

# Colorado's Teacher Shortages:

Attracting and Retaining Excellent Educators



COLORADO

Department of  
Higher Education



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## ACTIONS TO ADDRESS COLORADO TEACHER SHORTAGES

An analysis of Colorado's teacher shortage areas reveals problems resulting from a decline in interest (enrollment and completion in educator preparation programs), retention of existing teachers, and retirement of veteran teachers that has led our state to recruit 50 percent of our educators from out-of-state (Colorado Department of Education, 2017). Addressing the problem requires an understanding of the specific challenges found in various geographic areas (urban and rural), as well as in the content areas in demand statewide and in certain school districts. Colorado House Bill 17-1003, *Concerning a Strategic Action Plan to Address Teacher Shortages in Colorado*, and its subsequent inclusion in the Colorado Revised Statutes under 23-1-120.9, was passed to address this pressing issue facing the state.

In response to the legislation, The Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) in collaboration with The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) analyzed the teacher shortage and subsequently synthesized the concepts and recommendations into a proposed Strategic Action Plan. This plan can be organized and implemented in different ways by each level of the system (state, district, school, and community).

To summarize our findings, the state has teacher shortages in early childhood education and care, science, math, world languages, special education, and art/music/drama. We lack minority educators throughout the state. The shortages are more pronounced in rural and remote rural areas where we find unique challenges driven by inadequate teacher compensation, lack of affordable housing, and difficulty attracting new teachers to rural communities.

As specified in law, significant efforts have been made to include feedback and guidance from stakeholders from all regions of the state. To comply with statutory requirements, specific non cost strategies have also been developed and are included in this action plan. It should be noted that the items included in this report are options for consideration. Each stakeholder who has influence over this issue and interest in addressing the teacher shortage areas in Colorado will need to work with their colleagues to determine the best path forward. Legislators will need to decide what makes sense and is feasible for Colorado. District leaders, campus leaders, and community members will need to consider their own environment before selecting appropriate options. However, it is clear that decisive action is needed.

Colorado's teacher shortage must be addressed to ensure that the students of our state receive the highest quality education possible to support their academic and personal growth. This strategic plan and supporting report were developed with the students of Colorado in mind, recognizing the invaluable role of teachers in educating our students. Therefore, it is critical that we work strategically and urgently to expand the number of educators in the profession.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## THE STRATEGIC ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

Throughout the summer and fall of 2017, staff from CDHE and CDE convened a series of thirteen town hall meetings throughout the state and issued a targeted survey on teacher shortages to key stakeholders that included parents, students, community members, business leaders, teachers, school administrators, school staff members, state elected officials, educational organizations, boards of cooperative educational services (BOCES), educator preparation leaders across Colorado, and the general public to obtain their perspectives and to incorporate their suggestions into this strategic plan. This plan is derived from what was heard in these town halls and informed by promising and best practices.

Teacher shortages in Colorado are statewide challenges that uniquely affect all areas of the state and; therefore, all residents to some degree. As a result, the challenge requires collective efforts and collaborative solutions. Accordingly, this strategic plan framework represents the outgrowth of the statewide collaborative strategic planning process implemented to address this growing concern.

The strategic goals, objectives, and strategies were generated from stakeholders' input and perspectives shared: (1) at town hall meetings (2) through online survey instrument results and (3) via free-form email communications. Data was collected through the thirteen town-hall meetings held throughout the state and via the targeted on-line survey. The use of this mixed design approach proved to be beneficial as nearly 400 individuals participated in in-depth conversations regarding educator shortages, and more than 6,500 survey responses were collected from Coloradans. Using these data points, a series of ideas and options were developed to address the ongoing shortage of educators throughout Colorado. Other data sources used to compose the strategic plan include existing research gathered through literature review, best practices from states across the nation, and a special report entitled, *Teacher Shortages Across the Nation and Colorado: Similar Issues, Varying Magnitudes* commissioned by CDHE to provide national and statewide context.

In this strategic action plan, we refer to “teacher shortages” that includes early childhood education teachers and care providers (preschool and kindergarten) through 12th grade teachers. As the full report mentions, teacher shortages are exacerbated in some content areas such as early childhood education and care, mathematics, science, special education, world languages, and art/music/drama, as well as certain geographic locations such as rural and urban areas of the state. An explicit focus on the shortages in those areas with the strategies to address them is warranted.

## STRATEGIC GOALS

The collaborative efforts and research resulted in four strategic goals:

1

Retain Educator Talent  
by Increasing  
Teacher Retention

3

Attract Educator Talent in Content  
Shortage Areas by Developing Targeted  
Programs in Areas of Need

2

Retain and Attract Educator Talent by  
Increasing Teacher Compensation  
and Benefits

4

Attract Educator Talent by  
Creating Programs to  
Increase Enrollment and  
Completion of Educator  
Preparation Programs (EPP)

4

The following key options are offered for legislative consideration based on the above Strategic Goals and Objectives:

## OPTIONS FOR LEGISLATIVE CONSIDERATION

- **Promote the value of the teaching profession and encourage all others to do so**
- **Provide financial support for teacher compensation, retention and progression in the field prioritizing shortage areas like early childhood education and care, science, mathematics, special education, world languages, art/music/drama, and critical rural areas**
- **Support proven strategies to increase the number of educators going into the profession by supporting grow your own programs, expanding teacher residency programs, and loan forgiveness**
- **Extend Colorado House Bill 17-1176, *Concerning an Extension of the Employment after Retirement Limitations for Retirees of the Public Employee's Retirement Association (PERA) Employed by a Rural School District After Retirement*, to allow retired teachers to re-enter the profession in rural, suburban, and urban districts**

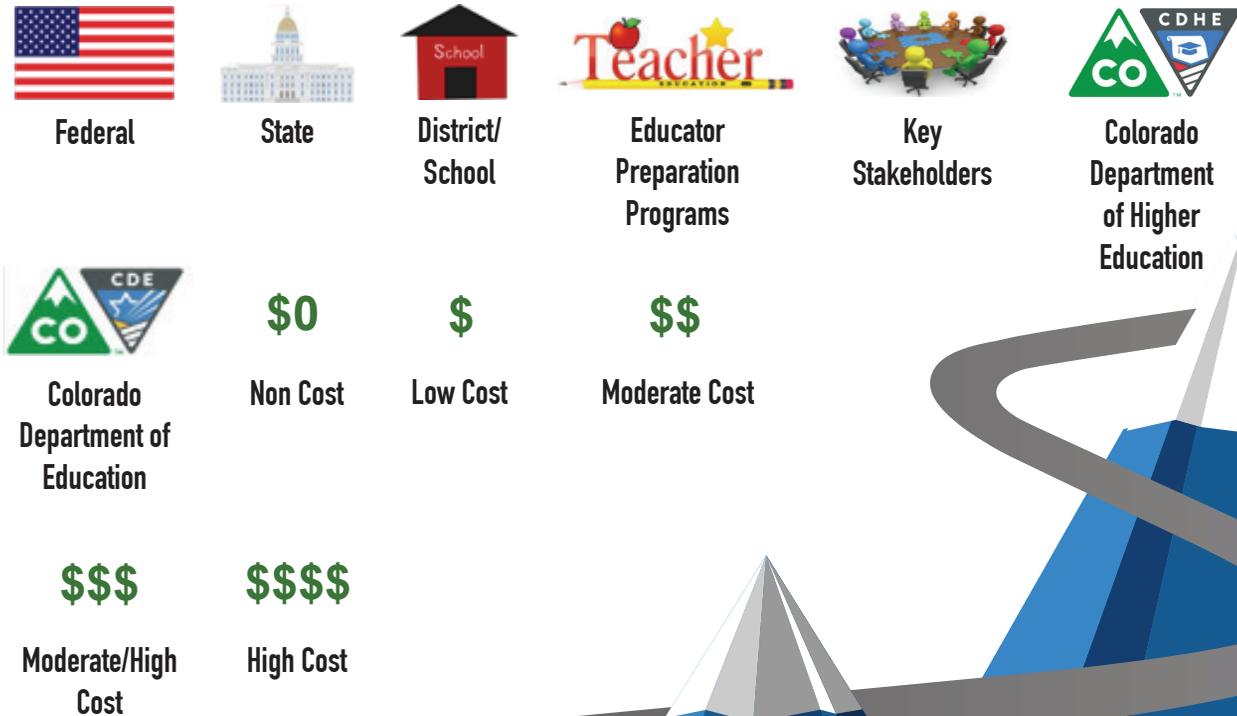
## LIMITATIONS

The authors recognize some of these strategies have funding implications and are keenly aware of the limitations regarding funding options. The strategic plan represents research-based strategies, strategies stakeholders suggested would be effective in addressing teacher shortages, along with best and promising practices from states across the nation highlighted in the report, *Teacher Shortages Across the Nation and Colorado: Similar Issues, Varying Magnitudes*. With this in mind, this strategic plan and report recommend a breadth of options for legislators and other stakeholders to consider.

*As we examine educator shortage challenges in Colorado, it is clear that successfully tackling this challenge will require implementation of comprehensive strategies and results-driven collaboration. To that end, below we articulate the objectives, strategies and suggest participants needed to advance this work.*

## STRATEGY PURVIEW AND COST ALIGNMENT

Each of the strategies has been aligned with the appropriate government level, educator preparation programs, or stakeholders along with the estimated cost. In many cases, the alignment includes all or multiple levels of government or stakeholders since aspects of the objectives and strategies require collaboration or rest within the purview of more than one entity. The projected cost for each of the strategies has been indicated as well.



# STRATEGIC GOAL 1:

## Retain Educator Talent by Increasing Teacher Retention



**OBJECTIVE 1:** Ensure Teachers are Supported by Providing Continual Training and Professional Development Necessary for Impactful Teaching from Initial through Professional Licensure

### STRATEGIES

**STRATEGY 1:** Create and Provide Funding for Districts to Provide Teacher Induction Programs for Initial Licensed Teachers



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**STRATEGY 2:** Develop and Fund Statewide Competitive Grant Programs to Support Professional Development and Recognition for Educators



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**STRATEGY 3:** Increase the Number of Teachers Trained through Traditional and Alternative Educator Preparation Programs that include Teacher Residencies and Grow Your Own Programs



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**STRATEGY 4:** Align Educator Preparation Program Content and Endorsements with the Needs and Expectations of School Districts



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**STRATEGY 5:** Prepare Teacher Candidates for Teaching and Living in Geographically Diverse Areas, e.g., Rural, Remote Rural, Urban, and Suburban



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# STRATEGIC GOAL 1:

## Retain Educator Talent by Increasing Teacher Retention



**OBJECTIVE 2:** Differentiate Teaching as a Career by Offering Advancement Opportunities that Encourage Teachers to Remain in the Classroom

### STRATEGIES

**STRATEGY 1:** Support Teacher National Board Certification to Encourage Remaining in the Classroom, Professional Recognition, Career and Leadership Advancement, and Increased Salary and Compensation



**STRATEGY 2:** Support Peer Review and Mentorship as an Advancement Opportunity for Distinguished Teachers



# STRATEGIC GOAL 1:

## Retain Educator Talent by Increasing Teacher Retention



**OBJECTIVE 3:** Improve Teacher Working Conditions

### STRATEGIES

**STRATEGY 1:** Provide Districts Funding to Increase Paraprofessional Support for Teachers and Students



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**STRATEGY 2:** Provide Reduced Teaching Loads for Novice Teachers



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**STRATEGY 3:** Provide Reduced Teaching Loads for Mentor Teachers to Work more Strategically with Novice Teachers



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**STRATEGY 4:** Provide Improved Educational Leadership Preparation and Professional Development to Assist Principals in Creating Positive School Climate and Culture



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Teacher

# STRATEGIC GOAL 2:

## Retain and Attract Educator Talent by Increasing Compensation and Benefits

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Explore a State Recommended Minimum Educator Salary at or above School Districts' Cost of Living

### STRATEGIES

**STRATEGY 1:** Explore the Possibility of Minimum Teacher and Early Child Care Provider Salaries



**STRATEGY 2:** Consider State Salary Equalization Aid to Incentivize Districts to Voluntarily Raise Minimum Teacher and Early Child Care Provider Salaries and Wages



**STRATEGY 3:** Establish Subsidies for Early Child Care and Education Businesses to Increase the Salaries and Wages of Early Child Care Providers



2

# STRATEGIC GOAL 2:

## Retain and Attract Educator Talent by Increasing Compensation and Benefits

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Create Compensation Incentives to Subsidize District Cost of Living

### STRATEGIES

**STRATEGY 1:** Offer Student Loan Forgiveness



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**STRATEGY 2:** Offer Housing Incentives



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**STRATEGY 3:** Institute Tax Credits for Early Child Care Providers and Education Professionals



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# STRATEGIC GOAL 2:

## Retain and Attract Educator Talent by Increasing Compensation and Benefits

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Create Compensation Incentives to Subsidize District Cost of Living (Cont'd)

### STRATEGIES

**STRATEGY 4:** Provide Supplemental Compensation for Teachers Working in Hard-to-Staff Schools (Particularly Remote Rural Schools)



**STRATEGY 5:** Consider Leveraging *Every Student Succeeds Act Title II, Part A* to Improve Educator Quality to States and Districts with Large Low-income Student Populations by Implementing a Differentiated Pay Scale for Teachers in Low-income Districts and Schools Teaching in Shortage Areas



2

# STRATEGIC GOAL 3:

## Attract Educator Talent in Content Shortage Areas by Developing Targeted Programs in Areas of Need



**OBJECTIVE 1:** Establish Hiring Projections

### STRATEGIES

**STRATEGY 1:** Provide Incentives for Early Notification of Retirement to Facilitate Accurate Projections



**STRATEGY 2:** Cultivate Partnerships with In-State and Out-of-State EPPs Based on Hiring Projections



**OBJECTIVE 2:** Increase the Number of Dual Licensure Program Offerings in Teacher Shortage Areas

### STRATEGIES

**STRATEGY 1:** Expedite Approval of Targeted Programs for Traditional and Alternative EPPs in Content Shortage Areas



# STRATEGIC GOAL 3:

## Attract Educator Talent in Content Shortage Areas by Developing Targeted Programs in Areas of Need



**OBJECTIVE 3:** Prepare Teacher Candidates in Teacher Shortage Areas

### STRATEGIES

**STRATEGY 1:** Offer Scholarships for Content Teacher Shortage Areas to Complete Licensure Requirements and Enter Teaching



**STRATEGY 2:** Provide Improved Educational Leadership Preparation and Professional Development to Assist in Creating School and District Cultures that Support Educators



**STRATEGY 3:** Offer Scholarships that Attract Teachers of Color to Complete Licensure Requirements and Enter Teaching



**STRATEGY 4:** Align Student Teaching Practicums with Anticipated District Teacher Position Openings



**STRATEGY 5:** Provide Transportation and Technology Stipends for Rural Teachers and Student Teachers Placed in Rural Schools



**STRATEGY 6:** Create EPP Policies that Require Teaching Methodology Course Practicums in Urban, Suburban, Rural, and Remote Rural Districts Over the Course of the Program



# STRATEGIC GOAL 3:

Attract Educator Talent in Content Shortage Areas by Developing Targeted Programs in Areas of Need



**OBJECTIVE 4:** Encourage Teachers Retired from Teacher Shortage Areas to Return to Teaching

## STRATEGIES

**STRATEGY 1:** Extend Colorado House Bill 17-1176, *Concerning the Extension of the Employment After Retirement Limitations for Retirees of the PERA Employed by a Rural School District After Retirement, to Allow Retired Teachers to Re-enter the Profession in Rural, Suburban, and Urban Districts*



# STRATEGIC GOAL 4:

## Attract Educator Talent by Creating Programs to Increase Enrollment and Completion of Educator Preparation Programs

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Increase Positive Perceptions and Messaging Around Teaching as a Career

### STRATEGIES

**STRATEGY 1:** Forge Public and Private Partnerships to Develop a Marketing Campaign



**OBJECTIVE 2:** Create Financial Assistance Incentives for Potential EPP Majors

### STRATEGIES

**STRATEGY 1:** Provide Financial Support to Prospective EPP Majors through Licensure Exam Fee Waivers



# STRATEGIC GOAL 4:

## Attract Educator Talent by Creating Programs to Increase Enrollment and Completion of Educator Preparation Programs

**OBJECTIVE 3:** Offer Alternative Forms of Financial Support for Student Teachers and Re-examine EPP Student Teaching Policies that Restrict Employment

### STRATEGIES

**STRATEGY 1:** Waive Student Teaching Practicum Employment Restrictions for Teacher Candidates in Good Academic and Dispositional Standing



**STRATEGY 2:** Provide Financial Support to Teacher Candidates through Student Teaching Stipends



# REFERENCES

Colorado Department of Education (2017). *Education Statistics*. Retrieved from <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval>

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