaukee, where students of color make up 90% of the student population, it is over 12%. Wisconsin schools with the highest concentrations of students of color employ twice as many emergency-credentialed teachers as schools with the lowest concentrations. Schools with the highest concentrations of students from low-income families employ four times as many emergency-credentialed teachers as schools with the lowest concentrations. The majority of schools with disproportionate concentrations of underprepared and inexperienced teachers are located in nine high-need, urban districts with high concentrations of students of color. Among these are the five largest districts in the state, educating almost 20% of Wisconsin students.

Finally, while there is growing evidence that teachers of color support higher achievement for students of color—and this is especially so with respect to Black teachers and Black students—in Wisconsin, the pool of teachers of color is very small. Overall, teachers of color comprise only 5.45% of the state workforce, as compared to around 20% nationally. These teachers are also concentrated geographically, with 71% of the state’s African American teachers and 39% of Latino/a teachers working in Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). Meanwhile, 86% of Wisconsin schools have no African American teachers and 83% have no Latino/a teachers.

Policy Context: Constant and Contradictory Revisions to Licensure and Program Approval

Policies governing teacher licensure and program approval are intended to ensure that all students have access to well-prepared teachers who can meet their learning needs. Wisconsin’s policies have undergone constant and significant revision in recent years. Driven by simultaneous concerns about teacher shortages and teacher quality, these changes have followed a bifurcated pattern in which regulations and requirements are added in some areas and removed in others, producing differential effects on the knowledge and skills of the teacher workforce and on staffing in more and less advantaged districts. This pattern goes back at least as far as the establishment of the state’s unified approach to licensure and program approval in 2000. As laid out in Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter PI 34, this much-praised standards-based system featured a three-tier progression of licensure tied to professional development as well as a performance-based EPP approval process. This integration of standards, licensure, and EPP approval remains a strength of Wisconsin’s system. And yet, even as PI 34 was implemented to ensure educator quality, alternative teacher certification programs were being established in MPS, the state’s largest and most diverse district. MPS was also the focus of experimentation with school vouchers and charter schools in the 1990s, revealing another pattern in education policy: the removal of regulations and requirements often affects the state’s most vulnerable students.

The PI 34 system remained in place for a decade and a half, though contradictory policy revisions continued. Alternative certification expanded further, particularly in Milwaukee, where Teach for

America and The New Teacher Project began operating in 2009. While these routes aimed to get more teachers into classrooms, they also reduced the expectations for the knowledge and skills these teachers would have to master before taking on full classroom responsibilities, and thus increased teacher turnover. Meanwhile, Wisconsin Act 10 of 2011 limited educators' collective bargaining rights and pension benefits, a move that caused a spike in teacher attrition and reduced interest in teaching careers among young people. Also in 2011, the legislature added a reading instruction exam for elementary and special education licensure, the Foundations of Reading Test (FoRT), a controversial assessment later shown to have low pass rates overall and disproportionately low pass rates for teachers of color.

Competing purposes in state policy became even more clear in 2015. That year, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) adopted the edTPA as a statewide teacher performance assessment to ensure candidate quality across programs and pathways. That same year, a committee of the legislature, focused on addressing rural teacher shortages, created a proposal that would have allowed anyone with a bachelor's degree to receive a teaching license. While this proposal was eventually converted to a teaching permit pathway for individuals with professional experience who receive 100 hours of instruction from an alternative certification program, the contradictory direction of these efforts exemplified the competing influences on education policy.

Starting in 2016, the DPI made a series of changes to licensure—based in part on recommendations by state workgroups made up of educators, administrators, DPI staff, and representatives of statewide education organizations—which were aimed at removing barriers to entering teaching without compromising teachers' preparation. The first round of changes created a licensure route for retired educators, allowed current teachers to add new license areas by passing exams, and made it easier for districts to retain substitute and emergency-certified teachers. The second round expanded reciprocity for out-of-state license holders, eliminated basic skills and GPA requirements for initial licensure, and allowed alternative demonstrations of content knowledge in lieu of subject matter tests. These changes to licensure assessment systems put Wisconsin out in front of an emerging nationwide conversation focused on offering multiple pathways for demonstrating required licensure competencies.

Then, in 2017, the legislature upended the previous licensure and program approval system with Act 59, which implemented lifetime teaching licenses, eliminating licensure-related professional development requirements. Act 59 set off a complete rewrite of PI 34 in 2018, dismantled the state's long-standing professional development program, and cut staffing at the DPI. It also replaced the state's three-stage licensure progression with a four-tier system, with the first tier including emergency-style "licenses with stipulations" for teachers who have not met all state requirements. In the ongoing back-and-forth between adding requirements to address teacher quality and removing them to solve shortages, these changes favored the latter.

An overall assessment of this policy landscape, starting with the assumption that licensure and program approval systems should produce a stable, diverse, and well-prepared teacher workforce to serve all students, must conclude that this raft of recent changes does not yet represent a

coherent strategy to reach these goals. In 2019, the state added a new reciprocity route to licensure and created an alternative assessment process in lieu of the FoRT, but only for special education candidates. In 2020, the DPI removed the statewide edTPA requirement while leaving EPPs the option of continuing to use the assessment. Also that year, another change to statute offered EPPs the option of providing alternatives to the required full-day, full-semester student teaching experience. The added flexibility in these systems could, if employed carefully to preserve quality, bring a larger and more diverse population of candidates into teaching. But thus far, a main outcome of these policy changes, as further details of state systems provided below will show, has been the creation of potential for greater variability in teacher and preparation program quality. This, in turn, could exacerbate shortages, further the inequitable distribution of qualified teachers, and expand achievement gaps.

Building Strong Systems of Teacher Certification and Preparation That Support Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Development

Strong certification and teacher preparation systems rely on essential elements that help all teachers acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to support students' social, emotional, and academic development. On the one hand, state systems establish standards that define high-quality practice, teacher preparation accreditation, and program approval processes that support continuous improvement and ensure standards-based candidate learning experiences, and performance-based assessments for candidates to demonstrate that they meet the standards. On the other hand, strong certification and preparation systems also support broad access to high-quality preparation and professional development by implementing incentives such as service scholarships and loan forgiveness programs to draw candidates into comprehensive preparation programs and by offering mentoring and coaching programs to support novice teachers' continued growth and long-term retention. Taken together, these two areas of focus—guiding practice and ensuring access—function as “two hands clapping,” working together to ensure all of the essential elements of state systems are in place.

The Current Teacher Licensure System

In Wisconsin's system, licensure is intended to ensure that a teacher has completed an approved program and has met all state standards and requirements, including preservice clinical experiences and assessments. The current licensure system still retains the standards- and performance-based foundation of the original PI 34, but with added variability in licensure pathways, including some with reduced or deferred requirements such as the licenses with stipulations in the first tier. The current licensure system consists of four tiers:

- **Tier I Licenses With Stipulations:** 1- and 3-year emergency-style licenses and substitute licenses
- **Tier II Provisional Licenses:** First-time, 3-year, renewable licenses for educator preparation program completers; for candidates seeking licenses based on reciprocity,

equivalency, and American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence routes; and for those upgrading Tier I licenses

- **Tier III Lifetime Licenses:** Available to Tier II license holders with six semesters of Wisconsin teaching experience, valid for 5 years, and renewable with continued employment and background checks
- **Tier IV Master Educator Licenses:** For Tier III license holders who either achieve National Board Certification or earn a master's degree and pass a state assessment process

In general, this new system has made it easier to obtain, maintain, and upgrade a teaching license. Reciprocity routes to Tier I or II licensure are available for out-of-state program completers and license holders who have not met Wisconsin standards, while Tier I emergency-style routes into teaching, which enable alternative certification programs, require only a bachelor's degree and no preservice preparation or in-service induction. Even though Tier I licensed teachers must complete all requirements and assessments to upgrade to Tier II licensure, they are permitted to do so while serving as teachers of record, with their on-the-job time in classrooms counting for the student teaching experiences completed by traditional candidates before they achieve licensure. Furthermore, Tier I licenses can be continually renewed, with the completion of Tier II requirements deferred, if a teacher makes demonstrated progress in an EPP or by district request, and there is no mandated limitation on such renewals except for special education teachers, who are limited to 3 years on an emergency-style license.

Along with these streamlined routes into the classroom, the new system has other features that may foster inconsistency. Since new teacher induction and ongoing professional development are no longer tied to licensure, both are left to districts, with few statewide guardrails to ensure comparable quality across geographic areas with different resources and needs. The elimination of basic skills tests, along with the creation of alternative assessment options for subject matter tests and the FoRT, has added flexibility to the system, which could provide opportunities for the state to expand and diversify the teacher workforce. However, the simultaneous elimination of the performance assessment requirement has left the state without a common measure of candidate quality upon entry into the profession.

The variability in this system creates openings for uneven preparation and professional development. The potential for different entry pathways to produce teachers of widely divergent capacities for teaching is compounded by the lack of a statewide performance assessment requiring a demonstration of competence in teaching prior to licensure, a proven means for creating a benchmark for teacher preparedness across routes and programs. Since teacher shortages and inequitable access to qualified teachers are already serious issues in the state, any gaps in preparedness will, in all probability, disproportionately impact students of color and students from low-income families. Additionally, since research shows that fully prepared teachers are more likely to be effective and to remain in teaching, sending underprepared educators into high-need schools can exacerbate both achievement gaps and shortages.

In order to manage this complex system, and to understand the nature of teacher preparation, supply, and retention in different districts, the state also needs better data. Current data on teacher education enrollment and completion are not sufficiently fine-grained to differentiate between traditionally prepared and alternatively prepared teachers coming through programs based at institutions of higher education (IHEs); all such teachers are reported as being traditionally prepared. For this reason, the percentage of program completers that are classified as coming out of alternative programs, 5.6% in 2017–18, is almost certainly too low. Furthermore, it is difficult to assess the effects of different types of preparation on teacher shortages, disparate access to well-prepared teachers, or workforce diversity without the ability to follow candidates from enrollment through completion and into the classroom. It will be essential for the state to learn more about the preparation pipeline, and its successes and shortcomings, if Wisconsin is to set a well-informed course for future policy.

The Current Program Approval System and Teacher Standards

In Wisconsin's standards- and performance-based system, the completion of an approved preparation program, required for licensure, signals that a teacher candidate has met all state standards and requirements. The system is performance based on multiple levels. Candidate proficiency on standards and requirements is assessed through a series of program-developed performance assessments. State EPP approval emphasizes the link between state standards and requirements and demonstrated candidate proficiency on such assessments rather than rating programs based on required credits or coursework. This system, which retains many features from the original PI 34, was explicitly intended to shift licensure and program approval away from input-based qualifications and toward demonstrations of competence, a move that was considered innovative when first implemented and that remains so even today.

Because of the performance basis of program approval, the DPI puts particular emphasis on examining how state standards are integrated into programs' performance assessment systems. Even with this focus, however, there is significant flexibility in applying these standards. PI 34 allows EPPs to adopt the standards as laid out in regulations or modify them to meet local priorities and needs, and also to add additional standards or even develop their own as long as all of the state standards are integrated into the program of study. In assessing EPPs for approval, the DPI focuses less attention on the form of the standards and more on their function, aiming to ensure that the standards chosen by EPPs are clearly and adequately assessed.

The 2018 overhaul of PI 34 retained the fundamentals of program approval but made notable changes. It removed previously specified requirements such as those governing admissions policies, program self-evaluation, and candidate portfolios, and it reduced the number of candidate observations by EPP clinical supervisors from four to three. The most important changes, however, were the creation of a single approval process for all programs and the update of state teaching standards. The single approval process applies to all programs regardless of their institutional type or delivery method, eliminating the former distinction between traditional and alternative programs.

The updated teacher standards are aligned to the most recent version of the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards, which are research based and have been widely adopted nationally. However, because the InTASC standards date from 2011, neither they nor Wisconsin's standards reflect the most recent findings from the science of learning and development (SoLD), such as the need for teachers to integrate social and emotional learning (SEL) with cognitive and content-area learning, to highlight intrinsic motivation and purpose in learning, and to utilize trauma-informed practices and educative and restorative behavioral supports.

All EPPs in the state were required to reapply for approval under the new system, which operates on 5-year cycles with yearly reviews and site visits. Faculty and faculty administrators work with DPI staff liaisons to submit reports and supporting documentation and to update these for each review. These reports, submitted electronically, describe programs' institutional features such as evidence of collaboration with local partners and of efforts to promote faculty and candidate diversity, but much of the focus is on programs' conceptual frameworks and standards- and performance-based assessment systems. Programs are responsible for developing and describing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that candidates will learn and for laying out how candidates will demonstrate this learning. Programs must also describe their self-evaluation processes, a key feature in promoting program-driven continuous improvement.

This new system of program approval, designed through a collaboration between the DPI and state EPPs, includes features that are innovative, flexible, and responsive to local needs. Yet these very features may also erode the connections between standards and licensure, creating variations in program quality and candidate preparation. The options available to EPPs in adopting, modifying, or adding standards make it more difficult to claim that the program approval process holds all programs to the same expectations. Combined with the state's lack of common or equivalent assessments of candidate proficiency in teaching and widely differing requirements across pathways to licensure, the overall result is a system not set up to guarantee that all teachers enter the classroom with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach all students well. Gaps in data on preparation exacerbate this issue, making it difficult to monitor or address uneven program quality and outcomes. As with licensure, variability left unaddressed by program approval will likely have the greatest impact on the highest-need students and students of color while leaving teaching shortages and achievement gaps intact.

Recommendations

Wisconsin's reputation for quality and innovation in education and in teacher licensure and preparation program approval stands uneasily alongside serious and ongoing achievement gaps, teacher shortages, and disparities in access to fully qualified and experienced educators. Driven by simultaneous concerns about teacher supply and teacher quality, the state has undertaken significant changes to both licensure and program approval systems in recent years. While these changes have encompassed a variety of purposes, on balance they have eased professional requirements for teachers, though both licensure and program approval have retained some of their

fundamental standards- and performance-based structures. While some of the added flexibility in these systems could be employed to expand and diversify the teacher workforce, the state's reform efforts have also opened up possibilities for uneven program and teacher quality.

The flexibility added to licensure creates multiple options for demonstrating competence in requirements and entering the profession. The costs of this flexibility are in the varied levels of preparation required for licensure, including routes requiring no preservice preparation at all, as well as the lack of a common licensure assessment. The flexibility added to program approval, and inherent in the options programs have in employing standards, creates opportunities for programs to take the initiative in creating content, structures, and assessments to meet local needs. On the other hand, this level of leeway, combined with holes in state data collection, makes it challenging for the state to claim, or even really to know, that all programs and routes are implementing state requirements and standards consistently. Given the state's issues with uneven student achievement and teacher distribution, any such inconsistencies in licensure and program approval will primarily affect students of color and students from low-income families who are already disproportionately taught by less-prepared educators and teachers who are completing preparation requirements on the job.

The recommendations laid out here, which draw on examples from other states as well as the findings of related research, are intended as a source of ideas for meeting the challenges the state is facing, including student achievement gaps and teacher workforce issues. These recommendations provide positive steps that the state can take, not only in licensure and program approval, but also in related policy areas such as data use, the creation of new and effective pathways into teaching, the application of incentives to teaching, and the improvement of induction for new teachers. Ideally, these recommendations will help the state meet not only its own specific challenges, but also the general challenge of moving the nation's education systems closer to structures and practices created to align with the findings from the SoLD and to meet all students' needs. These recommendations are as follows:

Recommendation 1: Strengthen preparation programs through updates to program approval and licensure

Wisconsin's standards- and performance-based licensure and program approval systems provide a foundational structure with many necessary features to ensure teacher and program quality. Still, a nuanced approach to performance assessment that offers both choice and consistency, combined with a focus on updating state standards, could enhance the state's ability to ensure all programs are preparing teachers to meet the diverse needs of all learners. The state could take the following steps to promote more consistent teacher and program quality and to integrate new knowledge about how people learn:

- Build upon past progress by implementing a statewide requirement for candidates to pass a valid and reliable capstone performance assessment for licensure. Options for the assessment are the already widely used edTPA or a state-approved and

standards-aligned equivalent assessment. By using either of these options, the state maintains both local flexibility and statewide consistency.

- Revise the state teacher standards, or add required guidance to existing standards, to align state expectations for teachers to the latest research on the science of learning and development (SoLD) by adding topics such as support for social and emotional learning (SEL), emphasis on intrinsic motivation and purpose, and use of trauma-informed and healing-informed practices and educative and restorative behavioral supports.
- Ensure that educator preparation programs are applying updated state standards consistently by requiring that any program-specific modifications to standards are consistent with research and professional consensus about responsible teaching practice aligned with up-to-date findings from SoLD.

Recommendation 2: Provide teaching incentives to improve teacher workforce supply, quality, and diversity

Ongoing teacher shortages, inequitable distribution of underqualified teachers, and achievement gaps are all related. The state should focus on promoting high-retention pathways to produce better prepared, more effective teachers who are likely to stay in the profession longer. With cost as a key barrier to entry into teaching for students of color and those from low-income backgrounds, teaching incentive programs can create opportunities to recruit a more diverse pool of educators and provide more candidates with access to high-quality preservice preparation, underwriting costs in exchange for a specified number of years of teaching. In Wisconsin, the creation of new high-retention pathways into teaching should be prioritized in the nine high-need districts where underprepared teachers are currently concentrated. This effort should be accompanied by an expansion of current teacher incentive programs; state incentives that bring experienced, National Board Certified educators into high-need schools; and state support for promoting high school students' interest in teaching, bolstering multiple stages of the professional continuum. This recommendation includes the following steps:

- Incentivize the creation of high-quality, high-retention teacher residencies in the state's nine highest-need districts, implemented through district-EPP partnerships. Through residency programs, candidates are financially supported to train in the classrooms of expert mentor teachers while they complete their preparation. Candidates then receive mentoring and commit to 3–5 years of teaching in the same high-need district in which they were trained.
- Increase accessibility and uptake of the Teacher Education Loan (TEL) and Minority Teacher Loan (MTL) programs by increasing funding, expanding eligibility requirements, and broadening the types of schools at which graduates can teach while maintaining incentives for high-need schools, and, for the MTL program, focusing on recruiting diverse teachers by expanding subject-area requirements.

- Improve the distribution of qualified and experienced educators and the quality of mentoring and teacher leadership in high-need districts by (1) expanding the incentive program for National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) who teach in high-need schools, (2) raising the yearly amount of the grants received by these NBCTs, (3) removing the 9-year limit on grant payments, and (4) tying these upgrades to NBCT participation in mentoring for teacher candidates and novice teachers.
- Provide administrative support for the expansion of already-existing Educators Rising chapters in the state, which have already ramped up offerings of preservice teacher experience and dual-credit options with EPPs to high school students interested in becoming Wisconsin teachers, and have so far done so without dedicated administrative staffing.

Recommendation 3: Improve data use for continuous system and program improvement

Improvements in data collection and use can help the state track program enrollees and completers to better understand, and make improvements to, the state’s teacher pipeline. Additionally, better data could enhance program approval and continuous improvement processes. To strengthen preparation, the state can:

- Improve state data by requiring educator preparation programs to report the number and demographics of candidates enrolled in and completing each program by pathway, not only by institution. States can then use those data to track graduation, employment, and retention rates and make the data available in a timely and accessible format through a dashboard system.
- Ensure that the Office of Socially Responsible Evaluation (SREed) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, which runs the statewide Wisconsin Educator Development Support and Retention (WEDSR) Survey, provides data to the DPI on educator preparation and induction program performance. Doing so in an aggregated form will provide an overall statewide picture without raising accountability concerns.

Recommendation 4: Provide enhanced induction and mentoring

Induction is an important strategy for increasing teacher retention and effectiveness, addressing both teacher shortages and student achievement gaps. When the switch to lifetime licensure dismantled the state’s professional development system, it also removed the core of new teacher induction. With few remaining requirements, induction quality is dependent on local priorities and funding levels, making it more likely that higher-need schools, with higher concentrations of novice and underprepared teachers, will struggle to provide high-quality programs. Furthermore, many new teachers who enter the classroom without preparation are not required to participate in an induction program. All new teachers—and particularly those in alternative preparation programs, who are more likely to serve students of color and students from low-income families—should have access to high-quality induction, a goal that can be furthered by these steps:

- Require induction experiences for all novice teachers, including those enrolled in EPPs while working as teachers of record on Tier I licenses.
- Replace limited statewide induction requirements with more comprehensive expectations to promote more consistent and equitable implementation across districts, add DPI oversight of added expectations, and provide state funding support to high-need districts with higher concentrations of novice and underprepared teachers.

Recommendation 5: Increase state education agency capacity

Wisconsin can support the implementation of all these recommendations by providing adequate staffing for the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Staff cuts at the DPI, combined with the flood of recent policy changes, have left the agency in a reactive mode. To facilitate the changes recommended here, as well as other improvements prioritized by DPI staff and leadership, will require sufficient agency capacity to act proactively and lead the work. This additional capacity could support:

- making improvements to the DPI website and speeding up inquiry response times;
- creating and promulgating new research-based guidance to update teaching standards;
- proposing and supporting new high-retention pathways into teaching;
- revising and expanding teacher loan forgiveness programs;
- collecting and using more educator preparation and workforce data to guide program improvement; and
- taking on additional responsibilities to support and improve teacher induction.

Conclusion

These five recommendations build both on Wisconsin’s long history of standards-based licensure and program approval and on more recent efforts, aiming to address some of the less effective aspects of current systems while also making forward-looking changes aligned to the biggest challenges facing the state today. With its reputation for quality schooling and educator preparation existing alongside long-standing and wide achievement gaps and serious teacher shortages, Wisconsin has achievements to celebrate and work to do. Applying these recommendations to shape educator preparation and practice can help move the state closer to having a diverse, stable, well-qualified, and equitably distributed teacher workforce able to support all students’ deeper learning and social, emotional, and academic development. While the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic—addressed in an addendum to this report—may exacerbate the state’s challenges or alter or delay the implementation of these recommendations, there are still steps the state can take now to ensure that licensure and program approval are strengthened as schools weather today’s challenges and evolve to meet those of the future. Ideally, this report will serve to inform a strategic approach to guide these efforts.

Introduction

In recent years, expectations for schools and for educators have been on the rise. Research on the science of learning and development (SoLD) has been advancing rapidly.¹ Calls have been growing to provide all students with deeper learning² experiences that will prepare them for the increasing demands of life and work in the 21st century.³ These calls have been accompanied by an increasing awareness of long-standing gaps in opportunities, resources, and achievement for students of color and students from low-income families and of the failure of previous reform efforts to eliminate these gaps.⁴ Meeting rising expectations for schools will require the realignment of educational systems toward equitable structures and SoLD-aligned practices encompassing the cognitive, sociocultural, and socioemotional aspects of learning and development.⁵

In any such systemic transformation, teachers must play a vital role. Teachers' methods, qualifications, and levels of experience affect students' academic achievement, well-being, and opportunities to learn.⁶ Teachers' preparation for the job also matters. Strong preparation has been linked to increased teacher effectiveness and retention,⁷ and improving schooling will require it to become stronger still.⁸ As the Committee on Teacher Education of the National Academy of Education framed the issue, if “systemic reforms” are to take place, “teachers will need to be prepared to be a part of this change process.”⁹

Unfortunately, even in the current system, there are not enough well-prepared teachers to meet the needs of all students, creating a series of challenges that must be addressed in preparation for wider changes. Teacher shortages are long-standing and widespread, particularly in high-demand subjects—such as the STEM fields and special education—and in high-need schools in urban and rural areas.¹⁰ Schools are struggling to recruit and retain teachers of color even as a growing research base emphasizes the benefits of a racially and linguistically diverse teacher workforce.¹¹ Too many classrooms are staffed by underprepared teachers, and, furthermore, these teachers are concentrated in schools serving the highest-need students and students of color.¹² This inequitable distribution of qualified teachers creates opportunity gaps that contribute to our system's pervasive achievement gaps.¹³

For all these reasons, policies that affect teachers and the teacher workforce will play key roles in moving educational systems toward providing equitable access to deep and comprehensive learning experiences. Of particular importance will be policies governing teacher licensure and program approval, which are intended to ensure that all teachers are well prepared to meet the learning needs of all students. Such policies have been shown to positively influence education systems and to create opportunities to address teacher workforce challenges. The application of research-aligned standards for teaching across a coherent, performance-based professional continuum has been recognized as a vital step in supporting student learning.¹⁴ Inclusion of standards in licensing and accreditation systems can shape preparation program coursework, clinical experiences, assessment, and the development of teacher candidates' skills.¹⁵ Analyses of successful education systems around the world have shown how teaching standards can “undergird preparation, professional

licensure or registration, professional learning, appraisal, and career development,” while also supporting systemic alignment with SoLD by emphasizing “the whole child’s physical, emotional, and moral development.”¹⁶

With these considerations in mind, the Learning Policy Institute, in collaboration with the Council of Chief State School Officers, undertook a series of studies of state teacher licensure and program approval systems. The aim of these studies was to examine how these systems are advancing the preparation of a stable, diverse, well-qualified, and equitably distributed teacher workforce to support all students’ deeper learning and social, emotional, and academic development. Drawing upon state teacher and student data, analyses of statutory and regulatory frameworks and policy activities, and interviews with educators and state agency staff (see Appendix A for methodology), these reports are intended to lay out state progress and challenges, describe state policy initiatives and systems in detail, and provide research-based recommendations for systemic improvement.

This report examines teacher licensure and preparation program approval systems in Wisconsin. It proceeds in five parts. The first describes the context in which licensure and program approval operate, with a focus on the achievement gaps and teacher workforce challenges that exist amid the state’s substantial educational successes. The second describes the extensive changes to licensure and program approval that have characterized the state’s education policy space in recent years, setting the stage for in-depth descriptions of the workings of licensure in the next section and of program approval and state teacher standards in the section after that. The fifth section includes recommendations, based on state needs and priorities, current research, and examples from other states, that are intended to assist policymakers in building upon and strengthening existing systems. Data collection for this report took place before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and even as the report goes to publication, we do not fully know the pandemic’s effects on education systems. However, these recommendations can still contribute to future planning, as addressed in an addendum included after the recommendations section.

State Context: Achievement Gaps, Teacher Shortages, and Disparities in Opportunity

Before digging into the policies, structures, and practices of educator licensure and program approval systems in Wisconsin, it is important to get a sense of some of the major issues that have informed education policymaking in the state. Issues that bear on the central topics of this report are centered on the status of the state's teacher workforce, but these are deeply connected to larger challenges within the k–12 education system. Recognized for its high-achieving schools and high-quality teacher workforce, Wisconsin also suffers from serious inequities, including the nation's largest gaps in achievement and graduation rates between White and Black students. These gaps are, in turn, related to opportunity gaps created by teacher shortages and attrition, declining enrollment in educator preparation programs (EPPs), increasing use of emergency-type certifications, inequitable distribution of prepared and experienced teachers, and a low percentage of teachers of color in the workforce. These challenges form the context in which current licensure and program approval systems operate and the background for the recommendations of this report.

A Mixed Legacy of Successes and Inequities

Wisconsin has long been known for its high-quality k–12 education system. The state has been a leader in both reading and math scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for decades. While this performance relative to other states has declined over time, Wisconsin did not follow the nationwide trend of a drop in NAEP scores that occurred from 2017 to 2019. Indeed, the 2019 results still put Wisconsin's 8th-graders ahead of most of their peers across the country, while the performance of the state's 4th-graders was about at the national average.¹⁷ In addition to the state's notable NAEP performance over time, Wisconsin's 4-year high school graduation rate has also been consistently among the highest in the nation. This rate reached 90% in 2019, part of a continuing upward trend that has allowed Wisconsin to retain its place in the top quintile of states in this measure.¹⁸

The quality of the state's teaching force, and of its teacher preparation and licensure policies, has also been widely recognized. Two decades ago, a years-long, systemic redesign effort culminated in the creation of a standards- and performance-based education licensure and program approval system, the Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative (QEI).¹⁹ Adopted in 2000 and fully implemented by 2004, the QEI was laid out in Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter PI 34, a chapter mentioned many times in this report. The state's reputation for teacher quality preceded PI 34, with Wisconsin held up as an example of how a well-prepared teacher workforce can contribute to high k–12 student achievement.²⁰ Even so, the adoption of the PI 34 system was praised as a forward-looking step toward professionalizing teaching.²¹

And yet, the state's excellent reputation and above-average NAEP performance exist alongside troubling inequities with similarly deep roots. Wisconsin has the largest achievement gap between Black and White students of any state in the nation, an alarming distinction.²² Furthermore, breaking

down the NAEP scores into tested subjects and grades shows multiple achievement gaps. They are present in both reading and math, at both the 4th- and 8th-grade levels, and they have persisted for decades.²³ Additionally, while the state’s overall graduation rate is high, Wisconsin also has the largest gap in the nation between the graduation rates of Black and White students.²⁴ Wisconsin has held this unfortunate distinction since the 2013–14 school year, though the existence of the gap long preceded its growth to that level.²⁵

Ongoing and Widespread Shortages

Teacher shortages, a significant contributor to achievement gaps, are another long-standing issue in the state. The current shortage situation has been described by the state’s Department of Public Instruction (DPI) as “historic” and “one of the most critical public policy issues facing our state.”²⁶ Teacher shortages have also drawn media attention²⁷ and have been the focus of several recent state agency workgroups.²⁸ State-designated shortage areas for the 2019–20 school year included special education, English as a second language (ESL), bilingual and/or bicultural education, language arts and reading, and career and technical education (CTE), as well as science, mathematics, music, art, and world languages.²⁹ Shortages in some areas have been persistent, spanning two decades (e.g., math, science) or even three (e.g., special education).³⁰ School administrators have also noted a decline in the perceived quality of applicants in recent years.³¹

Even though Wisconsin designated only one geographic shortage area in 2018–19—Milwaukee Public Schools³²—shortages and applicant quality issues have been characterized as more severe in urban and rural districts than in suburban ones.³³ Kim Kaukl, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance and a longtime teacher and administrator, identified teacher shortages as a vital issue and one of the “common challenges” faced by both urban and rural schools in the state. Tim Joynt, an administrator in a suburban district, also described shortages, but only “in areas that, nationally, we have teacher shortages,” such as math and science. Comparing his district to urban and rural districts, he explained, “In terms of the size and the pool [of applicants], we’re not struggling as much.”

Another perspective on shortages comes from a 2018 study of teacher supply and demand carried out by the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.³⁴ Though this study did highlight difficulties in hiring “certified and highly effective” teachers and acknowledge subject-area and geographic shortages, it also made the claim that the state “is not experiencing a statewide teacher shortage.”³⁵ Bradley Carl, a co-author of that study interviewed for this report, explained the importance of this claim, noting that an overly simplified shortage narrative can end up “obscuring . . . a fair amount of nuance.” Peter Goff, lead author of the study, added in that same interview that “from a policy perspective, it makes me nervous when people say that there’s a shortage.” According to Carl, such a focus can keep policymakers from asking important questions, such as “Are we attracting the right kinds of folks with the right kinds of incentives?” and “Are we doing a good enough job of keeping people in the profession?”

Whether or not the concept of a statewide teacher shortage is over-applied in Wisconsin, it was a frequent topic in stakeholder interviews conducted for this report, often raised in connection with Act 10, the controversial 2011 legislation that restricted teachers' collective bargaining rights and increased their pension payments.³⁶ Kaukl, for example, explained that "after Act 10, parents were telling kids, you don't want to go into education because they don't look at you as a professional anymore." Another educator stated that lack of interest in teaching careers has created a "grim situation" for recruiting. Media coverage has also highlighted these issues. In one 2015 article, a school administrator explained that "because of the attack on the profession, it's not as attractive to want to become a teacher."³⁷ A teacher candidate interviewed in 2017 said that many of her colleagues "have been warned off by older teachers."³⁸ The next year, a teacher educator described teachers telling students "Don't choose this as a career."³⁹

Aversion to teaching as a career is, unfortunately, a national trend; indeed, a 2018 poll indicated that the majority of American adults would not want a child of theirs to become a teacher.⁴⁰ Even so, the pessimism about the state of the teaching profession expressed in stakeholder interviews was striking. "We have enough licensed teachers in the state," said a DPI staffer. "We just don't have teachers that are willing to work in the conditions that have been created for educators." A teacher educator observed that "as long as the profession continues to be viewed as something anybody can do with an online class, we're going to have problems with recruiting and retaining effective teachers." If any of this seems like hyperbole, it is important to consider that Superintendent of Public Instruction Carolyn Stanford Taylor, in her State of Education address, referred to 2019 as "a time when far too many teachers are leaving the profession and too many students aren't aspiring to become teachers."⁴¹

Teacher Attrition Has Added to Supply and Diversity Issues

Attrition in Wisconsin came up repeatedly in interviews as an issue contributing to shortages. One teacher educator claimed, "We don't only have a shortage here, we have an exodus," while a DPI staff member explained, "No matter how many teachers you prepare, if you're filling a supply into a leaky bucket, you'll never have enough teachers." And as with shortages, Act 10 was cited as a cause for attrition; one educator claimed that "morale still is not good" even years after Act 10, while a teacher educator pinpointed Act 10 as the start of the "de-professionalization" of teaching and the creation of an environment in which teachers are "not valued." The numbers do provide some support to this narrative, since attrition rose from 6.4% before the passage of Act 10 to 10.5% the year after it passed, though the percentage has generally been near the national average of around 8% since then.⁴² Still, even this lower percentage is double that of high-achieving systems internationally, and the state is losing more teachers than it is producing: From the 2015–16 school year to the 2016–17 school year, Wisconsin lost 5,031 teachers to attrition, while 3,031 teachers completed EPPs in the state.⁴³

Also in line with national patterns, attrition in Wisconsin is higher for new teachers and teachers in hard-to-staff areas, particularly special education and math.⁴⁴ For the 2017–18 school year, 1 in 5 of

all the teachers who left were in their first 3 years of teaching, a proportion that has held steady since the 2014–15 school year. The DPI has repeatedly warned of “a significant issue of teacher retention for newly hired teachers,”⁴⁵ while the Wisconsin Policy Forum has noted:

Even if aggregate teacher supply levels remain stable and attrition rates continue at current rates, an inability to retain young and less experienced teachers may pose a significant cost to districts and may threaten the ability of individual schools and districts to maintain a stable, high-quality teaching corps or to staff their classrooms at appropriate levels.⁴⁶

One final area of alignment with national trends is higher rates of attrition for teachers of color, ranging from over 10% to over 25% depending on subject area, with many teachers leaving in the first 2 years on the job.⁴⁷ Across the country, teachers of color are more likely to enter teaching through alternative routes due to financial constraints and are more likely to work in under-resourced schools with high teacher turnover rates.⁴⁸ In the Wisconsin context, a report by the Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness Research Partnership focused on “relational trust” between teachers and administrators, finding that lower levels of trust were associated with attrition and that African American teachers feel lower levels of trust than their White or Latino/a counterparts. The report recommended that districts focus on creating emotionally safe environments and promoting cultural competence in schools to build needed relationships and trust among educators.⁴⁹

A Steep Decline in Enrollment and Completion in Educator Preparation Programs

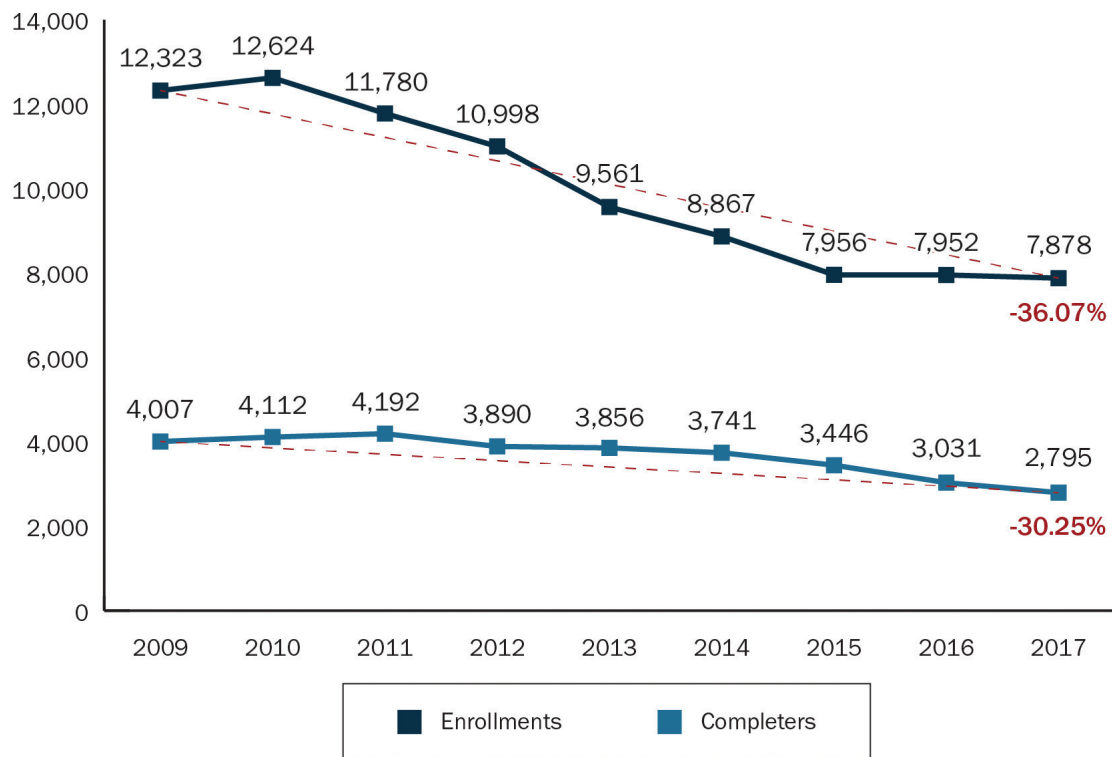
Over the past decade, Wisconsin has faced steep declines in educator preparation program (EPP) enrollment and completion, with the former falling 36% since 2009–10 and the latter by 30% (see Figure 1). These decreases are part of a nationwide phenomenon, as from 2010 to 2018, enrollment across the country fell by nearly 36% and completion by 28%, though some states have seen even more precipitous drops.⁵⁰ “Preparation programs are very much hurting,” acknowledged David DeGuire, Director of Teacher Education, Professional Development, and Licensing (TEPDL) at the DPI, though he also added, “All our neighbors [states] are experiencing something similar.” DeGuire did not speculate on causes for falling enrollment and completion, though stakeholder comments and media coverage on the declining appeal of teaching as a career suggest a connection to the status of the profession.

The drop in EPP completers in and of itself means fewer teachers are available for Wisconsin schools, but it is important to note that, between 2012–13 and 2017–18, only one half to two thirds of completers took teaching jobs in the state.⁵¹ This adds to the already significant difference between EPP completion and teacher attrition highlighted in the previous section.

A Sharp Increase in the Use of Emergency Credentials

Over roughly the same period that has seen the state’s precipitous drop in teacher preparation program enrollment, the number of emergency-style teaching credentials, issued to teachers who have not met full state requirements, has doubled. In raw numbers, the number of

Figure 1
Wisconsin Educator Preparation Program Enrollment and Completion

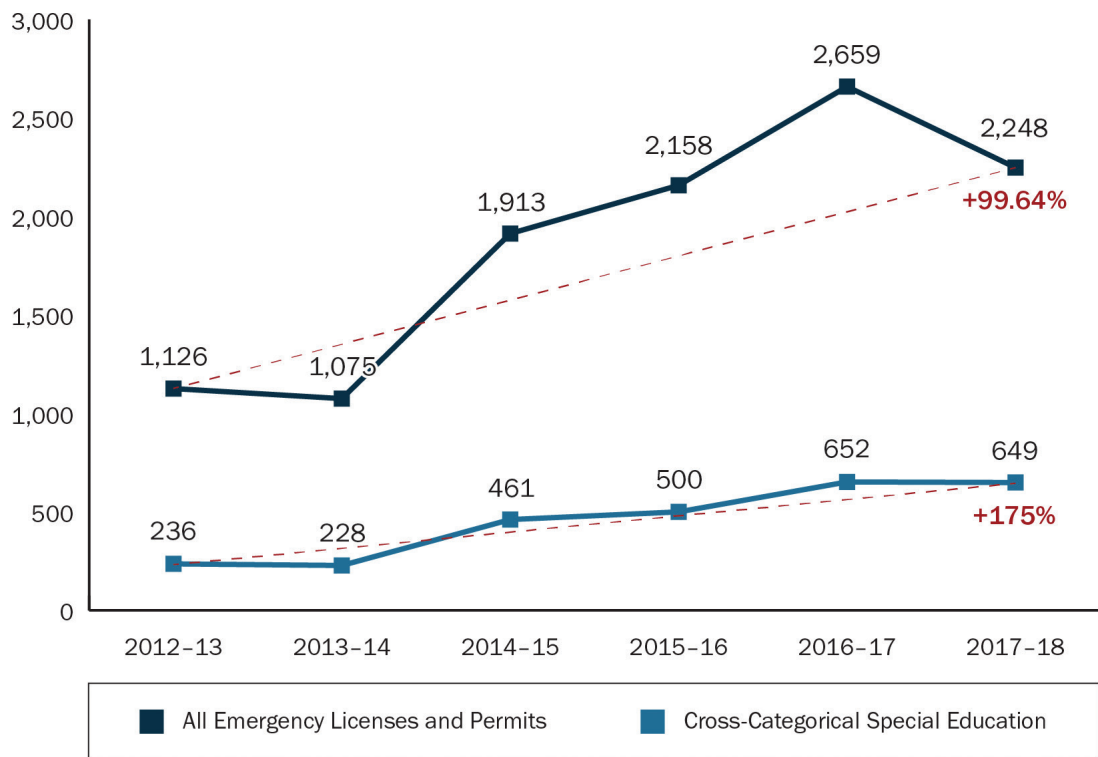


Data source: DeGuire, D. (2019). CESA 12 Licensing Updates [PowerPoint slides]. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

emergency-style credentials issued has increased from 1,126 in 2012–13 to 2,248 in 2017–18 (see Figure 2).⁵² While teachers working under these licenses make up 3.4% of the workforce, the use of these credentials is more prevalent in special education, bilingual education, ESL, reading, science, math, and CTE.⁵³ In 2017–18, Cross-Categorical Special Education had both the highest number of emergency credentials issued (649) and the largest increase in their use since 2012–13 (175%).⁵⁴ Tellingly, the 652 emergency licenses issued in this area in 2016–17 exceeded the number of regular licenses issued to EPP completers, which was 601.⁵⁵

Patterns in emergency-style credentialing align to geographic as well as subject-area shortage areas, but there are also indications that teacher supply is not the sole issue driving the increase in the issuance of such credentials. Researchers have found some evidence that may point to their overuse, such as increases in the number of renewals and the use of credentials in higher-supply subject areas.⁵⁶ Another driver of emergency-style credentialing has been a licensure assessment required for elementary and special education teachers, the Foundations of Reading Test (FoRT). The FoRT was singled out by stakeholders as a barrier to licensure for special education program completers who, having failed to pass the FoRT, were being hired by districts with emergency credentials. In late 2019, as described below, the legislature changed state requirements to allow an alternative to the FoRT for special education licensure.

Figure 2
Wisconsin Emergency Licenses and Permits



Data source: DeGuire, D. (2019). CESA 12 Licensing Updates [PowerPoint slides]. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

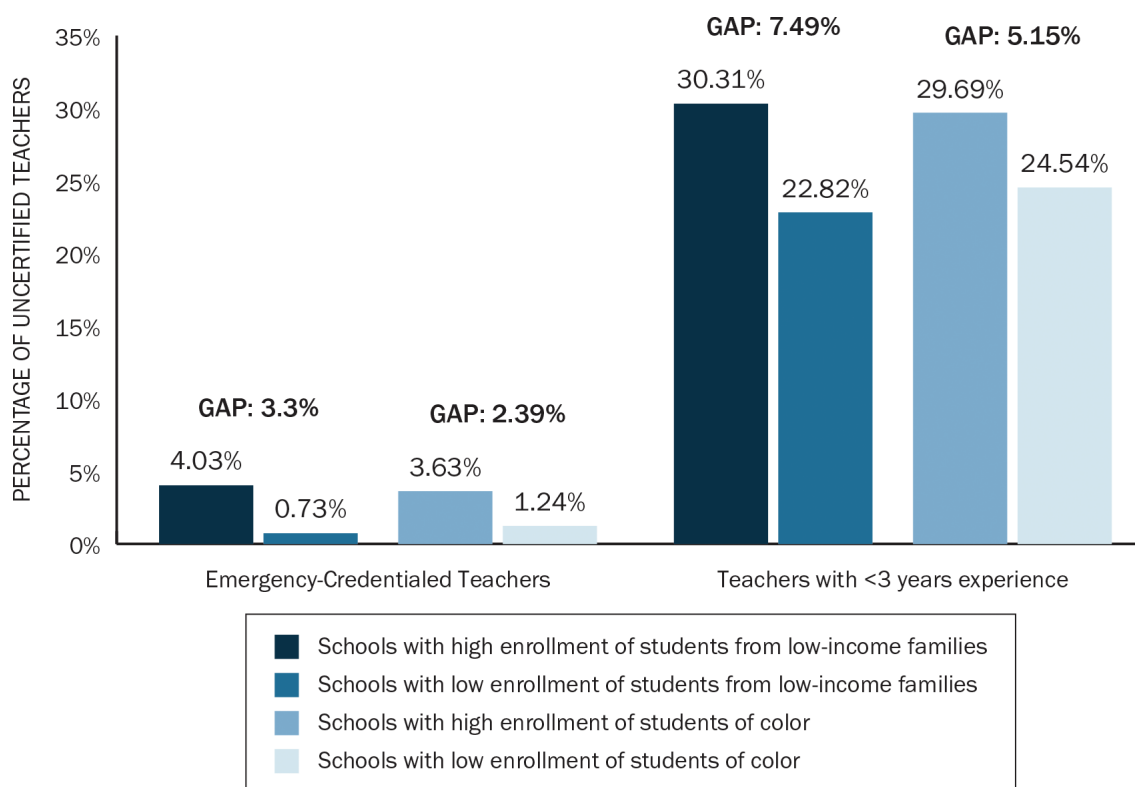
Disparities in Access to Qualified and Experienced Teachers

As is the case across the country, achievement gaps, teacher shortages, and disparities in opportunity intersect in Wisconsin. While access to qualified and experienced educators is perceived as a statewide issue, it does not affect all districts equally, nor is it fully captured by the previously described differences in teacher supply between urban, rural, and suburban districts. Instead, these disparities can be seen most clearly when schools are looked at in terms of their populations of students of color and students from low-income families; high concentrations of one or the other, or of both, are frequently correlated with disproportionate concentrations of teachers who are inexperienced or underprepared. Wisconsin is, of course, not unique in this regard, as a pattern of unequal access to experienced and certified teachers exists across the country and in rural, suburban, and urban communities.⁵⁷ Still, since achievement gaps stem in part from inequitable access to qualified teachers,⁵⁸ the issue is of particular salience in the state.

The state’s Teacher Equitable Access Plan for Wisconsin, developed in 2015 and referenced in the state’s 2018 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated State Plan, identified an “equity gap” in students’ access to highly qualified and experienced teachers.⁵⁹ The state’s analysis, using data from 2012–13, looked at how two categories of teachers, emergency-credentialed teachers (unqualified or teaching out-of-field) and inexperienced teachers, were distributed in schools with high

(top quartile) and low (bottom quartile) populations of students of color and students from low-income households.⁶⁰ The analysis shows a concentration of teachers who are not fully prepared, qualified, and experienced in the schools with the highest concentrations of students from low-income families and students of color (Figure 3). As these figures demonstrate, the inequities are stark. Wisconsin schools with the highest concentrations of students of color employ twice as many emergency-credentialed teachers as schools with the lowest concentrations. Schools with the highest concentrations of students from low-income families employ four times as many emergency-credentialed teachers as schools with the lowest concentrations.

Figure 3
Distribution of Teachers by School Population



Data source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2015). Teacher equitable access plan for Wisconsin. https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/wi-equity-plan/_files/wiequityplan060115.pdf.

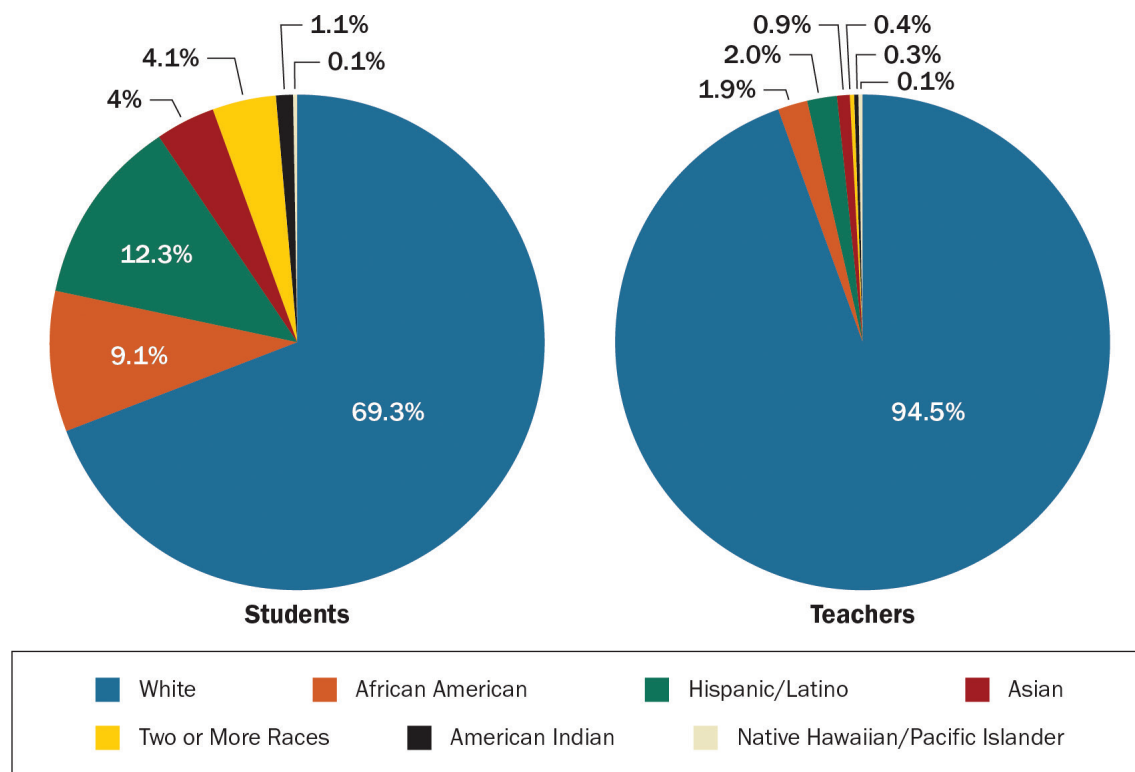
While this equity gap analysis is based on student demographics, geographic location is also a factor. The statewide percentage of teachers with emergency-style credentials is around 3.4%, but the percentage in some urban and rural districts is double that or more, including in Racine Unified, at over 8%; Madison Metro, at nearly 10%; and Milwaukee Unified, at over 12%.⁶¹ These three districts are part of the nine singled out by Wisconsin’s equity plan, all identified as “low-income, high-minority, and high need,” as encompassing the majority of schools and students experiencing disproportionate access to prepared and qualified teachers and thus accounting for the majority

of the equity gap.⁶² These districts, targeted for state support and federal Title II, Part A funds, are all located in urban areas.⁶³ The first five districts on this list—Milwaukee Unified, Madison Metro, Green Bay, Racine Unified, and Kenosha—are the five largest in the state, educating almost 20% of Wisconsin students.⁶⁴ All serve student populations more diverse than the state average, ranging from 57% students of color in Green Bay to 90% in Milwaukee.

The Need for a More Diverse Teacher Workforce

Given the importance of a racially and linguistically diverse educator workforce for all students, and especially students of color, the lack of diversity among Wisconsin teachers, even as diversity of the student population is rising, is an issue calling out for attention.⁶⁵ Teachers of color make up only 5.45% of the Wisconsin teacher workforce (see Figure 4), compared to around 20% of the teacher workforce nationally. The Wisconsin Center for Education Research report cited above concluded, “Regardless of what measures are used, the statewide system lacks African American or Hispanic educators, as does the teacher preparation pipeline.”⁶⁶ This lack of diversity in the workforce is compounded by how these teachers are distributed, since 71% of the state’s African American teachers and 39% of Latino/a teachers work in one district, Milwaukee Public Schools. Meanwhile,

Figure 4
Wisconsin Student and Teacher Diversity, 2018–19



Data source: 2018–19 WISEdash Student Enrollment, statewide; 2018–19 Wisconsin Public All Staff Report – code 53 (Teacher).

across the rest of the state, 86% of schools have no African American teachers, and 83% have no Latino/a teachers.⁶⁷ Kaukl of the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance cited lack of diversity of rural school faculty as an issue, even compared to rural areas in other states. “When I look at my national counterparts,” he explained, “they are much more diverse out in rural areas than we are.” Stakeholders described the educator pipeline as a factor in the lack of workforce diversity. District administrator Joynt explained that, even though his school board is “very much focused [on] the diversity of our staff,” hiring teachers of color “has been very difficult for us.” He stated that EPPs need to work on supporting candidates of color, asking questions about “barriers . . . to students of diverse backgrounds.” He focused on student teaching as one such barrier, calling it “a hindrance of diversifying our staff.” As he put it, asking teacher candidates “to pay to do a job that other people are getting paid for” is likely to “get [more] white affluent people to do the job.” Beth Giles, Assistant Director of TEPDL at the DPI, shared a similar concern regarding the conflict between student teaching and paid employment. “We’ve got people who are supposed to be student teaching in the spring semester,” she said, “who may not have money to eat.”

Other stakeholders raised similar concerns, describing structural aspects of educator preparation that make it a poor fit for teacher candidates who are caregivers, who are working to support themselves or others, or who lack transportation, all attributes more common among first-generation college students, career-changers, and students of color. Robin Fox, Interim Dean of the College of Education and Professional Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, emphasized that the standard model of full-time teacher preparation programs at institutions of higher education (IHEs) leaves out many potential teachers. “We have to think strategically about the programs that we are developing and not just thinking that the folks are going to show up,” she stated, “because they’re not.” She added, “If we want diversity, we’ve got to change our programs.” Absent that change, she said, “We’re not ever going to capture that group of people who have complex lives [and] who would be phenomenal educators.” A DPI staff member expressed a similar sentiment, claiming that if more IHE-based programs were better attuned to candidates’ needs, “We would need fewer alt[ernative] route programs in this state.”

Some changes in educator preparation are already evident, with mixed results. As is described in greater detail below, EPPs are increasingly blurring the lines between “traditional” and “alternative” preparation, while the state has eliminated this distinction in program approval. One DPI staff member explained that programs “originally designed to meet the needs of a traditional undergraduate student” are restructuring themselves “to meet the needs of other populations of students.” Changes made to student teaching requirements in 2020, also described below, may facilitate such restructuring, as they allow more varied experiences to be approved as equivalent to the required full-time, one-semester student-teaching placement.

Such flexibility seems called for, and yet the tie-in between alternative licensure programs and the state’s growing reliance on emergency certification shows how flexibility in preparation can, if carried too far, deny some teachers the sort of supervised clinical experience that has been shown to lead to higher retention and effectiveness. One suggested solution for preserving preservice preparation

while making EPPs accessible to broader populations of candidates came from Pat Luebke, Dean of the School of Professional Studies (which includes teacher education) at Alverno College, who recommended “a yearlong internship/residency that is paid, like we do with school psychologists.” Luebke said that “teachers need a year on the ground, with pay . . . before we certify them,” a possibility further explored in this report’s recommendations.

State Policy Structure, Environment, and Initiatives

A Framework for Examining Teacher Preparation and Certification Systems

Strong certification and teacher preparation systems rely on essential elements that help all teachers acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to support students' social, emotional, and academic development. On the one hand, state systems function to guide high-quality practice through key features such as:

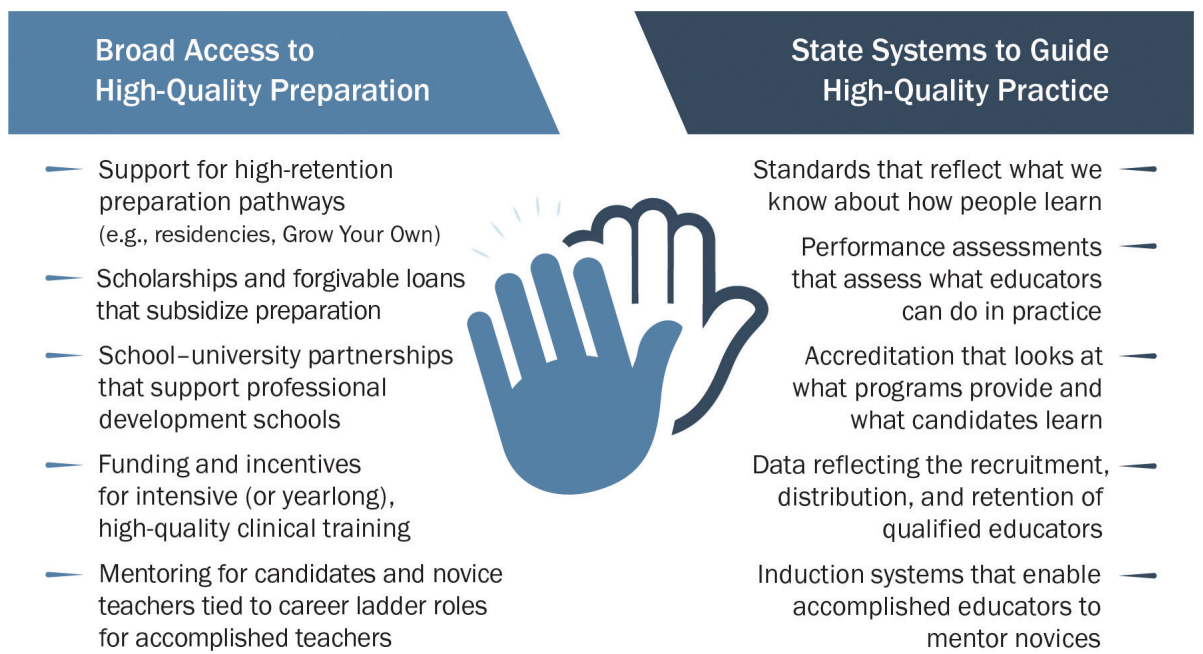
- standards that reflect what we know about how people learn,
- performance assessments that assess what educators can do in practice, and
- teacher preparation accreditation and program approval processes that look at what programs provide and what candidates learn.

On the other hand, strong certification and preparation systems also support broad access to high-quality preparation and professional development. They do so by combining the features described above with incentives such as service scholarships and loan forgiveness programs to draw candidates into comprehensive preparation programs, as well as with mentoring and coaching programs to support novice teachers' continued growth and long-term retention.⁶⁸

Taken together, these two areas of focus—guiding practice and ensuring access—function as “two hands clapping,” working in ways that are necessarily interconnected (see Figure 5). When both hands are clapping, all of the essential elements of state systems are in place: Policymakers have created the infrastructure necessary to bring a sufficiently large and diverse pool of aspiring teachers into the pipeline while also providing teacher candidates, and new teachers, with learning experiences that support their growth and development and assessments that allow them to demonstrate their ability to support learning for all students.

In order to understand how Wisconsin's licensure and program approval policies ensure access and guide practice, as well as how these policies might better align the state's systems to the essential elements described above, it is helpful to examine these policies in context. The following section establishes some essential details about how these systems operate and the environment in which they do so. It begins with an outline of state policy structures and of the state's general approach to policy implementation. These are followed by a narrative of recent policy moves in education, which is intended to provide background and perspective for the analysis of system features. Because Wisconsin's program approval and licensure systems have been comprehensively revised in the last half-decade, and are still evolving, this narrative is essential to understanding the workings of these systems; their relationship to achievement gaps and teacher workforce issues; and their influence on future efforts to provide the state with a diverse, stable, well-qualified, and equitably distributed teacher workforce.

Figure 5
Ensuring Equitable Access to a Strong, Stable, and Diverse Teacher Workforce



Licensure Policy and Program Approval Structures and Data Systems

The top education officer in Wisconsin is the elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), who leads the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), an executive branch agency that administers licensure and program approval. A Professional Standards Council (PSC), consisting mainly of teachers, administrators, and teacher educators, advises the SPI on policies related to teaching. Much of the detail on the workings of licensure and program approval in Wisconsin is laid out in administrative code in Chapter PI (Public Instruction) 34. Legislative requirements around licensure and program approval are concentrated in state code in Chapter 118, section 118.9, which addresses educator licensure; in Chapter 15, section 15.37, which created the DPI; and in Chapter 115, Subchapter I, which lays out the powers and duties of the SPI and established the Professional Standards Council.

State data systems capture a significant amount of information on educator preparation, though these data are housed in a variety of locations with differing levels of accessibility. Data on current teachers and on k–12 students are accessible through the state’s data dashboard, the WISEdash portal, while data on emergency certification and teacher attrition and turnover can be found on the DPI website in the form of reports and spreadsheets.⁶⁹ Data on educator preparation programs (EPPs), beyond the information that is available through reporting required by Title II of the Higher Education Act, are accessible through the state’s required Annual Report on Educator Preparation Programs, mandated by Act 166 of 2011 and first produced in 2013.⁷⁰ Data available in the annual reports include:

- **Number of program completers** in Wisconsin, including the total and the numbers licensed and employed in the state from public, private, and alternative programs
- **Number of license endorsements** produced by EPPs, broken down by license type and program type, and further broken down by grade level and subject area, available both statewide and by individual program
- **Pass rates on licensure tests**, including Praxis II (subject area), the Foundations of Reading Test (FoRT), and the edTPA performance assessment, with varying levels of detail provided for different tests; statewide and program-level pass rates are provided for most tests, while Praxis II and edTPA pass rates are broken down by gender, ethnicity, and gender/ethnicity

There is some room for improvement in both the collection and use of data related to educator preparation. Current data on teacher education enrollment and completion, for example, are not sufficiently fine-grained to differentiate between traditionally and alternatively prepared teachers completing programs based at institutions of higher education (IHEs). The issue is described in detail below, but the essential problem is that all such teachers are reported as being traditionally prepared, and so the percentage of program completers classified as completing alternative programs is almost certainly too low. Furthermore, the data currently collected have gaps that make it difficult to assess the effects of different preparation pathways on teacher shortages, distribution, or diversity, because the state does not have the capacity to follow candidates from enrollment to completion and into the classroom.

A Legacy of Standards-Based Policy Implementation

The history of licensure and program approval systems in the state shapes current practice, and this is particularly true of Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter PI 34. Created in 2000 by combining PI 3 (licensure) and PI 4 (program approval) after a years-long systemic redesign effort, and fully implemented by 2004, PI 34 created a much-praised standards-based progression of licensure stages (initial, professional, master) and required the completion of ongoing Professional Development Plans (PDPs) for renewals and upgrades.⁷¹ PI 34 also included a shift to “performance-based” EPP approval, with a “demonstration of knowledge, skills, and dispositions”⁷² through standards-aligned assessments; DPI staff characterized this shift as a move from an “input-oriented” to an “outcomes-oriented” process. State teacher standards, also included in PI 34, were aligned to the Interstate New Teacher Assessment Consortium (INTASC) national standards.

PI 34 was completely revised in 2018 after years of piecemeal adjustments, as is described in the next section, but the original PI 34 system’s emphasis on distributed responsibility and local flexibility in policy implementation has carried over into current practice. Under the original PI 34, EPPs met state requirements by designing and implementing their own standards- and performance-based courses of study. Initial licensure was tied to standards because it required the completion of a

standards-aligned program. Renewals and upgrades of licenses were tied to standards-based PDP processes overseen by teams of local educators, while induction, essentially a first-time version of the PDP, was also locally administered but centrally aligned. The focus was on standards-based, rather than standardized, policy implementation.

This standards- and performance-based emphasis of PI 34, along with a general distribution of responsibility to the program and district level, continues to shape the state's approach to monitoring and regulating licensure and program approval. The state program approval process still relies on EPPs to set up their own standards- and performance-based systems, and even allows them to alter or add to state standards. Teacher induction is no longer tied to a PDP, since the whole professional development system was dismantled by recent revisions to licensure, but it is still locally run by districts. And though the state's Educator Effectiveness (EE) system is not a subject of this report, it is revealing to note that even this state-mandated accountability and improvement process is treated as a district responsibility, and that the state does not even require all districts to use the state-adopted model. Overall, in overseeing the implementation of policy, the state provides standards, direction, and support rather than top-down mandates, an approach described by multiple stakeholders, including DPI staff, as one of "local control."

A Complex Set of Recent Policy Changes Shape the Current Context

Wisconsin's policies have undergone constant and significant revision in recent years. In general, policies governing teacher licensure and program approval are intended to ensure that all students have access to well-prepared teachers who can meet their learning needs. In Wisconsin, however, changes to these systems have been driven by simultaneous concerns about teacher shortages and teacher quality, and thus have followed a bifurcated pattern in which regulations and requirements have been added in some areas and removed in others. This pattern has created competing influences on the knowledge and skills of the teacher workforce, with differential effects in school districts serving more advantaged and less advantaged students.

This pattern goes back to the establishment of the state's unified licensure and program approval system in PI 34. Even as the state was adopting PI 34 to further professionalize teaching—setting up the link between teacher standards, EPP program structures, and teacher licensure, which remains a strength of Wisconsin's system to this day—alternative teacher certification programs were being established in Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS).⁷³ These programs put teachers into classrooms before they completed all of the requirements laid out in PI 34, effectively circumventing the system. MPS, the state's largest and most diverse district, was also the focus of experimentation with school vouchers and charter schools in the 1990s, revealing another ongoing pattern in education policy: When regulations and requirements are removed, the effects often fall upon the state's most vulnerable students.⁷⁴

The PI 34 system remained in place through 2015 as contradictory policy changes continued. Alternative certification was further expanded, particularly in Milwaukee, where Teach for America and The New Teacher Project began operating in 2009.⁷⁵ While these routes aimed to get more

teachers into classrooms, they also reduced the expectations for knowledge and skills to be mastered before individuals took on full teaching responsibilities and led to higher rates of teacher turnover. Meanwhile, Act 10 limited teachers' collective bargaining rights and pension benefits, a move that caused a spike in teacher attrition and led to reduced interest in teaching careers, as described above.⁷⁶ However, it was also in 2011 that the legislature added the FoRT as a requirement for elementary and special education licensure, an assessment that would later be shown to have low pass rates overall and disproportionately low pass rates for candidates of color.⁷⁷

Competing purposes in state policy became even more clear in 2015. That year, while the DPI adopted the edTPA as a statewide teacher candidate performance assessment to ensure quality across different programs and pathways, a committee of the legislature, focused on addressing rural teacher shortages, created a proposal to allow anyone with a bachelor's degree to receive a teaching license.⁷⁸ This proposal was eventually watered down, leading only to the addition of a new teaching permit pathway for career-changing professionals who receive 100 hours of alternative-type preparation and pass content-area tests.⁷⁹ Even so, the contradictory direction of these efforts exemplified the sometimes countervailing influences that operate on education policy in Wisconsin, where teacher preparation and licensure requirements are shaped by both the independently elected state superintendent of public instruction, who leads the DPI, and the state legislature.

Starting in 2016, the DPI began making a series of changes to licensure—based in part on recommendations from state workgroups made up of educators, administrators, DPI staff, and representatives of statewide education organizations—which were aimed at removing barriers to entry into teaching without compromising teachers' preparation. The first round of changes created a licensure route for retired educators, allowed current teachers to add new license areas by passing exams, and made it easier for districts to retain substitute and emergency-certified teachers.⁸⁰ The second round expanded reciprocity for out-of-state license holders, eliminated basic skills and GPA requirements for initial licensure, and allowed alternative demonstrations of content knowledge in lieu of subject matter tests.⁸¹ These changes to licensure assessment systems put Wisconsin out in front of an emerging, nationwide conversation around offering multiple pathways for demonstrating required licensure competencies.⁸²

Then, in 2017, the legislature passed Act 59, the state's 2017–19 budget, which implemented lifetime teaching licenses, the term “lifetime” referring to the removal of all professional development requirements for license renewals and upgrades. This was a key event in shaping the state's policy context, carried out by the administration of then-Governor Scott Walker and the state legislature with the stated intent of addressing teacher shortages.⁸³ Act 59 completely upended the previous licensure and program approval system. It also eliminated the DPI's role in licensure renewal and dismantled the state's long-standing and highly developed PDP process. In addition, anticipating a lower workload for the DPI after these changes, Act 59 cut the agency's staffing.

After the passage of Act 59, a revision of PI 34 was needed to bring it into compliance with statute, and the DPI used this opportunity to completely rewrite the chapter in 2018.⁸⁴ The changes were comprehensive. This rewrite not only implemented the current four-tier licensure system, but also

created new “Elementary and Middle” (k–9) and “Middle and High” (4–12) licensure grade spans and consolidated subject area licenses to five categories: computer science, English and language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Any one of these would have been a major change by itself. Yet the rewrite also revised the state’s teacher standards to align with the latest version of the InTASC standards and revised program approval to create a single process for all programs, eliminating previous distinctions between programs based at IHEs and those run by other providers (e.g., nonprofits; school districts; and Cooperative Educational Service Agencies, or CESAs⁸⁵).⁸⁶ The streamlining of program approval also reduced specified admissions requirements,⁸⁷ eliminated general education requirements,⁸⁸ simplified candidate and program evaluation,⁸⁹ and reduced the required number of student teacher clinical evaluations from four to three while adding a virtual observation option. With this new process in place, all EPPs in the state were required to reapply for approval.

Still, all of these changes represent only part of the story of recent revisions to licensure and program approval (see Table 1). In 2019, the state added a new reciprocity route to licensure for out-of-state license holders with a year of experience, or two semesters of Wisconsin experience. The state also created an alternative course of study and assessment process in lieu of the FoRT, but only for special education candidates, a change that was implemented by a revision to PI 34 in 2020. The same year, a change to statute offered programs the option of providing alternatives to the previously required full-day, full-semester student teaching experience requirement by allowing the approval of equivalent experiences by the SPI.⁹⁰ Also in 2020, the DPI removed the statewide performance assessment requirement for demonstrating pedagogical knowledge for licensure—the edTPA—in a change set to take effect on July 1 but carried out in March by an emergency executive order related to the COVID-19 pandemic (see report addendum).⁹¹

Takeaways From Recent Policy Changes in Licensure and Program Approval

Considering all these changes together, there are several important takeaways worth highlighting. First, the number of changes shows that the state has been active in making moves to address teacher workforce issues. Second, the sheer volume of change provides a sense of the unsettled nature of the licensure and program approval policy space, which has implications for educator and state staff capacity to absorb and implement recommended future changes. Third, and most importantly for the purposes of this report, an assessment of this policy landscape, based on the assumption that licensure and program approval systems should produce a diverse and well-prepared teacher workforce to serve all students, must conclude that this raft of recent changes does not yet represent a coherent strategy to reach this goal.

As an example of this lack of coherence, consider developments in licensure assessments. Since 2014, the state has implemented the FoRT and edTPA as licensure requirements, removed the Praxis Core test as a requirement, created an alternative assessment for subject matter licensure tests, then removed the FoRT requirement for some teachers, then removed the edTPA as a requirement for all teachers, though EPPs can still use it as a demonstration of pedagogical knowledge. This collection of actions seems uncoordinated, driven by a mix of motives rather than a vision of teacher

Table 1
Timeline of Recent Changes to Licensure and Program Approval in Wisconsin

Year	Change
2000	PI 34 created from PI 3 and PI 4
2004	PI 34 fully implemented
2011	Act 10 limits teacher collective bargaining and increases pension payments Act 166 creates Educator Effectiveness (EE) system, requires Foundations of Reading Test (FoRT) for elementary and special education teachers, and requires EPP data reporting
2013	First EPP Annual Report, as required by Act 166, produced by DPI
2014	FoRT requirement implemented, as required by Act 166
2015	edTPA adopted for demonstration of pedagogical knowledge (consequential in 2016–17)
2016	Changes to PI 34 allow retired educators to obtain licenses and current teachers to add new license areas by testing, and create flexibility in hiring substitute/emergency-certified teachers
2017	Changes to PI 34 create new license with stipulations options to replace emergency licenses and permits, expand reciprocity, eliminate basic skills test and GPA requirements for licensure, and allow alternative demonstrations of content knowledge in lieu of subject matter tests Act 59 creates lifetime licenses and makes related changes, also creates the Teacher Development Program and the Rural School Teacher Talent Program
2018	PI 34 brought into compliance with Act 59, implementing the current four-tier licensure system; expanding grade spans; consolidating subject areas for 4–12 licenses; updating standards; and creating a single, streamlined program approval process for all EPPs
2019	Act 43 grants Tier II provisional licenses to out-of-state license holders who have 1 year of experience under that license or 2 semesters under a Wisconsin license Act 44 removes the FoRT requirement for special education licensure if candidates complete an alternative course of study/assessment Act 35 expands the Minority Teacher Loan program statewide and expands eligible populations
2020	Act 84 creates alternatives to the full days/full semester student teaching requirement Change to PI 34 implementing Act 44's FoRT alternative goes into effect Change to PI 34 removes the performance assessment (edTPA) requirement

quality. It is not clear that there is a deliberate vision for how to balance a desire that candidates demonstrate their competence in teaching with flexibility in how they do so, wide agreement on core competencies or assessment methods, or strategies to mitigate against the potential for uneven implementation across EPPs that can accompany increased flexibility.

Another such example can be found in the capacity of the state to implement current and potential changes. Act 59 cut the DPI staff by five full-time positions at a time when the agency was tasked with implementing new licensure and program approval systems and supporting educators through the transition. Additionally, the switch to lifetime licenses, which was supposed to reduce the DPI's workload, still requires background checks and employment verification, which are processed by the DPI. Cutting the agency while increasing demands upon it seems counterproductive and has created

some issues. DPI staff and leadership expressed a desire to improve the agency’s web presence and response time to public questions. DPI program approval liaisons noted that moving EPPs toward continuous improvement required more time than is available. The DPI has at times had to rely on temporary staff to process licensure applications. The situation has put the DPI in a reactive mode in recent years. “For my team,” David DeGuire explained, “we have spent most of our time implementing changes to law and changes to rule,” limiting opportunities to take the initiative in addressing other challenges.

Overall, the many recent changes to licensure and program approval have produced systems in which entry into the teaching profession is possible through a variety of routes that require different levels of preparation and—in some cases—no preparation. In addition, the switch to lifetime licenses, in removing professional development requirements, reduced statewide expectations for support of teachers, including novice teachers. Wisconsin educators, including some interviewed for this project, have described these recent changes as steps toward the de-professionalization of teaching; interviewees’ characterizations of lifetime licensure spanned an entirely negative range, with “unfortunate” marking one end and “a bit terrifying” the other.⁹² As is illustrated below in the detailed descriptions of the current systems of licensure and program approval, a main outcome of this unsettled policy context thus far has been the creation of potential for greater variability in teacher and preparation program quality, which in turn may exacerbate shortages, inequitable distribution of qualified teachers, and already large achievement gaps.

Teacher Licensure and Pathways

Licensure Tiers and Pathways

In Wisconsin's system, licensure is intended to attest that a teacher has completed an approved program—demonstrating competence in all standards and requirements and preservice clinical experiences—and has passed all required assessments. The current licensure system still retains the standards- and performance-based foundation of the original PI 34, but with added variability and reduced or deferred requirements, particularly in the first tier of “licenses with stipulations.” The current licensure system consists of four tiers:

- **Tier I Licenses With Stipulations** (and other short-term licensure options): These include 1- and 3-year emergency-style licenses and substitute licenses. The 1-year license options are for initial licensure candidates who have not met all educator preparation program (EPP) requirements and for bachelor's degree holders in alternative certification routes. The 3-year options are for licensed Wisconsin educators adding subject areas or grade spans. This tier also includes substitute, guest, and charter school teacher licenses. Tier I licenses have taken the place of emergency-style licenses and permits.
- **Tier II Provisional Licenses:** A first-time, 3-year, renewable license for EPP completers; for candidates seeking licenses based on reciprocity, equivalency, and American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence routes; and for those upgrading Tier I licenses. The provisional license is convertible to a lifetime license or renewable without limit. Districts must provide orientation, support, and a licensed and trained mentor for teachers on provisional licenses with fewer than 3 years of experience. There is no professional development required for renewal of a Tier II license or upgrade to a Tier III license.
- **Tier III Lifetime Licenses:** A lifetime license can be obtained by Tier II provisional license holders who have successfully completed six semesters of Wisconsin teaching experience. A background check is required every 5 years to maintain a Tier III license, along with proof of continuing employment in education. There is no professional development required for renewal of a Tier III license.
- **Tier IV Master Educator Licenses:** A license upgrade for Tier III license holders who earn National Board Certification, or for those who earn a master's degree and complete a formal assessment process to receive a state Master Teacher designation.⁹³

While the four-tier system seems relatively simple to describe, much detail about variations of the license types is left out of the summary provided above, and so it does not really illustrate the variety of pathways into the classroom for would-be teachers in Wisconsin. A few examples, therefore, serve to provide a sense of this variety:

- **Program completers who meet all state licensure requirements** receive a **Tier II provisional license**.
- **Program completers who have not met all state requirements** can be hired by a district and receive a **Tier I license**, renewable while working toward or completing state requirements and assessments, with repeated and unlimited renewals allowed, by district request, with additional progress toward requirements or passing assessments.
- **Out-of-state license holders** can, with 1 year of teaching experience on that license, obtain a **Tier II provisional license**; those without experience can obtain a **Tier I license**, teach for two semesters in Wisconsin schools, and upgrade to a **Tier II license**.
- **Out-of-state program completers** who demonstrate content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge by assessment can receive a **Tier II provisional license**.
- **American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) program completers** can receive a **Tier II provisional license** through the “Online Only Preparation With No Student Teaching Experience” route.
- **Bachelor’s degree holders** who are hired by a district receive a 1-year **Tier I license** and can renew that license while working toward completing program requirements and attempting or completing licensure assessments, or with a district request specifying that all requirements will be completed. There is a 3-year limit on such licenses for special education teachers.
- **Bachelor’s degree holders with 5 years’ work experience** in selected subjects (ASL, art, computer science, foreign language, mathematics, music, science, or tech ed) can complete a 100-hour training program, pass a subject area test, and receive a 2-year **Professional Teaching Permit** (an option outside of the tier system) to teach grades 9–12, with supervision by a licensed teacher, renewable for 5-year intervals.⁹⁴
- **Teacher candidates at institutions of higher education (IHEs) selected to work as interns** can teach for 1 year under a nonrenewable **Tier I intern license**, with supervision from a licensed teacher. This license is utilized by participants in the **Wisconsin Improvement Program**, through which students enrolled in EPPs receive full-time, one-semester placements with 50% teaching loads, which include stipends.⁹⁵ According to the DPI, the program is popular with EPPs, though the number of candidates ready for this route, in the subject areas that districts need, is lower than district demand. A new use of the intern path is the **Institute for Urban Education**, a University of Wisconsin System initiative housed at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and open to students across the system, which provides fall semester clinical placements and spring semester internships in urban elementary classrooms. Starting in Racine Unified School District in 2020–21, the program aims to eventually partner with all nine urban school districts identified for assistance under the Wisconsin State Equity Plan.⁹⁶

Required Assessments for Licensure

Wisconsin requires that EPP completers seeking Tier II licenses demonstrate subject area competency, knowledge of reading instruction (for elementary and special education teachers), and competency in pedagogy, three areas also required to be a part of EPP assessment systems.⁹⁷ These competencies can be demonstrated in the following ways:

- **Subject area competency** can be demonstrated by passing scores on an exam (Praxis II or, for world languages, ACTFL content area tests), by a 3.0 or higher GPA in the content area, or by a portfolio assessment through the EPP.
- **Competency in reading** is demonstrated by a passing score on the Wisconsin Foundations of Reading Test (FoRT), which is required for elementary-level teachers. As of July 1, 2020, special education teachers, formerly required to pass the FoRT, can substitute additional preparation and an alternative assessment.
- **Pedagogical proficiency** is assessed by EPPs, as required by PI 34. Previously, demonstration of pedagogical proficiency required a passing score on a research-based performance assessment,⁹⁸ which in Wisconsin was the edTPA. This requirement was suspended in March 2020 and removed from PI 34 as of July 2020, though EPPs are still permitted to require the assessment for program completion.

Program completion also requires a GPA of 2.75 for undergraduate programs and 3.0 for postbaccalaureate programs; alternative measures of performance can apply to 10% of each cohort.

The system of required assessments reflects the status of the licensure system as a whole: There has been significant change of late, there are multiple pathways, and there is potential for a lack of consistency. As described above, Wisconsin's basic skills test requirement was eliminated in 2017 and an alternative option was created for demonstrating subject area knowledge through a portfolio.⁹⁹ The performance assessment (edTPA) requirement has also been eliminated, though because EPPs must still assess pedagogical knowledge, the edTPA remains a local option.¹⁰⁰ Special education candidates can now complete an alternative assessment in lieu of the FoRT.¹⁰¹ Putting aside the specific reasoning behind any of these changes, it must be emphasized that the only remaining state-required assessment for licensure that cannot be met through an alternative demonstration of competency is the FoRT, required only for elementary candidates. While flexibility in demonstrating required competencies can serve multiple purposes, this level of flexibility raises the question, given the potential for inconsistency, of whether all candidates are truly being required to meet a common standard.

Another opening for inconsistency is created by the workings of Tier I licensure. The subject area, reading, and pedagogical competency requirements described above apply only to EPP completers who are candidates for Tier II provisional licenses. Individuals who are granted 1-year, Tier I licenses with stipulations, such as teachers completing programs on the job in alternative certification pathways, do not have to meet such requirements in order to begin working as teachers of record,

and need only attempt to pass the assessments to seek licensure renewal.¹⁰² With the significant increase in the use of emergency-style certifications in the state, this different standard for Tier I licensed teachers not only raises questions about common expectations for new educators, but also raises significant equity concerns. Tier I licensure puts teachers into classrooms before they demonstrate they have met state standards and provides options for keeping them there long-term without requiring that they ever do so, and this happens disproportionately in high-need schools with high concentrations of students from low-income families and students of color.

Required Clinical Experiences for Wisconsin Teachers

Wisconsin requires that EPPs provide both pre-student teaching and student teaching clinical experiences for candidates seeking Tier II licensure. Student teaching is addressed in state statute subdivision 118.19 (3) (a), which makes EPP approval contingent on all candidates being required to “complete student teaching consisting of full days for a full semester following the daily schedule and semester calendar of the cooperating school or the equivalent, as determined by the state superintendent.” The latter section, starting with “or the equivalent,” was added in 2019 to provide more flexibility in student teaching assignments. The same statute directs the state superintendent to lay out the requirements for student teaching, which are found in PI 34.023, and which also set expectations for pre-student teaching. An exception to these requirements is provided for candidates in alternative certification programs teaching on Tier I licenses with stipulations; their teaching experience can be substituted for preservice clinical experience.¹⁰³ The following requirements apply to pre-student teaching and student teaching:

- **Pre-student teaching** experiences are supervised and must be developmental and take place in a variety of settings, with at least two formal evaluations relating to the state teaching standards and required assessments.
- **Student teaching** requirements build on those for pre-student teaching and must also be developmental in nature, and though a variety of settings is not required, opportunities to work with students with disabilities are. Student teaching requires a minimum of three observations by a program supervisor as well as three evaluations by a cooperating teacher or supervisor, with the cooperating teacher required to complete at least one of the evaluations. The teacher candidate, cooperating teacher, and supervisor are required to meet to discuss the evaluations.
- **Cooperating teachers** and “school-based supervisors” must be licensed, must have volunteered for the role, must have 3 years’ experience (including 1 year at the current site), and must have “completed training in the supervision of clinical students” and the Wisconsin state teaching standards.
- **EPP faculty** supervising student teachers must have 3 years’ experience in pre-k-12 settings in teaching, administration, or pupil services, or the equivalent.

Required Induction for Wisconsin Teachers

While most of the attention in this report is focused on preparation and licensure, new teacher induction is connected to both, addressed in PI 34, and part of the story of how these systems have changed in Wisconsin. PI 34 provides few details on induction programs and does not even use the term “induction,” though it does require that districts provide new teachers with “ongoing orientation and support which is collaboratively developed by teachers, administrators, and other school district stakeholders” as well as “a licensed mentor who successfully completed a mentor training program approved by the department.”¹⁰⁴ Induction is a district responsibility in Wisconsin, consistent with the state’s localized approach to policy implementation, with no state financial support except for the state’s Peer Mentoring and Review Grants, which provide up to \$25,000 for 1 year and are available to consortia of CESAs or districts. The DPI supports district efforts by actions such as creating a *Teacher Induction and Mentoring Guidebook* and instructional modules that lay out mentor training and induction seminars, the latter linked to the state’s Educator Effectiveness (EE) system.¹⁰⁵

Still, for all the DPI’s efforts in this area, the state has a limited role in, influence on, and knowledge about induction program quality. According to one DPI staff member, anecdotal evidence indicates that “quality of induction and mentoring varies wildly from district to district,” while other interviewees expressed concern that not all new teachers were assigned mentors and that differential district funding levels, an equity issue in and of itself, were contributing to uneven induction program quality. Some of the concerns around the quality of induction may stem from the elimination of the Professional Development Plan (PDP) system, which required educators teaching on initial licenses to participate in professional development under the guidance of an “initial educator team” made up of a teacher, an administrator, and a representative from an IHE. Novice educators had to create a PDP based on the state teacher standards, document their progress on that plan, and have the plan reviewed and approved by the team before they could advance to the professional educator license.¹⁰⁶ When the PDP system was eliminated in 2018, much of what had served as new teacher induction in Wisconsin went with it.

Aside from potential quality issues, it is also important to point out that even the sparse induction requirements laid out by PI 34 do not apply to all new teachers. Only teachers holding Tier II provisional licenses (and with less than 3 years of experience) along with some special categories of Tier I license holders (“Guest Teacher” license holders and Tier I special education license holders) must receive “ongoing orientation and support.” No other Tier I license holders are included. This sets up a situation in which EPP completers holding Tier II licenses receive this support, while bachelor’s degree holders teaching under Tier I licenses, who have not yet completed an EPP, are not required to be provided with the same. Given the growth of emergency-style licensure in the state, the expanded role that Tier I licensure has taken on in educator preparation, and the demonstrated effects of induction on teacher retention and effectiveness,¹⁰⁷ these uneven requirements for novice educators should raise concerns.

The Unclear Status of Alternative Certification in Wisconsin

The picture of traditional versus alternative educator preparation in Wisconsin is a complex one. In many ways, the line between traditional and alternative preparation programs is being blurred—sometimes by design, other times by circumstance. The 2018 revision of PI 34 eliminated the distinction between traditional and alternative pathways in program approval, and DPI staff emphasized the importance of this change, though the state’s Higher Education Act Title II reporting and EPP annual reports still separate programs by institution type.¹⁰⁸ Wisconsin Title II data from 2016–17 list a total of 41 educator preparation providers, with 33 designated as “traditional” and 8 as “alternative, not IHE-based.” The state’s 2018 EPP report gives a similar list of 8 alternative programs and 35 based at IHEs. According to the Title II data, most of the teachers prepared in Wisconsin come through traditional routes: Of 2,795 completers in 2016–17, only 156, or 5.6%, are reported as completing alternative, not IHE-based programs.¹⁰⁹

Part of the complexity of the alternative certification picture is that these numbers do not appear to accurately represent the number of teachers who complete alternative preparation programs in any given year, or even the number of alternative preparation programs operating in the state. Setting aside for a moment the state’s efforts to remove the traditional versus alternative distinction from the program approval process, alternative preparation programs are defined in this report as programs in which teachers are enrolled in preparation and completing state requirements while simultaneously serving as teachers of record. There seem to be more than eight such programs in the state, including a number of district–IHE partnerships preparing paraprofessional and district employees and several other programs that refer to themselves as “residencies” even though they require their candidates to act as teachers of record rather than placing them under the guidance of an expert mentor who fills that role.¹¹⁰ And if the number of alternative-type programs is being underreported, it is almost certain the number of teachers completing such programs is also being underreported, as is the percentage of total completers they represent.

Upon examination, the source of the discrepancy turns out to be straightforward: In state and federal data reporting, the state classifies any candidate prepared through an IHE-affiliated program as having been traditionally prepared. For example, consider the situation of Teach for America (TFA). Operating in partnership with Alverno College, TFA has approximately 120 corps members in the state, all teaching under Tier I licenses while working toward Tier II licensure.¹¹¹ Because these TFA teachers are Alverno teacher candidates, they are counted as enrollees in a traditional IHE-based program rather than in an alternative program. The same situation appears to be playing out at IHE-based EPPs across the state, as well as in school districts running programs in partnership with IHEs. Clearly, if all of the teachers in IHE-affiliated alternative programs are being counted as traditional candidates, the data are not accurately capturing the status of educator preparation in the state.

As a result of this data system glitch, it is not clear in Wisconsin which teachers are enrolled in, or completing, programs in which they are teachers of record while also being prepared for teaching. Compounding the issue, districts are not required to report to the DPI on the EPP or route in which

their Tier I teachers are enrolled. DeGuire, after pointing out this lack of required district reporting, also emphasized some additional data gaps:

I would love to have data on enrollment from all of our prep programs, and I'd love to have it by gender and race and age to look at who's coming into our programs, who's getting through, and then . . . start asking questions about that. But that's not data we have right now.

As it stands, then, current data reporting does not provide the whole story on how the state's teacher workforce is being prepared, and so it would be advisable for the state to consider how it should distinguish and classify different types of EPPs and track enrollment and completion across those types. Research has demonstrated that turnover is higher for teachers who enter the profession without adequate preparation, including those entering through alternative certification pathways, and that teachers who enter through these routes are less effective with students when they begin teaching than teachers who have been fully prepared before entry.¹¹² Accurate data on which teachers are in which types of pathways, where they end up teaching, and how long they stay would give the state vital information that bears on multiple workforce issues.

Alternative route programs are connected in one way or another to all the teacher workforce challenges facing Wisconsin. Examining their role in educator preparation is key to identifying the path to improvement in the preparation and effectiveness of that workforce. Educators interviewed for this report, noting the lack of teachers of color in the preparation pipeline, also referred to advantages alternative programs have in recruiting diverse pools of candidates. If backed by data, this assertion would conform to national trends showing that candidates of color, along with candidates from low-income backgrounds, frequently choose paid pathways into teaching to defer the cost of preparation.¹¹³ And yet, if alternative programs are indeed contributing to workforce diversity, the next question is how long these teachers are staying in classrooms—that is, whether the contribution to diversity lasts for the long term. Another set of questions would concern the effectiveness of alternatively prepared teachers, since many of these programs are operating in districts singled out by the state as being most affected by the equity gap in teacher distribution.

Highlighting these issues is not, however, intended to dismiss the work that some districts and IHEs are doing to meet the needs of both candidates and students, and to diversify the profession, through nontraditional preparation models. Alverno College offers a “Paraprofessional to Teacher” program that includes a path both to teacher licensure and to a bachelor's degree for associate degree holders who are working paraprofessionals. This 48-month program is not a traditional pathway, but neither is it an alternative model, as it includes the full 18-week preservice student teaching experience. All the candidates in a recent cohort were first-generation college students bilingual in English and Spanish. Another program, the School Based Teacher Academy of Racine (STAR) program, which uses an alternative preparation model, has attracted the attention of the DPI and other providers. Formed in a close partnership between the University of Wisconsin-Parkside and the Racine Unified School District, this 2-year postbaccalaureate pathway for special education teachers includes year-round coursework, tuition support from the district, mentoring, and release

time to attend classes and clinical experiences, and it requires a 3-year post-program commitment to the district.

In the end, the most definitive conclusion that can be reached about alternative preparation in Wisconsin is that it needs to be better understood. A full accounting of the status of alternative routes to licensure would require the state to make a meaningful distinction between preservice and on-the-job preparation and to gather data on both pathways. The number of IHE-based providers working in the alternative preparation space and the rise of the use of emergency-style licensure in Wisconsin add urgency to the need for this additional data, which could also contribute to the state's ability to learn from varied models of preparation. Before that can be determined, however, more needs to be known about how different pathways affect the workforce and how well they prepare candidates to teach all k-12 students effectively.

Overall Assessment of Licensure

In general, the new licensure system created by Act 59 in 2017 and the revision of PI 34 in 2018 have made it easier to obtain, maintain, and upgrade a teaching license, with multiple options for demonstrating competence in requirements and for entering the profession. The costs of this flexibility are manifest in the varied levels of preparation required for licensure, including routes requiring no preservice preparation at all, as well as the lack of any meaningful common licensure assessment system. Reciprocity routes to licensure are available for out-of-state program completers and license holders who have not met Wisconsin standards. Tier I emergency-style routes into teaching, used by alternative certification programs, require only a bachelor's degree and no preservice preparation or in-service induction. While Tier I licensed teachers must complete all requirements and assessments to upgrade to Tier II licensure, they are permitted to do so while serving as teachers of record, with their on-the-job time in classrooms standing in for preservice student teaching experiences. Furthermore, Tier I licenses can be continually renewed, with the completion of Tier II requirements deferred, if a teacher makes demonstrated progress in an EPP or by district request, and there is no mandated limitation on such renewals except for special education teachers, who are limited to 3 years on an emergency-style license.

Along with these streamlined routes into the classroom, the new system has other features that may foster inconsistency. Since new teacher induction and ongoing professional development are no longer tied to licensure, both are left to districts, with few statewide guardrails to ensure comparable quality across geographic areas with different resources and needs. The wide variability in this system creates openings for uneven preparation, induction, and professional development. Since teacher shortages and inequitable access to qualified teachers are already serious issues in the state, any such gaps in preparedness will, in all probability, disproportionately impact students of color and students from low-income families. Additionally, since research shows that fully prepared teachers are more likely to be effective and to remain in teaching, sending underprepared educators into high-need schools can exacerbate both achievement gaps and shortages.

Teacher Standards and Preparation Program Approval

In Wisconsin's system, the completion of an approved preparation program signals that a teacher candidate has demonstrated proficiency in all state standards and met other state requirements.¹¹⁴ As with licensure, the program approval process in Wisconsin is under the purview of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction but is carried out by the Teacher Education, Professional Development, and Licensing (TEPDL) team at the DPI. Wisconsin does not require accreditation for educator preparation programs (EPPs) outside of the state's own program approval process, though if programs are offered by an "institution," meaning a 4-year IHE, the IHE must be accredited.

The original PI 34 created this system (also addressed in Wis. Stat. Sect 118.19) with the explicit intention of shifting licensure and program approval away from input-based qualifications and toward a standards- and performance-based process. As the DPI described the system, "EPPs have the flexibility to develop distinct programs reflecting their unique missions, goals, and structures," but must "provide performance-based evidence that their programs prepare educators who can meet the . . . standards established by Chapter PI 34."¹¹⁵ For candidates, this performance-based model means that their proficiency on standards and requirements is assessed through a series of program-developed assessments. For programs, the performance-based model emphasizes the link between state standards and requirements on one side and demonstrated candidate proficiency on the other, rather than tallying up required credits or coursework.

Many features of the system were carried over when PI 34 was revised, but there were some changes made, as described above, including the removal of previously specified requirements governing admissions policies, program self-evaluation, and candidate portfolios, and the reduction of the number of candidate clinical evaluations from four to three.¹¹⁶ The most important changes, however, were the creation of a single approval process for all programs and the update of state teaching standards. The single approval process applies to all programs regardless of their institutional type or delivery method, including "all undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, graduate, and non-degreed educator preparation programs in Wisconsin."¹¹⁷ This eliminated the previous distinction between traditional and alternative programs (including the previously required focus on high-need areas or workforce diversity for alternative programs¹¹⁸), though the program approval process still maintains some distinctions between IHE-based and non-IHE-based programs, mostly around facilities, faculty, and budgetary resources.¹¹⁹

The teacher standards were aligned with the 2011 InTASC standards, the most recent version. The Wisconsin standards, as laid out in PI 34, cover 10 areas of teacher practice: (1) pupil development, (2) learning differences, (3) learning environments, (4) content knowledge, (5) application of content, (6) assessment, (7) planning for instruction, (8) instructional strategies, (9) professional learning and ethical practice, and (10) leadership and collaboration. Each area is accompanied by a one-sentence description (the full set of standards can be found in Appendix B of this report). The alignment of the Wisconsin state standards with the InTASC standards is a close one, almost word for word. Along with

these general standards, Wisconsin has created Licensure Program Content Guidelines for each type of teaching, administrative, and pupil services license.¹²⁰

Because the updated Wisconsin teacher standards are aligned to the most recent iteration of the InTASC standards, the state standards share the InTASC standards' strengths. First, they are grounded in research, including seminal work available at the time the InTASC standards were developed,¹²¹ and they "support a view of teaching as complex and responsive to students' developmental and learning pathways."¹²² Second, the InTASC standards have been adopted by states and EPPs across the country, putting Wisconsin in good company.¹²³ On the downside, the state's standards also share a weakness of the InTASC standards—namely, that the last InTASC update was in 2011. This means that the Wisconsin standards, though just revised in 2018, reflect a conception of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for teachers that has not kept up with the rapid progress of research on the science of learning and development (SoLD) in the past few years.

A more up-to-date framework for teacher preparation and practice, grounded in the principles of whole child learning and development, could build off the advances in research on SoLD and their implications for classrooms, schools, and educational systems.¹²⁴ Additions to current standards could include the integration of social and emotional learning (SEL) skills and mindsets with cognitive and content-area learning. Another key area of emphasis could be intrinsic motivation, including the importance of purpose in learning and the role of student choice in instruction. Finally, trauma-informed practices and culturally responsive pedagogy could be added to teachers' repertoire of skills and knowledge, along with the employment of educative and restorative behavioral supports to create welcoming, relationship-based learning environments that are supportive for all students' learning.

Overall, then, even though the Wisconsin state teaching standards were updated only 3 years ago, there are some areas in which they are out of alignment with the more recent and comprehensive account of learning presented by SoLD. The current state standards do reflect the active and collaborative nature of learning and the variation inherent in development, and they address still-relevant topics such as content-specific pedagogies and formative assessment. Yet because these standards are somewhat out of date, they do not contribute as much as they could to Wisconsin's teachers' preparation to meet all students' needs. And even though Wisconsin EPPs do have the flexibility to modify standards and add more recent material, there is no requirement that they do so at all, much less consistently across programs or in ways aligned to a strong research base.

A Standards-Based, Not Standardized, System

The DPI, when reviewing EPPs for the state approval process, puts particular emphasis on examining how state standards are integrated into programs' performance assessment systems. Even with this focus, however, there is significant flexibility in applying the state standards. The flexibility shows how the state system is standards-based without being standardized. Part of this flexibility is provided by the

high-level form of the standards themselves. The 10 InTASC-aligned standards, as laid out in PI 34, are not accompanied by any further descriptions or explanations, nor are there any state-provided guidance documents laying out required knowledge, skills, and dispositions for each standard. This arrangement stands in contrast to the InTASC standards themselves, which are embedded in a document listing performances, essential knowledge, and critical dispositions for each standard.¹²⁵ Contrasting examples are also provided by neighboring Illinois¹²⁶ and Minnesota,¹²⁷ both of which include required knowledge and performances for each standard in administrative code.

In Wisconsin, EPPs are responsible for filling in these specifics themselves, and they have several options for doing so. One such option is for programs to “[adopt] the educator standards . . . as written.”¹²⁸ A second option is for programs to “modify the standards to reflect the missions, vision, and philosophy of the educator preparation program.” Programs may also “adopt additional standards beyond the standards.”¹²⁹ Finally, even beyond the flexibility of modifying or adding to the state standards, an EPP can “choose to develop its own program approval standards” so long as it identifies “where the [state] standards . . . are integrated within the educator preparation program.”¹³⁰ With EPPs able to adopt, change, add to, or even create standards, DPI program approval reviews place far less emphasis on the form of the standards employed and far more on the function of these standards, aiming to ensure that they are clearly and adequately assessed by EPPs.

Though he emphasized that all the state standards must be integrated into an EPP’s program of study regardless of other changes or additions the EPP makes in standards adoption, DeGuire still described these requirements as including “tremendous flexibility” for EPPs. A faculty member at Alverno College went even further, stating that “DPI is agnostic as to what standards” programs use. An example illustrates the point: In the 2018 rewrite of PI 34, the DPI shifted to the newer InTASC standards in part because, according to DeGuire, “Most of our prep programs were already using the updated standards, so we were kind of catching up to them.” When the new state standards were adopted, “it didn’t seem like a big deal,” according to Kathy Lake, a Professor of Education at Alverno College. She explained, echoing DeGuire, that “Lots of prep programs were already using the [updated] InTASC standards.” That EPPs in Wisconsin were already using a new set of standards before the state even adopted them is an indicator of how much leeway is present in this system.

The Program Approval Process

The actual program approval process consists of the submission of reports to the DPI and site visits by DPI staff. Each EPP is assigned a DPI liaison.¹³¹ Liaisons work closely with EPPs to assist them in meeting requirements and in integrating the compliance aspects of the process with the program’s own improvement efforts. Jenna Buchner, an Education Consultant with TEPDL who serves as a liaison, described her role as “helping [EPPs] to understand what’s really required,” including “what they have to document for us for compliance, but [also] that their opportunities extend so far beyond with minimum expectations.” DPI liaisons emphasized that the system puts the responsibility for quality on “EPP leadership as opposed to program approval,” as one put it, in keeping with the state’s local control approach.

As DPI staff described it, their goal for program approval is that it spurs, and contributes to, continuous improvement at EPPs. They highlighted the annual review cycle and requirements for program self-evaluation as systemic features aligned with this goal. Even though they take their compliance role seriously, the DPI staff is more aligned with helping programs to meet requirements than with penalizing them for not doing so. As DeGuire put it when describing the staff's approach, "We make a commitment to work with each program to get to a 'yes.'" When a yes is not possible, as has happened on two occasions described by DPI staff, programs have been advised to withdraw their applications. Still, even as the staff emphasized their enthusiasm for fostering EPP continuous improvement, they also acknowledged that this approach is labor-intensive, a concern for an agency that has faced staff cuts and capacity issues in the wake of Act 59.

As the research for this report was being carried out, EPPs were making their way through the first round of reviews and approvals under the revised process, so there were no statewide data on their effectiveness, though interviewee responses were generally favorable. Dana Ryan from the University of Wisconsin-Parkside said, "DPI has done an excellent job of supporting IHEs." Pat Luebke at Alverno College expressed a similar sentiment, stating, "The people at DPI . . . want us to be successful." Kathy Lake, also at Alverno College, spoke favorably about "the annual visits from our liaison" when, as she described, "We reflect on changes we've made, we get to set goals, we get input." As for how EPPs themselves are responding, Kimberly Strike, a DPI Education Consultant and liaison, said almost all of her programs have been "a true delight to work with" and are "looking for those opportunities to change" provided by the approval process.

The system operates on 5-year cycles with yearly reviews and site visits. Programs work with DPI staff liaisons to electronically submit reports and supporting documentation, and to update these for each review. Initial approval requires submission of an EPP report consisting of five sections, which are based on the reporting requirements in PI 34: description of the entity, policies and practices; conceptual framework and standards; assessment system; collaboration; and documentation. These reports describe the programs' institutional features, including evidence of collaboration with local partners and of efforts to promote faculty and candidate diversity, though much of the focus is on programs' conceptual frameworks and standards- and performance-based assessment systems. In addition to the EPP report, a new license program report, which builds on the EPP report and draws on the same documentation, must be submitted for each individual program leading to a teaching, pupil services, or administrative license.

Programs are responsible for developing and describing the standards-aligned knowledge, skills, and dispositions that candidates will learn and for illustrating how candidates will demonstrate this learning. A key feature of program approval, and of the EPP report, is the conceptual framework, which includes the program's vision and philosophy as well as "what program completers should know (knowledge), be able to do (skills), and be committed to (dispositions)." These, in turn, "serve as the performance-based standards and performance tasks for all programs."¹³² A second key feature, the assessment system description, builds on the conceptual framework but focuses on evaluation of candidates' readiness for licensure "measured against the standards."¹³³ The

performance tasks described must be developmental in nature, multiple in number, and research-based, and they must allow candidates to demonstrate their level of proficiency.

DeGuire's description of the program approval process emphasized that programs must use these sections to draw a through line from standards to their assessment systems. "What we're looking for primarily are . . . performance assessments identified for each of the standards," he explained. "How they get there, what they teach, how they teach, we're not as concerned about as what are the students being assessed on." When Luebke described the program approval process, her account also showed this through line, getting at the essence of the approval process:

When we submit for program approval, . . . our program approval document indicates the standards on one end, then we will look at the knowledge, skills, and dispositions. What are the Alverno courses? What are the assignments? We put the detail in our program application and then DPI takes a look at it.

While the standards-to-assessments linkage is the central focus of program approval, the state requirements also include several other important leverage points for program structures and practices. These include:

- **Diversity of faculty and students:** Programs are required to "recruit, hire, and retain a diverse educator preparation faculty,"¹³⁴ as well as to "create, submit to the department, and implement a written plan and provide sufficient resources to recruit, admit, and retain a diverse student body."¹³⁵ According to the DPI, staff intend to make this diversity plan a focus of future program approval visits.
- **Collaboration:** Programs must provide evidence of "systematic, ongoing collaboration" with schools and districts and of relationships with the community and other local stakeholders.
- **Program evaluation:** Programs are required to describe how they will obtain information from program completers, employers, and "other relevant individuals" and then describe how they will use this information to inform program assessment. One source of information available to EPPs is data collected through the statewide Wisconsin Educator Development Support and Retention (WEDSR) Survey, which, among many functions, asks novice teachers to evaluate their preparation.¹³⁶ However, although EPPs can request these data, they are not required to access or utilize the information. The DPI has no access unless the programs share the data. These practices are addressed further in the recommendations below.

Once the EPP report is submitted, initial approval is granted or denied within 60 days.¹³⁷ After initial approval, the EPP enters a cycle of regular reviews and site visits, including on-site annual reviews in years 1 through 4 and a comprehensive review in year 5. For annual reviews, programs update their supporting documentation and prepare responses to questions about what they are learning, what changes they are making, and how their DPI liaison can provide support. For the comprehensive

review, programs update and resubmit their supporting documentation. The on-site comprehensive review leads to full approval. Maintaining full approval requires participation in a yearly onsite continuous review process, with ongoing updates to supporting documentation and pre-visit submissions describing trends in candidate assessment results and any program changes. If at any point a program is determined to be out of compliance, the DPI can require a program improvement plan, conduct an on-site comprehensive review, or deny approval.

Overall Assessment of Program Approval and Standards

The recently revised system of program approval, which the DPI designed in collaboration with state EPPs, includes features that are innovative, flexible, and responsive to EPP needs. At the same time, these very features can water down connections between standards and licensure, creating questions about program quality and candidate preparation. Because EPPs can use the state standards in a variety of ways, or even create their own standards, it is difficult to claim that the program approval process ensures that all programs are meeting the same expectations—even with the requirement that all state standards be embedded in each EPP’s program of study. Combined with the state’s lack of common assessments of candidate proficiency in teaching and the variety of pathways into the classroom that come with different sets of requirements, the overall result is a system that is not set up to guarantee that all teachers enter the classroom with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach all students well. When flexibility in program approval is taken in tandem with the weaknesses in data on various routes into classrooms, it is difficult to see how uneven program quality and outcomes can be monitored or addressed. And, as with variations in licensure, uneven program quality will likely have the most impact on the highest-need students and students of color while leaving teaching shortages and achievement gaps intact.

Recommendations

Wisconsin is a state with a reputation for quality and innovation in education. Yet the state also faces serious and ongoing achievement gaps as well as teacher shortages and attrition, declining educator preparation program (EPP) enrollment and increasing use of emergency-style licenses, disparities in access to prepared and experienced educators, and a lack of workforce diversity. Responses to these challenges have produced a decade of upheaval in education policy. Though they retain some of the standards- and performance-based foundation laid down 20 years ago, state licensure and program approval systems have undergone significant changes over this period. Driven by simultaneous concerns about teacher shortages and teacher quality, these changes have pulled licensure and program approval systems in different directions, but on balance they have eased professional requirements.

Flexibility added to licensure and program approval has both benefits and drawbacks. For licensure, multiple options for demonstrating competence in requirements and for entering the profession could create opportunities to expand and diversify the workforce. Yet the different levels of preparation required across licensure pathways, including some that require little or no preparation, make it difficult to ensure consistent teacher quality, a problem compounded by a licensure assessment system that does not require any common or comparable measures across all these pathways. For program approval, EPPs have the ability to take the initiative in applying or adapting state standards, and in creating content, structures, and assessments to meet local needs. On the other hand, the level of leeway that exists for programs, particularly in how they apply standards, raises serious questions about consistency of state expectations for EPPs.

The drawbacks of system flexibility in licensure and program approval, combined with holes in state data collection, make it challenging for the state to claim, or even really to know, that all programs and routes are implementing state requirements and standards consistently. In other words, the changes made to licensure and program approval in the past decade have opened possibilities for uneven program and teacher quality. Given the state's issues with achievement gaps and inequitable teacher distribution, any such inconsistencies in licensure and program approval will likely have the most significant effects on students of color and students from low-income families, as it is these students who are already disproportionately taught by less-prepared educators and teachers who are completing preparation requirements on the job.

Wisconsin's long history of leadership in developing and implementing performance- and standards-based educator preparation systems means that addressing these issues would be a matter of systemic adjustment rather than wholesale reform. Certainly, over time, some notable gaps have emerged that undermine the state's ability to ensure high-quality practice and broad access to education—the two hands, as described above (see Figure 5), are not always clapping—but the capacity for improvement is already present. The recommendations laid out here, which draw on examples from other states as well as the findings of related research, are intended as a source of ideas for meeting the challenges the state is facing in supporting the teacher pipeline and in

ensuring teacher quality. And while some of these recommendations also go beyond a singular focus on licensure and program approval to address aspects of teacher workforce policy, the intention is that this broader focus will help the state address not only the specific challenges described in this report, but also the general challenge of moving education systems closer to structures and practices aligned to up-to-date research findings from the science of learning and development (SoLD) and designed to meet all students' needs.

Summary of Recommendations

While the recommendations are laid out in detail below, a summary is provided here to offer a single reference point for readers. There are five recommendations in this section:

Recommendation 1: Strengthen preparation programs through updates to program approval and licensure

- Build upon past progress by implementing a modified statewide requirement for candidates to pass a valid and reliable capstone performance assessment for licensure. EPPs can be given the option of adopting either the edTPA or any equivalent, state-approved, standards-aligned assessment—including locally developed options—thereby maintaining both local flexibility and statewide consistency.
- Revise the state teacher standards, or add required guidance to existing standards, to align state expectations for teachers to the latest research on SoLD by adding topics such as support for social and emotional learning (SEL), emphasis on intrinsic motivation and purpose, and use of trauma-informed and healing-informed practice and educative and restorative behavioral supports.
- Ensure that EPPs are applying updated state standards consistently by requiring that any program-specific modifications to standards are consistent with research and professional consensus about responsible teaching practice aligned with up-to-date findings from SoLD.

Recommendation 2: Provide teaching incentives to improve teacher workforce supply, quality, and diversity

- Incentivize the creation of high-quality, high-retention teacher residencies in the state's nine highest-need districts, implemented through district–EPP partnerships. Through residency programs, candidates are financially supported to train in the classrooms of expert mentor teachers while they complete their preparation. Candidates then receive mentoring and commit to 3–5 years of teaching in the same high-need district in which they were trained.
- Increase accessibility and uptake of the Teacher Education Loan (TEL) and Minority Teacher Loan (MTL) programs by increasing funding, expanding eligibility requirements,

and broadening the types of schools at which graduates can teach while maintaining incentives for high-need schools, and, for the MTL program, focusing on recruiting diverse teachers by expanding subject-area requirements.

- Improve the distribution of qualified and experienced educators, and the quality of mentoring and teacher leadership in high-need districts, by expanding the incentive program for National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) teaching in high-need schools, raising the yearly amount of the grants received by these NBCTs, removing the 9-year limit on grant payments, and tying these upgrades to NBCTs' participation in mentoring for teacher candidates and novice teachers.
- Provide administrative support for the expansion of already-existing Educators Rising chapters in the state, which have already begun offering preservice teacher experience and dual-credit options with EPPs to high school students interested in becoming Wisconsin teachers, and have so far done so without dedicated administrative staffing.

Recommendation 3: Improve data use for continuous system and program improvement

- Improve state data by requiring EPPs to report the number and demographics of candidates enrolled in and completing each program by pathway, not only by institution. States can then use those data to track graduation, employment, and retention rates and make the data available in a timely and accessible format through a dashboard system.
- Ensure that the Office of Socially Responsible Evaluation (SREed) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, which runs the statewide Wisconsin Educator Development Support and Retention (WEDSR) Survey, provides data to the DPI on educator preparation and induction program performance. Doing so in an aggregated form will provide an overall statewide picture without raising accountability concerns.

Recommendation 4: Provide enhanced induction and mentoring

- Require induction experiences for all novice teachers, including those enrolled in EPPs while working as teachers of record on Tier I licenses.
- Replace limited statewide induction requirements with more comprehensive expectations to promote more consistent and equitable implementation across districts, add DPI oversight of added expectations, and provide state funding support to high-need districts with higher concentrations of novice and underprepared teachers.

Recommendation 5: Increase state education agency capacity

- Support the implementation of all other recommendations and additional DPI priorities by providing adequate staffing for the DPI.

Recommendation 1: Strengthen Preparation Programs Through Updates to Program Approval and Licensure

- Building upon past progress, implement a modified statewide requirement for candidates to pass a valid and reliable capstone performance assessment for licensure, giving EPPs the option of adopting either the edTPA or any equivalent, state-approved, standards-aligned assessment—including locally developed options—thereby maintaining both local flexibility and statewide consistency.
- Revise the state teacher standards, or add required guidance to existing standards, to align state expectations for teachers to the latest research on the science of learning and development (SoLD) by adding topics such as support for SEL, emphasis on intrinsic motivation and purpose, and use of trauma-informed and healing-informed practice and educative and restorative behavioral supports.
- Ensure that EPPs are applying updated state standards consistently by requiring that any program-specific modifications to standards are consistent with research and professional consensus about responsible teaching practice aligned with up-to-date findings from SoLD.

Research-aligned standards for teaching support student learning; drive EPP improvement; and contribute to the professionalization of preparation, licensing, and teacher development.¹³⁸

Wisconsin's licensure and program approval systems are built upon a standards- and performance-based structure with the capacity to support teacher and program quality, but even so there are several steps the state could take to improve consistency in these systems and account for new knowledge about how people learn. Wisconsin can build on past progress in implementing teacher performance assessments and take a new tack, incorporating what has been learned from previous efforts to construct an approach aimed at enhancing statewide consistency in ensuring teacher quality, providing for program-level flexibility, and aligning with the state's emphasis on local control. In the long run, Wisconsin could also consider updating the state's teacher standards and adjusting how these standards are addressed in program approval to further enhance the state's ability to ensure that all programs are preparing teachers to meet the needs of all learners.

A recommendation regarding the assessment of Wisconsin teacher candidates' readiness for the classroom must take multiple considerations into account. The elimination of basic skills tests, the creation of alternative assessment options for subject matter tests and the Foundations of Reading Test (FoRT), and the removal of the performance assessment requirement were undertaken to increase flexibility, remove barriers to entry into teaching, and expand the supply and diversity of teachers in the state. However, these changes have also left the state without a common or equivalent measure of candidate quality upon entry into the profession. In a standards- and performance-based system, this represents a significant opening to inconsistency in educator qualifications, with an already-highlighted likelihood that any ensuing differentials in teacher quality

across EPPs will result in less-qualified educators landing in schools where students are already facing the greatest opportunity gaps.

The recency of the move to eliminate the edTPA requirement would seem to foreclose any attempt to address quality assurance issues by reestablishing a similar mandate. Still, teacher performance assessments are worth another look. Performance assessments are designed to authentically evaluate candidates' readiness for teaching, an improvement over multiple-choice licensure exams, which have been found not only to shrink the teacher pipeline but also to produce racial disparities in pass rates.¹³⁹ In comparison, teacher performance assessments have been found to have less of a disparate impact on candidate pass rates while proving better at predicting teaching effectiveness and also functioning as learning tools that develop teachers' skills and effectiveness in planning, instruction, and assessment.¹⁴⁰ Closer to home, the Office of Socially Responsible Evaluation (SREed) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee released a study in early 2020 concluding that the edTPA does have some predictive value for teacher effectiveness and does not represent a barrier to entry for teachers of color, though the report noted the high cost of the assessment and questioned the value of the threshold score.¹⁴¹

As to how to manage the implementation of a revised performance assessment requirement, one way forward is demonstrated by the state's own well-regarded Educator Effectiveness (EE) system, a statewide program, with a state-adopted evaluation model, which also makes room for districts to develop and implement their own models as long as they are deemed equivalent to the state-adopted model.¹⁴² Wisconsin could **implement a modified statewide requirement for candidates to pass a valid and reliable capstone performance assessment for licensure that provides EPPs with the choice of using either the already widely used edTPA or a state-approved and standards-aligned equivalent assessment, thus maintaining both local flexibility and statewide consistency.** Such a requirement could include other existing performance assessments or even locally developed options, as long as they meet state equivalency requirements. Not only is such a strategy consistent with the state's approach to educator evaluation, but it has also been implemented in states as different from each other as California and West Virginia, making the strategy defensible from multiple perspectives and giving the state some examples to draw upon in following this path.¹⁴³

An effort to require equivalent performance assessments would be a lighter lift than the original move to mandate a common measure while still fulfilling the important purpose of ensuring that candidates have demonstrated their competence across a variety of teaching skills and practices through one of several state-approved performance assessments prior to their being issued a license. Under the recent change in rule, EPPs may continue utilizing the edTPA to assess candidate performance, and no doubt some will do so; a new requirement of the type suggested here would not change this option.¹⁴⁴ Other EPPs could take advantage of the flexibility of such a requirement by adopting or creating assessments that better suit their needs, with the DPI playing the role of ensuring these assessments are standards-aligned and functionally equivalent. Getting this system

in place would take time and effort, but the outcome would be the creation of a needed benchmark across pathways and programs that could serve to maintain consistency and alignment across EPPs and bolster the state's standards-based system while addressing some of the concerns specific to the mandatory use of edTPA.

Of course, a primary concern in a system like Wisconsin's is the standards themselves. Because of the key role that state standards play in licensure and program approval, it is important that they represent the most up-to-date and broad consensus on SoLD and are well aligned to those research findings.¹⁴⁵ The state has made an effort to keep the standards current, but, as described above, the InTASC standards on which Wisconsin's standards are based have not been updated since 2011, leaving the Wisconsin standards similarly dated. While they remain a useful set of benchmarks, Wisconsin's standards could be updated to better support the preparation of teachers to meet the needs of all of the state's students and to provide them with equitable access to deeper learning experiences.

To these ends, the state should **consider revising the state teacher standards, or add required guidance to existing standards, to align state expectations for teachers to the latest research findings from SoLD. This revision or guidance should be focused on adding topics such as support for SEL, emphasis on intrinsic motivation and purpose, and use of trauma-informed and healing-informed practice and educative and restorative behavioral supports.** This recommendation stops short of making an outright recommendation for a revision of the state's standards only because the most recent revision was only 2 years ago, creating the possibility that another might be politically or practically infeasible. The state's approach to standards implementation does make the idea of issuing guidelines a workable alternative, as such guidelines could be structured to fill in details left unspecified by the standards and incorporated into the state's program approval process, offering EPPs a common framework from which to draw. Still, in the long run, a full update of state standards should be strongly considered, as it would be more straightforward in implementation and would set expectations across the entire education system. Such an effort might even drive a national conversation about the update of the InTASC standards, which is itself overdue.

Lastly, the recommendation to update state standards brings up important questions about how such an update would affect EPPs. The option for EPPs to modify state standards under PI 34 offers flexibility, but it also raises the possibility that any such modifications will dilute the intent or effects of the update. Therefore, it would be worth **considering an update to program approval requirements to ensure that any modifications to standards are consistent with research and professional consensus about responsible teaching practice aligned with up-to-date findings from SoLD.** Such a modification would be a significant change from current program approval practice, which focuses more on the standards-to-assessments link in programs than on the form of the standards themselves. However, if the state undertakes the effort required to bring the standards in line with the most recent findings in research, it would be worth simultaneously ensuring that some mechanism is in place to incentivize programs to pay careful attention to how their implementation of state standards ensures a through line from updated standards to high-quality practice.

Recommendation 2: Provide Teaching Incentives to Improve Teacher Workforce Supply, Quality, and Diversity

- Incentivize the creation of high-quality, high-retention teacher residencies in the state's nine highest-need districts, implemented through district–EPP partnerships. Through residency programs, candidates are financially supported to train in the classrooms of expert mentor teachers while they complete their preparation. Candidates then receive mentoring and commit to 3–5 years of teaching in the same high-need district in which they were trained.
- Increase accessibility and uptake of the Teacher Education Loan (TEL) and Minority Teacher Loan (MTL) programs by increasing funding, expanding eligibility requirements, and broadening the types of schools where graduates can teach while maintaining incentives for high-need schools, and, for the MTL program, focusing on recruiting diverse teachers by expanding subject-area requirements.
- Improve the distribution of qualified and experienced educators, and the quality of mentoring and teacher leadership in high-need districts, by expanding the incentive program for National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) teaching in high-need schools, raising the yearly amount of the grants received by these NBCTs, removing the 9-year limit on grant payments, and tying these upgrades to NBCTs' participation in mentoring for teacher candidates and novice teachers.
- Provide administrative support for the expansion of already-existing Educators Rising chapters in the state, which have already begun offering preservice teacher experience and dual-credit options with EPPs to high school students interested in becoming Wisconsin teachers, and have so far done so without dedicated administrative staffing.

In Wisconsin, as across the nation, teacher shortages, declining EPP enrollment, rising use of emergency-style certification, and inequitable distribution of underqualified teachers are interconnected problems, and all are related to achievement gaps. Since high-quality educator preparation has been shown to affect teacher retention and effectiveness as well as student achievement, incentivizing such preparation could drive improvements on multiple fronts.¹⁴⁶ And with the state having identified the districts accounting for much of the equity gap in the distribution of qualified and experienced teachers, it is clear where such incentives could be applied to good effect. Therefore, the first recommendation for building the teacher workforce is for the state to **incentivize the creation of high-quality, high-retention teacher residencies in the state's nine highest-need districts, implemented through district–EPP partnerships, in which candidates are financially supported to train in the classrooms of expert mentor teachers while completing their preparation, then receive mentoring and commit to 3–5 years of teaching in the same high-need district in which they were trained.**

Characterized by high-quality preparation through district–university partnerships, paid apprenticeships, and tightly linked coursework, residencies produce effective teachers who go on to

work in high-need subject areas and schools and who stay in teaching at higher rates than other new teachers.¹⁴⁷ Teacher residents are also, on average, more racially diverse compared to new teachers prepared in other routes and bring a wider range of work experiences to the classroom.¹⁴⁸ High-quality teacher residency programs have been shown to share several common elements, including:

- strong district and university partnerships;
- coursework about teaching and learning tightly integrated with clinical practice;
- a full year of residency teaching in the same classroom with a teacher of record who is an expert mentor teacher;
- high-ability, diverse candidates recruited to meet specific district hiring needs, typically in fields with shortages;
- financial support for residents in exchange for a 3- to 5-year post-residency teaching commitment;
- cohorts of residents placed in “teaching schools” that model good practices with diverse learners and are designed to help novices learn to teach;
- expert mentor teachers who co-teach with residents; and
- ongoing mentoring and support for graduates after they enter the teaching force.¹⁴⁹

In incentivizing the adoption of such models, Wisconsin would follow the example of federal Teacher Quality Partnership Grants, other states that have made recent investments in residency programs (e.g., California, Delaware, Mississippi, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, and Texas), and the 15 states that have identified the residency model in their ESSA plans as a strategy to improve teacher preparation and effectiveness.¹⁵⁰ California’s residency grant program is particularly notable because it focuses on special education, bilingual education, and STEM, which are also high-need areas in Wisconsin. Furthermore, the California program provides up to \$20,000 of grant funding per resident, with an equivalent district match.¹⁵¹ Another possible route forward, with lower initial costs, would be to seed new residencies through grants for planning and capacity-building, such as the \$50,000 grants provided by California or the \$75,000 grants provided by Pennsylvania.¹⁵² The University of Wisconsin’s Special Education Teacher Residency Program (UW-SET), funded by a Teacher Quality Partnership Grant, includes the evidence-based features identified above and so can serve as a model for replication, while the University of Wisconsin System’s Institute for Urban Education, already working with the nine districts identified in the state equity plan, could serve to coordinate or carry out the seeding of residencies in those districts.¹⁵³

Wisconsin could also move toward comprehensive residencies by providing conditional funding to existing programs to enable them to add residency features to their already-established district–EPP partnerships, recruiting pipelines, and implementation systems. This effort could build upon the work of programs now underway in high-priority locations. One such program, which is highlighted

in this report, is the School Based Teacher Academy of Racine (STAR) program. This program includes a strong EPP–university partnership, financial support for residents in return for a teaching commitment, mentorship and coursework linked to practice, and recruitment of candidates from diverse backgrounds to teach in a high-need field. It is thus already primed to make the move into the “residency” category with the addition of an apprenticeship component that would allow candidates to work alongside an expert teacher. Other existing programs—such as those focusing on incentives for local and nontraditional students to teach in high-need subjects and locations—could also be chosen to level up to residency status, with state support.

Another step states can take to provide more candidates with access to high-quality preservice preparation is to create teacher incentive programs. Nationwide, a key barrier to access to quality teacher preparation is cost. Many prospective candidates, and particularly candidates of color and those from low-income backgrounds, either choose not to enter teaching because of preparation costs¹⁵⁴ or choose pathways in which they can be paid to teach while completing their training,¹⁵⁵ even though such alternative pathways are associated with lower teacher effectiveness and higher levels of attrition.¹⁵⁶ Incentive programs address this issue by underwriting candidates’ preparation costs in exchange for a specified number of years of teaching. Research has shown that they aid in teacher recruitment and retention, even in high-need subjects and locations.¹⁵⁷

Such programs can address teacher supply, turnover, quality, distribution, and diversity, so it is fortunate that Wisconsin has two such programs in place already, providing progress on which to build. These two programs—the Teacher Education Loan (TEL) and the Minority Teacher Loan (MTL) programs—are administered by the Wisconsin Higher Educational Aids Board and offer loans that are forgivable with specified teaching service.¹⁵⁸ Instead of starting from scratch, then, the state should consider **increasing accessibility and uptake of the TEL and MTL programs by increasing funding, expanding eligibility requirements, and broadening the types of schools in which graduates can teach while maintaining incentives for high-need schools, and, for the MTL program, focusing on recruiting diverse teachers by expanding subject-area requirements.** These ideas gained traction in the state and were proposed in prior state budgets, but ultimately they were not enacted. Still, the variety of state needs that these changes could meet, and their alignment with successful efforts in other states, make a compelling case for continuing efforts to see them through to implementation.

As currently constituted, the TEL and MTL programs are available to IHE students with GPAs of 3.0 or greater who are enrolled in EPPs leading to licensure in state-identified shortage areas,¹⁵⁹ though the MTL also requires students to be members of defined populations (Black American, American Indian, Alaska Native, Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Island Origin, or “a person whose ancestry includes 2 or more races”¹⁶⁰). Each program provides loans of up to \$10,000 per year for 3 years, with a maximum of \$30,000. After graduation, loans are forgiven at a rate of 25% per year for each year of full-time teaching in identified shortage areas related to the individual’s teaching license. For the TEL, the position must be in Milwaukee or a rural district, while the MTL requires work in a school in a district with a 40% or higher minority student population. Both require that teachers receive ratings of proficient or distinguished each year through the state’s Educator Effectiveness (EE) system.

Both programs have undergone significant changes in recent years. Act 55 made the TEL a statewide program in 2015.¹⁶¹ The TEL issued 55 loans between 2015–16 and 2018–19, distributing a total of \$428,340, or about \$7,788 per loan.¹⁶² In contrast, the same legislation reduced the reach of the MTL by adding the GPA, high-need licensure, and EE system requirements. Following these changes, the number of MTL awards decreased steadily from 59 in 2014–15 to 1 in 2017–18.¹⁶³ The drop in awards inspired the passage of Act 35 (2019), which expanded the definition of “minority” and extended the geographic reach of the program to any school in a district with a population that includes 40% or more students of color.¹⁶⁴ Both programs were funded at over \$500,000 for the 2019–21 biennium, a level that could support the addition of 60 teachers per program, a welcome improvement, though one that still leaves these programs serving only a fraction of the state’s 2,800 EPP completers per year.¹⁶⁵

The expansion of the MTL and TEL programs would serve vital state interests. Wisconsin has an urgent need for a more diverse teacher workforce across districts, particularly in the 86% of schools that have no African American teachers and 83% that have no Latino/a teachers.¹⁶⁶ It is thus counterproductive for the MTL to require that recipients both be licensed in high-need subject areas *and* teach in high-minority population schools, particularly since only about 10% of Wisconsin districts meet both conditions. Limiting both applications and teacher placements makes even less sense given research findings that a racially diverse teacher workforce benefits all students, not just students of color.¹⁶⁷

The TEL and MTL provide a solid base for future growth because they already have features shown by research to align with successful implementation: They provide substantial awards, target high-need fields and schools, recruit academically well-prepared candidates, and reinforce teaching commitments through reasonable consequences.¹⁶⁸ Even so, other states offer some ideas that Wisconsin should consider **for implementing the above recommendations.** North Carolina and Nebraska, for example, double the amount of loan forgiveness for educators to teach in high-need schools.¹⁶⁹ Other state programs aiming to recruit teachers of color require only that participants teach in state public schools without geographic or subject area restrictions or offer flexible admissions options based on a variety of academic qualifications beyond GPA.¹⁷⁰ A combination of broadening program eligibility while maintaining incentives for candidates to choose high-need schools could both expand the candidate pool for Wisconsin’s programs and help the state address inequities in the distribution of qualified teachers.¹⁷¹

Given the positive association between teacher experience and student success,¹⁷² the state should focus not only on preparing new teachers but also on supporting experienced educators, particularly the state’s NBCTs, and placing them where they are most needed. National Board Certification is a long-established process for recognizing advanced teaching practice during which applicants complete a standards-based performance assessment that includes a portfolio, videos, reflections, lesson plans, and evidence of student learning. NBCTs have been found to be more effective at producing student learning gains than similarly experienced colleagues, and students from low-income families have been shown to derive greater benefits from being taught by NBCTs than

do their peers from higher-income families.¹⁷³ Other recent research has highlighted the effectiveness of NBCTs as mentors for novice teachers.¹⁷⁴ Wisconsin had 1,450 NBCTs teaching in the state as of 2019, with 410 teachers pursuing certification.¹⁷⁵

Wisconsin already recognizes the contributions NBCTs can make. The state will cover certification costs for NBCTs, and those rated effective or highly effective on the state's EE system can apply to receive annual grants of \$2,500 for 9 years after Board certification.¹⁷⁶ If they work in high-need schools where 60% or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, they receive \$5,000 per year. With these programs already in place, the state could further **improve the distribution of qualified and experienced educators, and the quality of mentoring and teacher leadership in high-need districts, by expanding the incentive program for NBCTs teaching in high-need schools, raising the yearly amount of the grants received by these NBCTs, and removing the 9-year limit on grant payments.** According to DeGuire, it has been a DPI priority to raise the amount of this grant, but the change requires legislative action. **Tying these upgrades to NBCTs' participation in mentoring for teacher candidates and novice teachers** could provide an additional reason for making these legislative changes while also contributing to improvements in induction.

Another way for Wisconsin to boost teacher recruiting would be to **provide administrative support for the expansion of already-existing Educators Rising chapters in the state, which have already begun offering preservice teacher experience and dual-credit options with EPPs to high school students interested in becoming Wisconsin teachers and have so far done so without dedicated administrative staffing.** Such high school pathway programs can serve as an important recruitment strategy for local districts,¹⁷⁷ and other states are seeing promising results from such programs, including the Recruiting Washington Teachers (RWT) teacher academy and the South Carolina Teacher Cadet Program.¹⁷⁸ Wisconsin's Educators Rising effort, originally driven by local stakeholders with DPI assistance and now supported administratively by the Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC), started with one club in 2016 and has expanded to over 40 registered clubs. Along with offering preservice teacher experiences to high school students, these chapters also provide dual-credit options with local EPPs, including courses in educational foundations, child development, and special education.¹⁷⁹ They have been cited in the state ESSA plan for their role in teacher recruitment. According to Leah Luke, a teacher and Educators Rising leader who has been instrumental in establishing the organization in Wisconsin, the most important investment would be hiring a full-time program administrator to work statewide with all stakeholders connected to the effort, including the DPI, CESAs, districts, and schools.

Wisconsin has shown a willingness to make investments in incentives to strengthen teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention similar to those recommended above. Act 59 created two programs aimed at supporting educator preparation. The Teacher Training and Development Program, run through the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, was originally designed to fund efforts of local education agencies to establish Grow Your Own-type programs.¹⁸⁰ After awarding 40 grants totaling nearly \$4 million,¹⁸¹ the program was replaced by the Teacher Training and Recruitment Grant program, which offers funding to nonprofits instead of local education

agencies (LEAs) and which is budgeted to receive \$500,000 per year for 2019–20 and 2020–21.¹⁸² Grant recipients in 2020 include partnerships between nonprofits, districts, and EPPs to train educators on the job for licensure in special education and English as a second language (ESL).¹⁸³ Making such funding available to programs creating high-quality, high-retention pathways, including existing programs, would advance the goals of the state with a potentially greater return on investment.

Recommendation 3: Improve Data Use for Continuous System and Program Improvement

- Improve state data by requiring educator preparation programs (EPPs) to report the number and demographics of candidates enrolled in and completing each program by pathway, not only by institution. States can then use those data to track graduation, employment, and retention rates and make the data available in a timely and accessible format through a dashboard system.
- Ensure that the Office of Socially Responsible Evaluation (SREed) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, which runs the statewide Wisconsin Educator Development Support and Retention (WEDSR) Survey, provides data to the DPI on educator preparation and induction program performance. Doing so in an aggregated form will provide an overall statewide picture without raising accountability concerns.

Having the right data is vital to understanding state workforce issues, assessing the results of recent changes, and creating future policy. Wisconsin’s collection and use of teacher workforce data has several areas in which improvements could significantly enhance the state’s capacity to do this work. As described above, educators working on Tier I licenses, completing on-the-job preparation programs provided by IHEs, are counted as being prepared in a non-alternative, IHE-based program, and the DPI has no data from districts on which programs are preparing their Tier I licensed teachers. Additionally, demographic data on EPP enrollees and completers are insufficiently fine-grained to carry out analyses necessary to address teacher workforce and teacher pipeline diversity issues. Improvement in this area could aid EPPs in meeting program approval requirements around building diverse candidate pools and would fit with DPI efforts to better connect preparation to equity issues.¹⁸⁴ As one staff member put it, “I think I’d like to see the work of program approval dovetail more with the agency’s efforts to close the achievement gap,” adding, “that’s an area where we, as an agency, could move forward.”

Oregon provides an example with parallels to Wisconsin. Oregon requires all teacher preparation programs to develop plans to promote the “recruitment, admission, retention and graduation of diverse educators”¹⁸⁵ and combines the submission of these plans with the reporting and collection of demographic data on EPP enrollees and completers as well as licensure assessment scores and employment data.¹⁸⁶ Also in Oregon, plans are underway to create ways for EPPs to track completers’ employment, teacher performance, and student performance data.¹⁸⁷ Wisconsin already requires EPPs to submit similar plans as part of the program approval process and provides for the sharing of

Educator Effectiveness (EE) system data with EPPs who volunteer to receive it, a strategy included in the state's ESSA plan.¹⁸⁸ Wisconsin is also planning to track employment trends by cohort in future EPP annual reports.¹⁸⁹ A few additional steps would allow policymakers a more comprehensive view of the teacher workforce.

To take these steps, Wisconsin could **improve state data by requiring EPPs to report the number and demographics of candidates enrolled in and completing each program by pathway, not only by institution, using those data to track graduation, employment, and retention rates.** Requiring EPPs to report enrollment of Tier I license holders by pathway rather than by institution type would immediately provide a much more accurate picture of the status of educator preparation in the state. Annual reporting on EPP candidate enrollment and completion, disaggregated by racial and ethnic subgroups and with n-size reporting restrictions to protect privacy, would ideally be collected in such a way that candidates can be tracked from enrollment through completion to licensure and employment. Such tracking would allow the state to identify trends in subgroups' progress through the pipeline, including patterns across programs and areas where the pipeline "leaks." Along with giving a better picture of the workings of the system, this could allow the state to identify where candidates of color are being successfully supported and where more attention from the state might improve outcomes. These changes in data reporting could be accomplished either by revising EPP data collection requirements in Wisconsin statute or, as the DPI has already done in other cases, by adding additional data to required annual reports.

As the state improves data collection, another way to increase the usefulness of those data would be **making the data available in a timely and accessible format through a dashboard system.** Several states already make use of data dashboards to display indicators related to teacher preparation,¹⁹⁰ and stakeholders in Wisconsin have previously highlighted state needs in this area. The Wisconsin Professional Standards Council, focusing on teacher workforce data in its 2016 strategic plan recommendations for the Wisconsin Talent Development Framework, specifically noted that, while the DPI "collects meaningful data on the educator workforce through multiple data collections," the agency "does not have the capacity to analyze these data sets in an annual and on-demand system."¹⁹¹ Such a system could bring together existing data, provide a home for new data, and make all these data more readily useful for policymakers, educators, and the public. Even before adding additional data collection, existing data—including the EPP data currently in annual reports, the WISEdash staff data reported in spreadsheet form, and the emergency certification and teacher attrition/turnover data housed throughout the DPI website—could all be brought together in one connected and interactive site that could facilitate their use.

Another potential option for data system improvement involves the statewide WEDSR Survey, which has been running since 2015–16. Developed by the Wisconsin Education Effectiveness Research Partnership (WEERP), a collaboration between the SREed at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the DPI, the survey was originally developed to evaluate the implementation of the state's EE system. It has expanded in reach and topics, and in 2017–18 it had a 49% completion rate among EE teachers, while

new questions were added asking novice teachers to evaluate their EPPs and the effectiveness of their induction processes and mentor teachers.¹⁹² The SREed administers the survey each year, then analyzes the data and provides reports to districts and EPPs for their own use, though it does *not* provide these reports to the DPI.¹⁹³

Given the already-established nature of this survey, an additional change Wisconsin could make in improving data systems would be to **ensure that the SREed at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, which runs the statewide WEDSR Survey, provides data to the DPI on educator preparation and induction program performance, doing so in an aggregated form that will provide an overall statewide picture without raising accountability concerns.** This move could help the DPI to create a statewide picture of EPP and induction program performance without raising fears that the data will be applied to individual programs and districts for punitive purposes. As the DPI carries out statewide analyses, it could also use the program approval process to provide guidance to EPPs on the use of their own data in program improvement efforts, thus enhancing the continuous improvement aspect of the program approval system.

Recommendation 4: Provide Enhanced Induction and Mentoring

- Require induction experiences for all novice teachers, including those enrolled in EPPs while working as teachers of record on Tier I licenses.
- Replace limited statewide induction requirements with more comprehensive expectations to promote more consistent and equitable implementation across districts, add DPI oversight of added expectations, and provide state funding support to high-need districts with higher concentrations of novice and underprepared teachers.

Induction is an important strategy for increasing teacher retention and effectiveness,¹⁹⁴ and so can address both teacher shortages and student achievement gaps. In general, induction programs consist of a variety of activities that provide initial and ongoing support and assistance for new teachers, including new teacher orientations; ongoing professional learning opportunities; teaching load reductions; regularly scheduled collaborative and planning time; formal coaching and feedback from an experienced mentor; and regular and supportive communication from school administrators, such as principals and department chairs. A comprehensive program, with the highest likelihood of positive effects for teachers, would consist of a variety of these approaches.¹⁹⁵

In supporting such induction programs, Wisconsin has progress on which to build. As already noted, the state requires induction (“ongoing orientation and support”) for new teachers on Tier II licenses and some on Tier I licenses (“Guest Teacher” license holders and Tier I special education license holders), and the DPI issues induction guidelines, approves mentor training, and provides mentor training modules for district use. Still, not all new teachers receive induction support, including teachers on Tier I licenses who are serving as teachers of record without having completed teacher preparation and who may be most in need of additional support. Additionally, when the switch to lifetime licensure dismantled the state’s professional development system, it also removed the

core of new teacher induction and left program quality dependent on local priorities and funding levels, making it more likely that higher-need schools, with higher concentrations of novice and underprepared teachers, will struggle to provide high-quality programs.

To repair the holes in this system, the state could **require induction experiences for all novice teachers, including those enrolled in EPPs while working as teachers of record on Tier I licenses.** Given the doubling of the number of Tier I (emergency-style) licenses issued in recent years, the high percentage of teachers in some districts on Tier I licenses, and the lack of preservice preparation required for a Tier I license, providing induction support for this population should be a priority. These induction experiences would have to be designed to fit the needs of teachers on Tier I licenses, who are already working full time while completing educator preparation and state evaluation requirements, but such design work could be done through a collaborative process between the DPI, districts, and EPPs to ensure that those specific needs are addressed.

A second way of expanding the reach and quality of induction would be to address the uneven implementation of, and access to, induction programs. Wisconsin could **replace limited statewide induction requirements with more comprehensive expectations to promote more consistent and equitable implementation across districts.** The state could also **add DPI oversight of added expectations and provide state funding support to high-need districts with higher concentrations of novice and underprepared teachers.** Indeed, in districts serving the highest concentrations of students of color and students from low-income families, one third of teachers are novices with less than 3 years of experience, placing a significant and inequitable burden on these districts to support a large cohort of novice teachers each year. Past experience with Professional Development Plans (PDPs) at the DPI and statewide guidance form a baseline of knowledge of such systems, and new guidance and support could fill some of the gap left by the elimination of PDPs. Enhancing induction provides a research-based path toward enhancing both teacher retention and performance. It would also allow for the addition of training that is tailored to the needs of districts identified in the state equity plan.

DPI's guidance and training materials provide a solid basis for new expectations, while research has identified other key induction features that could be emphasized, including:

- tailoring seminars or related professional opportunities to new teachers;
- specifying the length of induction experiences, ideally for at least 2 years;
- incentivizing new teacher and mentor collaboration by providing release time for both;
- providing common planning and collaboration time with other teachers;
- prioritizing the matching of mentors and new teachers by grade level or subject area; and
- offering training in cultural competency and relational trust.¹⁹⁶

As such changes are adopted, Wisconsin's significant population of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) may be a resource to access in providing mentoring, as described above.

Other states have implemented systems that have shown promising results in improving new teacher practice and retention using some of the research-based features laid out above. Connecticut's 2-year Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) program pairs new teachers with trained and experienced mentors while districts provide dedicated collaboration time and mentor stipends.¹⁹⁷ Delaware requires that all new teachers participate in a 4-year induction and mentoring program, the Comprehensive Induction Program, which includes 2 years of specified meetings, observations, and learning sessions, then 2 additional years of participation in professional learning communities.¹⁹⁸ Until the program was made optional, Iowa's 2-year induction programs included mentor training and selection, a 2-year sequence of content, and release time for both mentors and new teachers, allocating \$1,300 for each first- and second-year educator in 2016–17.¹⁹⁹

Recommendation 5: Increase State Education Agency Capacity

- Support the implementation of all other recommendations and additional Department of Public Instruction (DPI) priorities by providing adequate staffing for the DPI.

Wisconsin can support the implementation of all these recommendations by providing adequate staffing for the DPI. Among the findings of this report was that the DPI has at times been stretched thin by staff cuts combined with a surfeit of recent policy changes. This has reduced the agency's ability to proactively engage challenges identified by DPI staff and leadership, including the need to improve agency communications with the public, an issue not directly addressed by this report. Facilitating the changes recommended here will require sufficient agency capacity to meet current responsibilities and, on top of that, to provide support and guidance across emerging priorities and initiatives. The efforts that could be supported by additional DPI staff capacity include:

- making improvements to the DPI website and speeding up inquiry response times;
- creating and promulgating new research-based guidance to update teaching standards;
- proposing and supporting new high-retention pathways into teaching;
- revising and expanding teacher loan forgiveness programs;
- collecting and using more educator preparation and workforce data to guide program improvement; and
- taking on additional responsibilities to support and improve teacher induction.

This recommendation does not address the state's systems of licensure and program approval directly, but it is important, nonetheless. Providing for additional agency capacity will be vital in creating the conditions for other recommended changes to be implemented effectively.

Addendum: Current and Potential Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The findings, analyses, and recommendations in this report are based on data and information that were, for the most part, gathered before the widespread onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. As COVID-19 spread across the country in early 2020, schools closed, districts scrambled to implement remote instruction, and the teacher workforce faced serious disruptions, including budget cuts and layoffs that many feared would only intensify.²⁰⁰ State budgets have since been buoyed by unanticipated revenues and federal stimulus spending, and massive layoffs have been avoided, but disruptions have continued. Increased staffing demands and heightened stress from the pandemic have led to a wave of teacher retirements and resignations that seem likely to exacerbate the persistent shortages, recruiting challenges, and retention issues that plagued the profession pre-COVID-19.²⁰¹

In Wisconsin, too, the picture for the teacher workforce has been mixed. The pandemic created serious shortages and highlighted preexisting inequities, yet state licensure and program approval systems, and the DPI, demonstrated adaptability amid unprecedented conditions. The state education budget, though recovered from the cuts and grim predictions of 2020, looks to remain largely flat for the next biennium, though federal recovery funding may create opportunities for both meeting short-term needs and tackling persistent, long-term challenges.²⁰² Policymakers' ability to implement the recommendations of this report have certainly been affected, but state systems continue to provide a solid base to support both recovery and improvement. This section will address what is known about the effects of COVID-19 on Wisconsin's teacher workforce and licensure and program approval systems, as well as possible impacts on the implementation of the recommendations of this report as it goes to publication in the winter of 2021.

Wisconsin's Education System Responds to COVID-19

As COVID-19 began to spread across the nation in early 2020, Wisconsin schools shifted to remote instruction in mid-March and stayed remote through the end of the 2019–20 school year.²⁰³ As educators struggled against unprecedented conditions, retirements jumped 14% from the year before, while state spending cuts spurred fears of widespread layoffs.²⁰⁴ The state did act to mitigate stresses on the workforce where it could. Act 185 of April 2020 exempted Wisconsin schools and districts from state report card and student assessment requirements for the 2019–20 school year and prohibited the inclusion of student assessment performance in educator evaluation scores.²⁰⁵ Fortunately, layoffs were limited in Wisconsin, with 82% of districts reporting none at all.²⁰⁶

Another bright spot for the 2019–20 school year was the DPI's smooth shift to remote work without serious disruption to operations. The flexibility built in to licensure and program approval systems played a key role in enabling this shift. The relatively new program approval system was already set up for virtual submission of EPP documentation, and therefore was able to proceed remotely with an additional DPI adjustment shift to virtual site visits. On the licensure side, the Tier I license with

stipulations route reduced the impact of reduced licensure testing opportunities since program completers unable to complete Tier II licensure requirements could still obtain Tier I licenses, though the state also suspended the edTPA requirement for all candidates by emergency order.²⁰⁷ The 2019 modification of statute to create flexibility in student teaching requirements allowed candidates to complete their spring 2020 placements even as schools shifted to remote learning.²⁰⁸ For already-licensed teachers, the DPI allowed spring 2020 experience to count toward lifetime licenses, extended renewal deadlines for teachers on Tier I licenses with stipulations through the end of August, and created an option for exceptions from Tier I license renewal requirements through the 2020–21 school year.²⁰⁹

Teacher Workforce Disruptions in the 2020–21 School Year

As the 2020–21 school year approached, teacher shortages were a key concern of DPI staff, who estimated that as many as 1 in 5 teachers might not return in the fall and that substitute teachers would also be in short supply.²¹⁰ DPI reopening guidance advised districts to prepare for staffing shortages and advised consideration of increased staffing demands arising from safety, wellness, and technological issues.²¹¹ In further recognition of potential workforce disruptions, the DPI also rolled out regulatory flexibility, including district waivers for state teacher effectiveness and evaluation requirements, broader scope for licensed educators to act as substitutes, and allowances for unlicensed personnel to supervise students during remote instruction.²¹² The DPI also provided for a variety of roles for teacher candidates and EPP students, even creating an option for candidates to take over classes, with EPP and district approval and support, if their cooperating teachers became ill.²¹³

Still, even the DPI's significant efforts in anticipating issues and creating options could not fully mitigate severe stresses on the workforce. Some educators started the year working in unfamiliar remote and hybrid modes while others were teaching in person, but instructional modes shifted with local guidance and COVID-19 case counts, and districts across the state cycled through repeated openings and closings, a phenomenon repeated across the country.²¹⁴ Shortages of full-time teachers, compounded by illness and quarantines, were followed by shortages of substitute teachers, which were intensified by supply issues; many retired teachers and teachers with young children who had previously worked as substitutes were unavailable.²¹⁵ As staff shortages reached critical levels, districts plugged administrators into teaching roles and offered substitutes full contracts.²¹⁶ The long-term effects of this disruptive year on the workforce are not yet known, though early indications are that retirements during 2020–21 would continue to be significantly higher than in pre-COVID-19 years, in line with national trends.²¹⁷ Anticipating ongoing issues, the DPI launched a new teacher recruitment campaign in May 2021.²¹⁸

The Impact of COVID-19 on Wisconsin's Education Budget

Since the onset of the pandemic, Wisconsin has gone from across-the-board state agency budget cuts and fears of widespread teacher layoffs to a gradually improving budget outlook in late 2020 to positive balances and predictions of ongoing surpluses by spring 2021.²¹⁹ As the fiscal picture

improved, driven in part by federal aid, the governor proposed a 2021–23 biennium budget calling for a \$1.6 billion increase in education spending, supported in part by tax increases, including funding for district special education costs, programs for English learners (ELs), and student mental health supports.²²⁰ The state legislature, following a different set of priorities, moved to cut taxes and allotted less than \$500 billion for education, a move that drew widespread disapproval from educators and inspired the U.S. Department of Education to warn the state about maintenance of effort requirements for federal relief.²²¹ Although the legislature adjusted the budget, adding over \$400 billion to school funding, this addition still left spending essentially flat from the previous biennium, while also limiting districts' ability to raise property taxes and leaving out special education and EL program funding increases.²²²

As to the future of education funding in Wisconsin, signs are mixed. The governor distributed over \$100 million in COVID relief funding in late 2021, while maintaining that funding overall was still lower than ideal.²²³ The next round of budget negotiations will begin in early 2023 for the 2023–25 biennium. With the reliance of the current budget on federal spending, and the last of federal education relief required to be spent down by early 2025,²²⁴ major decisions will confront state policymakers in order to avoid a sharp funding drop. It is hard to predict how the budget issues of today will carry forward, though one aspect of the funding picture will certainly linger: The 3% drop in public school enrollment during the pandemic will affect state aid to districts for some time, as the level of this aid is based on 3-year enrollment averages.²²⁵

Federal Investment and the 2021–22 School Year

Amid ongoing budgetary challenges, Wisconsin is still receiving a significant influx of federal funding from federal COVID-19 relief laws passed in 2020 and 2021: the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of March 2020; the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act of December 2020; and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of March 2021. States and local education agencies (LEAs) have until September 30, 2024, to obligate the last of these funds, and 120 days after that to spend them.²²⁶ All three laws fund the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund, which provides federal aid to states and districts for use toward any activity authorized in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, and the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act.²²⁷ The CARES and CRRSA acts also created the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) fund, setting aside money for state governors to direct, at their discretion, to LEAs and institutions of higher education (IHEs).²²⁸ Each law also reserves some funding at the state level, with similarly broad flexibility in use.²²⁹

Across these funds, this broad flexibility provides states with options for stabilization and diversification of the educator workforce.²³⁰ Some states are already exercising these options. In Minnesota, a GEER-funded program designated \$5 million to support teacher preparation candidates and programs, while Maryland has used GEER funds to support a statewide online tutoring program staffed by teacher candidates.²³¹ ESSER funding has been used by Tennessee to expand its Grow

Your Own competitive grant program and by Illinois to create an induction program for new teachers, many of whom had been unable to complete in-person clinical training.²³² In Wisconsin, the governor has directed that GEER funding be distributed to school districts to address health and safety, infrastructure and schedule modifications, and remote and distance learning, but state guidance allows for several teacher workforce-related uses, including compensation for planning time, training, curriculum development, and team teaching.²³³

LEAs also have authority to use ESSER funds to help grow and retain a pipeline of diverse and well-prepared teachers. Districts can utilize rescue funds to address the root causes of teacher shortages, creating residencies and Grow Your Own programs and supporting district-EPP partnerships to expand the pipeline, along with induction and mentoring programs for new teachers and professional growth and development opportunities for experienced teachers, including National Board Certification.²³⁴ And even though the ARPA requires that 20% of these ESSER funds be targeted to address lost instructional time, there are options for providing learning recovery while simultaneously strengthening the educator pipeline. Teacher candidates can potentially serve as tutors in high-quality tutoring programs, staff summer and before- and after-school programs, or serve as paraprofessionals in co-teaching or resident roles, providing much-needed staffing for programs and clinical experience for candidates.²³⁵ The ARPA provided Wisconsin with just over \$1.5 billion in ESSER funding, of which just over \$1.3 billion will be allocated to LEAs.²³⁶ As this report was going to publication in late 2021, the state's ARPA ESSER plan had been approved pending the removal of provision withholding funds from LEAs which provided less than half of their in-person instructional hours in 2020–21.²³⁷

Implications for the Future

As the state continues to cope with the fallout from the pandemic and the range of challenges it has brought and continues to bring, many unknowns remain. The arrival of the omicron variant of COVID-19 in the winter of 2021, which caused another round of unanticipated disruptions, demonstrated this aptly. The temporary changes to licensure and program approval put in place in 2020 were not extended for 2021–22. Districts across the state prepared for a return to in-person schooling in fall 2021 while also offering virtual or hybrid options, in keeping with DPI guidance, and some even started school early.²³⁸ However, uncertainty about the 2021–22 school year extends to whether the state will be in a position to implement the recommendations of this report. The essentially flat state education budget for the next biennium and the recovery efforts still ahead may present barriers to action, but the sizable federal funds available and the needs highlighted by the pandemic may induce state policymakers to find ways to reinvent systems even as they bring them back online.

COVID-19 has radically altered the conditions of schooling and society that existed when this research was commissioned, but in some ways the changes wrought by the pandemic make the report's recommendations all the more relevant. One recommendation calls for more attention to induction, and teachers who completed their preparation during the 2019–20 and 2020–21 academic years, and whose clinical training was impacted by COVID-19-related conditions

and disruptions, will likely need more and specialized support as they begin their careers. They will also need mentors, a need aligned with the recommendation for expansion of the state NBCT incentive program. The recommendation describing how an update to standards could add emphasis on topics such as social and emotional learning (SEL), trauma- and healing-informed practice, and educative and restorative behavioral supports may take on greater importance amid state and national concerns around student mental and emotional health in the pandemic era.

Most of all, the recommendations related to bolstering the teacher pipeline—ensuring access to quality preparation along with ensuring the quality of preparation—have taken on greater weight given severe short-term staffing challenges during the pandemic and the likelihood of long-term effects from COVID-19-related retirements and resignations. Revising educator loan program requirements to increase participation, supporting the efforts of Educators Rising, and improving data collection and analysis methods to enable informed systemic improvement are changes that could be made earlier because of their smaller budgetary impact. Expanding loan programs would be a heavier lift from a financial perspective, and creating high-quality, high-retention residency pathways would be heavier still, but the case for such work is stronger than ever, and the availability of federal funding for a host of uses supporting the educator workforce makes these recommendations worth careful consideration.²³⁹

Conclusion

The purpose of this report was to ascertain how state licensure and program approval systems are advancing the preparation of a diverse, well-qualified, and equitably distributed teacher workforce to support all students' deeper learning and social, emotional, and academic development. An additional topic of inquiry, which emerged over the course of the report, was the many recent changes to these systems and their relationship to the state's teacher workforce needs. This report's analysis of state teacher workforce data, examination of statutory and regulatory frameworks, and descriptions of the systems they produce and support have provided a picture of challenges facing the state; progress made in attempting to meet them; and opportunities for policymakers, state staff, and educators to pursue continuing improvement.

The five recommendations made in this report build on Wisconsin's long history of standards-based licensure and program approval and on more recent efforts, aiming to address some less-effective aspects of current systems while also making forward-looking changes aligned to the challenges facing the state today. With its reputation for quality schooling and educator preparation existing alongside long-standing and wide achievement gaps and serious teacher workforce issues, Wisconsin has achievements to celebrate and work to do. These recommendations are aimed at helping Wisconsin strengthen state systems to both guide practice in, and ensure access to, comprehensive, high-quality educator preparation. Such systems can help move the state closer to having the sort of workforce it needs to serve all students. While the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic may alter or delay the implementation of these recommendations, there are still steps the state can take now to ensure that licensure and program approval are strengthened as schools weather today's challenges and evolve to meet those of the future.

Appendix A: Methodology

Data collection took place from mid-2019 to mid-2020 and consisted of the following:

- **Document analysis:** Documents consulted and analyzed included state statutes and regulations in licensure and program approval, recent legislative acts and emergency and permanent rule changes, Department of Public Instruction (DPI) reports and presentations, outside research reports on workforce issues, state data (for students, teachers, and EPPs), DPI documents relating to licensure and program approval, DPI website and handbooks, Federal Title II and Teacher Shortage Area (TSA) data, EPP websites, and media articles.
- **Interviews:** DPI staff, EPP leadership and faculty, EPP researchers, and k-12 staff. Stakeholders interviewed included:

Jenna Buchner, Education Consultant, Teacher Education, Professional Development, and Licensing (TEPDL), Department of Public Instruction

Bradley Carl, Assistant Scientist and Co-Director of the Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative, Wisconsin Center for Education Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison

David DeGuire, Director, Teacher Education, Professional Development, and Licensing (TEPDL), Department of Public Instruction

Robin Fox, Interim Dean of the College of Education and Professional Studies, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

Beth Giles, Assistant Director, Teacher Education, Professional Development, and Licensing (TEPDL), Department of Public Instruction

Peter Goff, Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Curtis Jones, Senior Scientist, Director, Socially Responsible Evaluation in Education (SREed), University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Tim Joynt, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Shorewood School District

Kim Kaukl, Executive Director, Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WiRSA)

Kathy Lake, Professor of Education and Undergraduate Division Director, Alverno College

Patricia Luebke, Dean, School of Professional Studies, Alverno College

Leah Luke, Teacher, Mauston High School; University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Adjunct Instructor/Educators Rising Teacher Leader; 2010 Wisconsin Teacher of the Year

Desiree Pointer-Mace, Associate Professor of Education and Associate Dean for Graduate Studies, Alverno College

Dana Ryan, Director of Advanced Professional Development, University of Wisconsin-Parkside

Kimberly Strike, Education Consultant, Teacher Education, Professional Development, and Licensing (TEPDL), Department of Public Instruction

Paul Trilling, Education Consultant, Teacher Education, Professional Development, and Licensing (TEPDL), Department of Public Instruction

Appendix B: Wisconsin Teacher Standards

- 1. Pupil Development.** The teacher understands how pupils grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas. The teacher designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences for pupils.
- 2. Learning Differences.** The teacher uses his or her understanding of individual pupil differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each pupil to meet high standards.
- 3. Learning Environments.** The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
- 4. Content Knowledge.** The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of each discipline he or she teaches. The teacher creates learning experiences that make the discipline accessible and meaningful for pupils to assure mastery of the content.
- 5. Application of Content.** The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage pupils in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.
- 6. Assessment.** The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage pupils in their own growth, to monitor pupil progress, and to guide the teacher's and pupil's decision making.
- 7. Planning for Instruction.** The teacher plans instruction that supports every pupil in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, pedagogy, pupils, and pupils' communities.
- 8. Instructional Strategies.** The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage pupils to develop a deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to develop skills to apply knowledge in a meaningful way.
- 9. Professional Learning and Ethical Practice.** The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning. The teacher uses evidence to continuously evaluate the teacher's practice, including the effects of the teacher's choices and actions on pupils, their families, other educators, and the community. The teacher adapts the teacher's practice to meet the needs of each pupil.

10. **Leadership and Collaboration.** The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunity in order to take responsibility for pupil learning, to collaborate with pupils, their families, educators, and the community, and to advance the profession.

Source: Wisc. Admin. Code § PI 34.002

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