

# MN CSPD Recruitment and Retention Team

# Survey Results and Findings in

# Early Childhood Special Education

## MN CSPD-RR Team

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# Introduction and Purpose

- Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CPSD) is a requirement under IDEA.
- Minnesota is one of states receiving technical assistance from the Early Childhood Personnel Center, (ECPC), a TA center funded by OSEP.
- Recruitment and Retention is one of the six focus areas, along with pre-service, inservice, standards, evaluation, and leadership.
- The RR Team is a diverse group including educators, parents of children with disabilities, researchers, early childhood personnel leadership supported through ECPC leadership cohorts.
- Our task as the RR Team:
  - Look at the **system** of recruitment and retention for professionals working with children with disabilities in early childhood
  - Make recommendations about how it could be improved

# Recruitment and Retention - the Importance of Differentiation

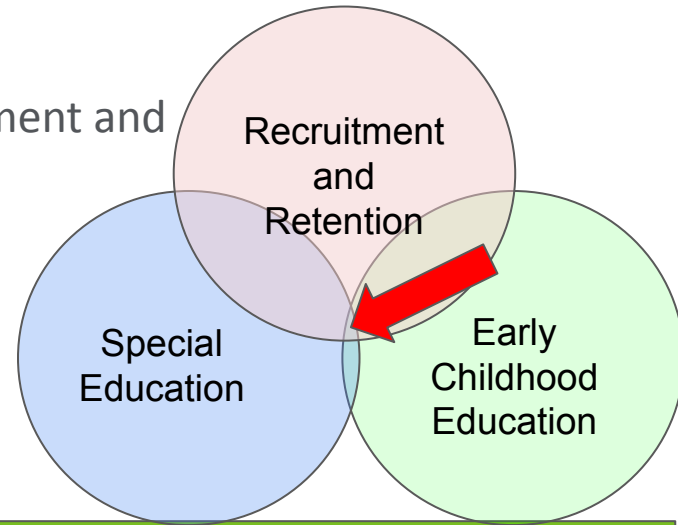
- Different systems
- Different approaches
- Different points of access
- Different research
- If we only address one or the other we will not solve the problem

# Our Process

- Began with a question: what are the evidenced-based practices around recruitment and retention in early childhood serving students with disabilities?
- What can we add to the conversation that hasn't already been said?
- Look at prior work:
  - B-8 Team
  - Childrens' Cabinet
- Literature review:
  - Broad brush approach including all allied professions

# Findings

- Many studies about recruitment and retention
- Many studies about special education
- Many studies about early childhood
- Not much research about the intersection of the three
- Many descriptions of TEACH, REETAIN, and other recruitment and retention programs, but not a lot of evidence about whether they work!
- Conclusion: There is a need for additional data



# Survey Process and Methodology

- Research questions:
  - Why do people go into early childhood special education?
  - Why do they stay?
  - If they leave, why?
  - Is there more that could be done to both recruit and retain?
- Survey open to anyone in any of the related fields from January - April 2021
- Did not want to duplicate other efforts
- Focus on those who were in the field as well as those who had left it
- Indebted to colleagues at Minnesota Department of Education who helped spread the word
- Primary outreach method was MDE outreach to registrants in recent professional development opportunities

# Survey Results - Demographics

~450 respondents

97% White (non-Hispanic)

95% still in the field

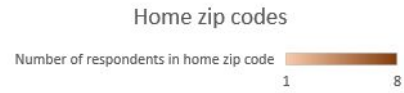
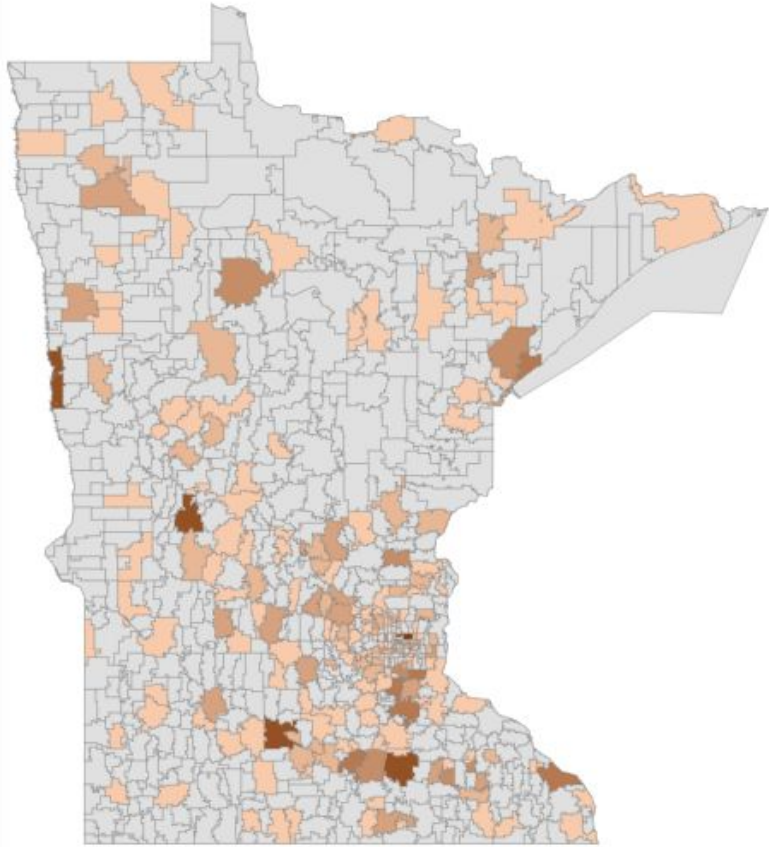
77% earning \$75,000 or less; 6% earning \$25,000 or less

73% currently holding license they use in their current role

63% Master's degree as highest level of education

60% 41 years old or older

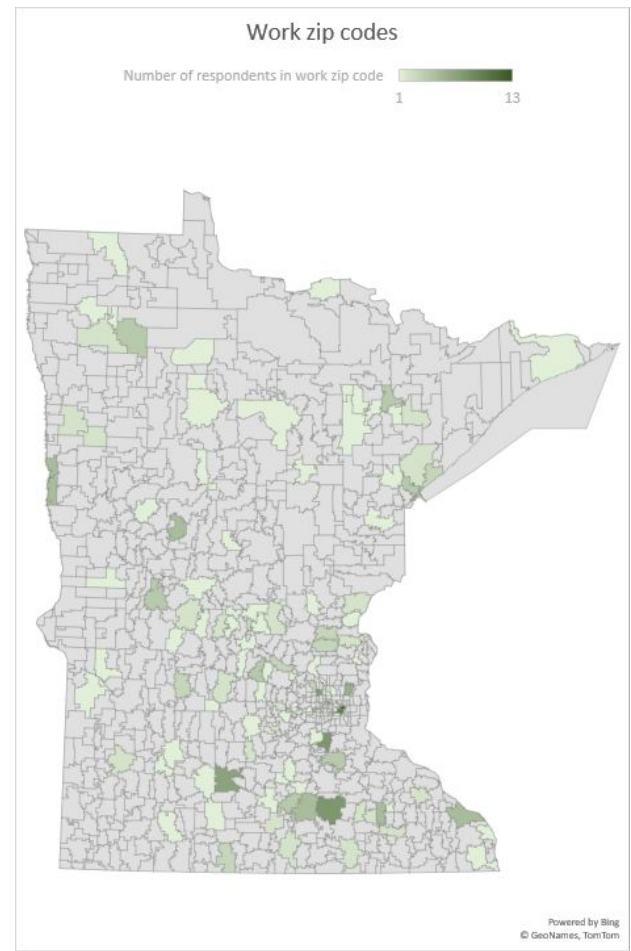
# Survey Results: Respondent Home Zip Codes





# Survey Results: Respondent Work Zip Codes

Method note: 305  
respondents provided current  
work zip code. All were within  
MN.



# Survey Results - Demographics

What is your age?	Number	Percentage
20 years old or younger	1	0%
21-30 years old	50	11%
31-40 years old	130	29%
41-50 years old	143	32%
51-60 years old	100	22%
61 years old or older	28	6%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Survey Results - Demographics

Do you identify with a particular race?	Number	Percentage
Asian or Asian American	4	1%
German	1	0%
Hispanic - Latino	1	0%
Multiracial	6	1%
South America (Guyana) Guyanese	1	0%
White	436	97%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Survey Results - Demographics

Are you of Hispanic origin?	Number	Percentage
No	440	99%
Yes	4	1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Survey Results: Level of Education

What is your highest level of education?	Number	Percentage
Associate's degree	9	2%
Bachelor's degree	134	30%
Certificate from a college or university	5	1%
Child Development Associate	1	0%
Doctoral degree	18	4%
High school diploma or GED	2	0%
Master's degree	283	63%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>100%</b>

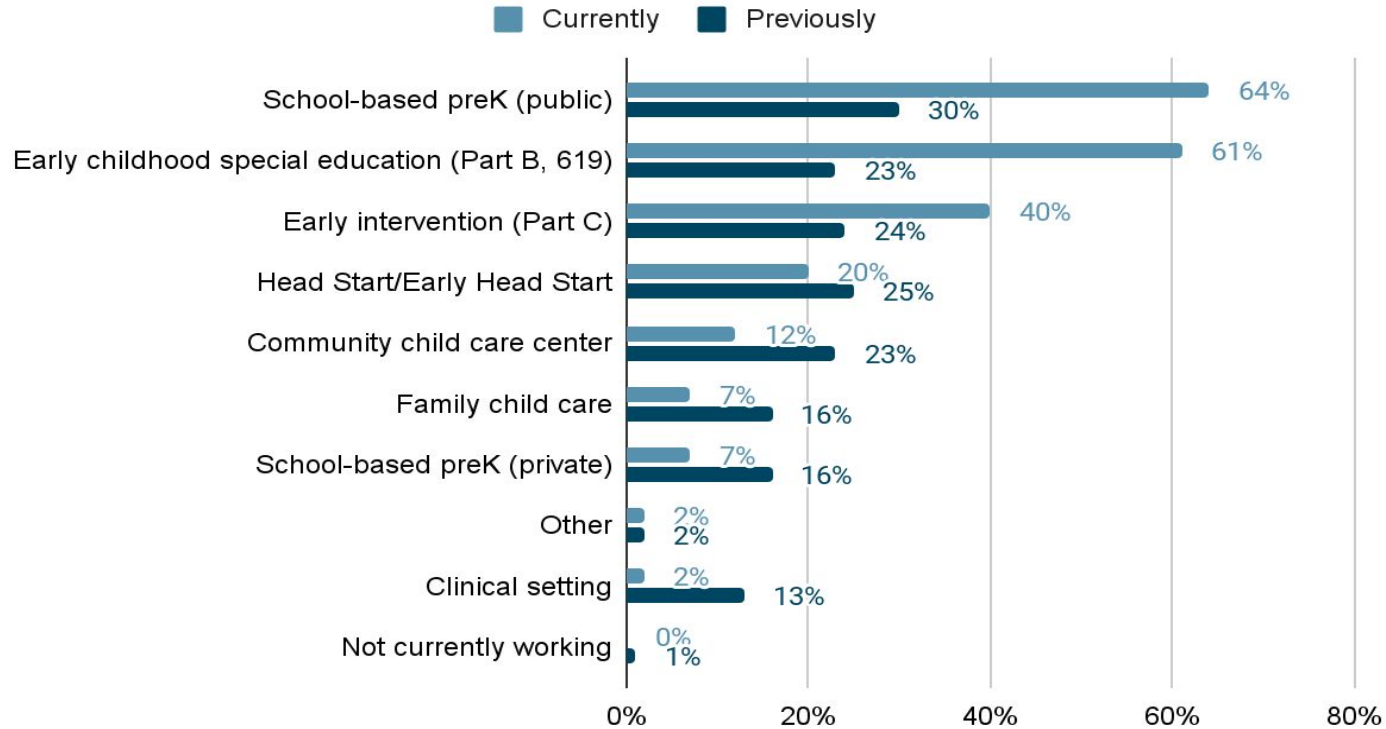
# Survey Results: Licensure

<b>Do you currently hold a professional license or business license (i.e. licensed child care business)?</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes, and using that license in my current role	328	73%
No, I do not have a current professional license or business license	91	20%
Yes, but not using that license in my current role	24	5%
No, but I am currently taking courses towards or applying for a license	5	1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Survey Results: Wages

If you are currently working, what is your annual salary?	Number	Percentage
\$25,000 or less	25	6%
\$25,001 - \$35,000	25	6%
\$35,001 - \$45,000	35	8%
\$45,001 - \$55,000	91	21%
\$55,001 - \$65,000	83	19%
\$65,001 - \$75,000	74	17%
\$75,001 - \$85,000	54	12%
\$85,000 or more	49	11%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Survey Results: What types of early childhood settings have you worked as a professional in early childhood special education? *Select all that apply*





# Survey Results: Current roles - select all that apply

43% Early childhood special education teacher

19% Early interventionist

16% Program director, principal, or other administrator

14% Speech-language therapist or assistant

13% Coach/mentor/master teacher

12% Home visitor

# Survey Results: Previous roles - select all that apply

39% Early childhood special education teacher

31% Home visitor

28% Lead teacher (child care, preK, Head Start, general education)

24% Early interventionist

19% Coach/mentor/master teacher

19% Early childhood family education teacher

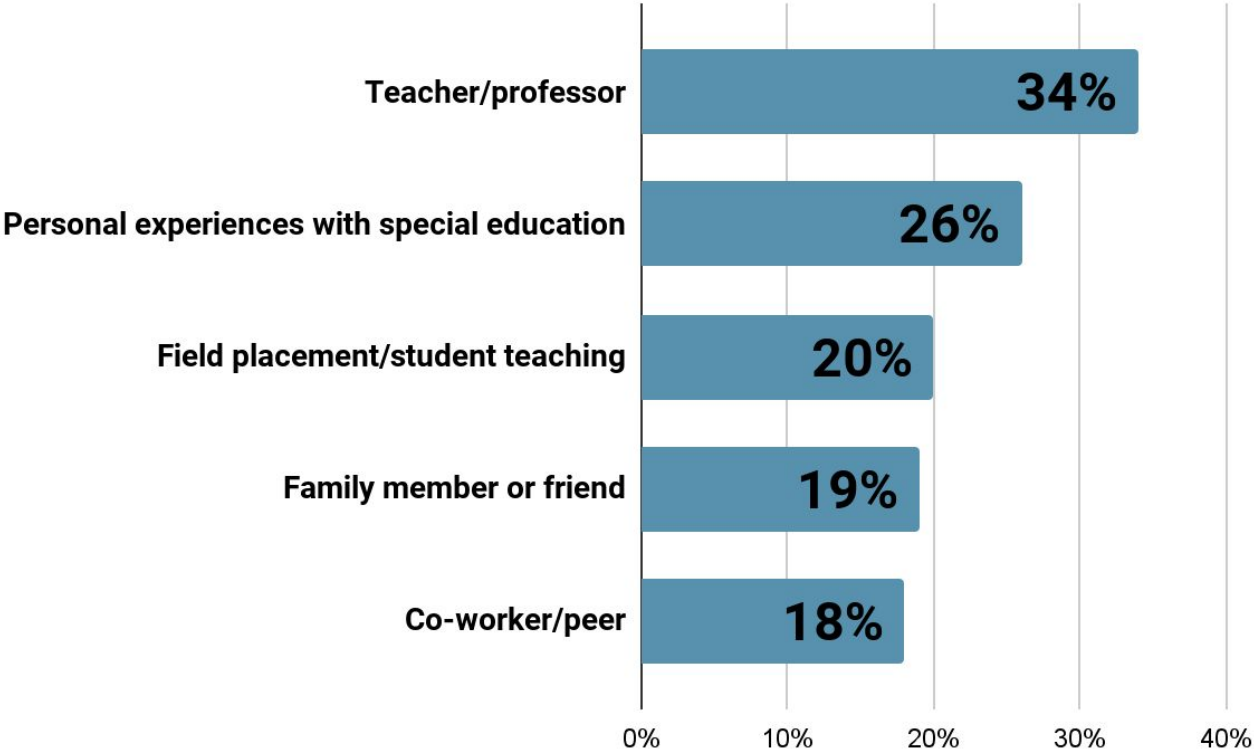
17% Speech-language therapist or assistant

14% Early childhood special education paraprofessional

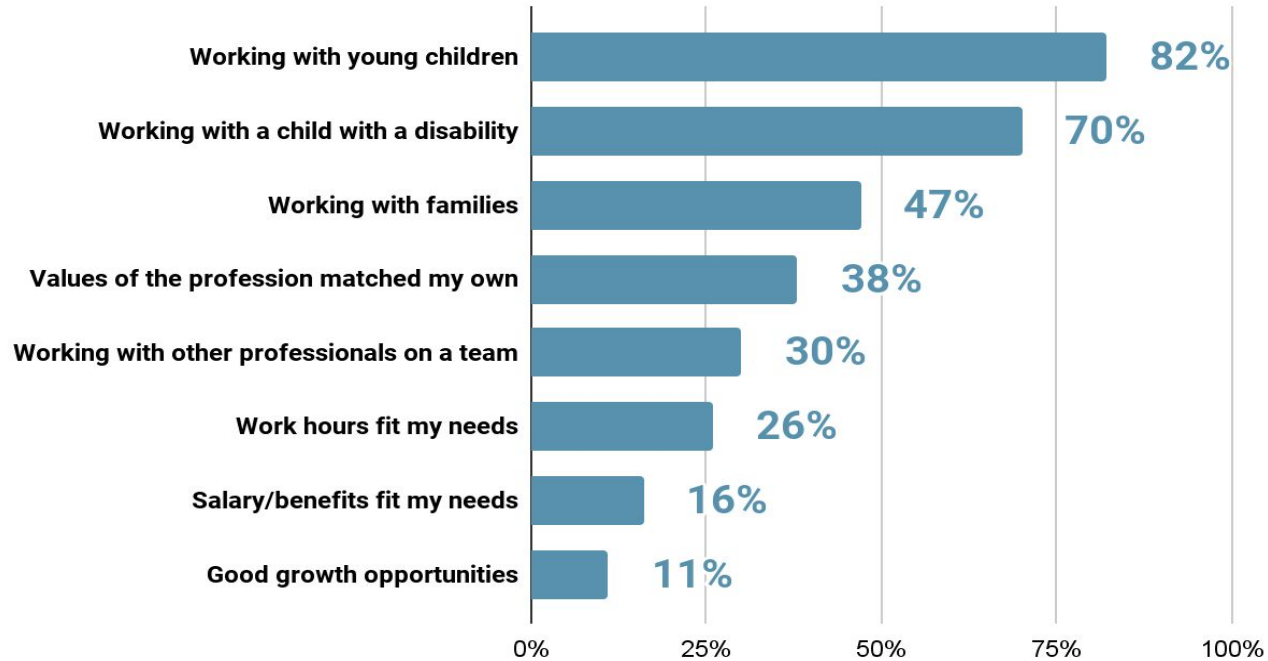
13% Program director, principal, or other administrator

11% K-12 special education teacher

Survey Results: How did you first learn about a career in early childhood special education? *Select all that apply*



# Survey Results: What made you interested in starting a career in early childhood special education? *Select all that apply*



# Survey Results: Early Experiences in the Field

**How did you first learn about a career in early  
childhood special education? (check all that apply)**  
**(n=449)**

**Percentage**

Teacher/professor	34%
Personal experiences with special education	26%
Field placement/student teaching	20%
Family member or friend	19%
Co-worker/peer	18%

# Survey Results: Early Experiences in the Field

Thinking back your experiences in early childhood special education, how well prepared were you for the following types of activities when you first started in this career?	Total	Percentage				N/A
		Very unprepared	Somewhat unprepared	Somewhat prepared	Very prepared	
Working with young children (about child development)	452	2%	7%	44%	47%	0%
Working with other professionals on a team	450	3%	14%	48%	35%	0%
Physical demands of the job	448	8%	20%	36%	33%	2%
Working with families	449	4%	22%	51%	23%	0%
Creating and monitoring goals for a child	450	6%	23%	46%	22%	3%
Working with children with a variety of disabilities	451	5%	17%	59%	19%	0%
Completing assessments and evaluations	451	10%	27%	40%	19%	4%
Mental/emotional demands of the job	451	17%	29%	38%	16%	1%
Time to collaborate with co-workers	446	8%	29%	46%	15%	2%
Completing other paperwork or documentation	451	11%	34%	40%	14%	2%
Managing caseloads	450	16%	31%	35%	9%	9%

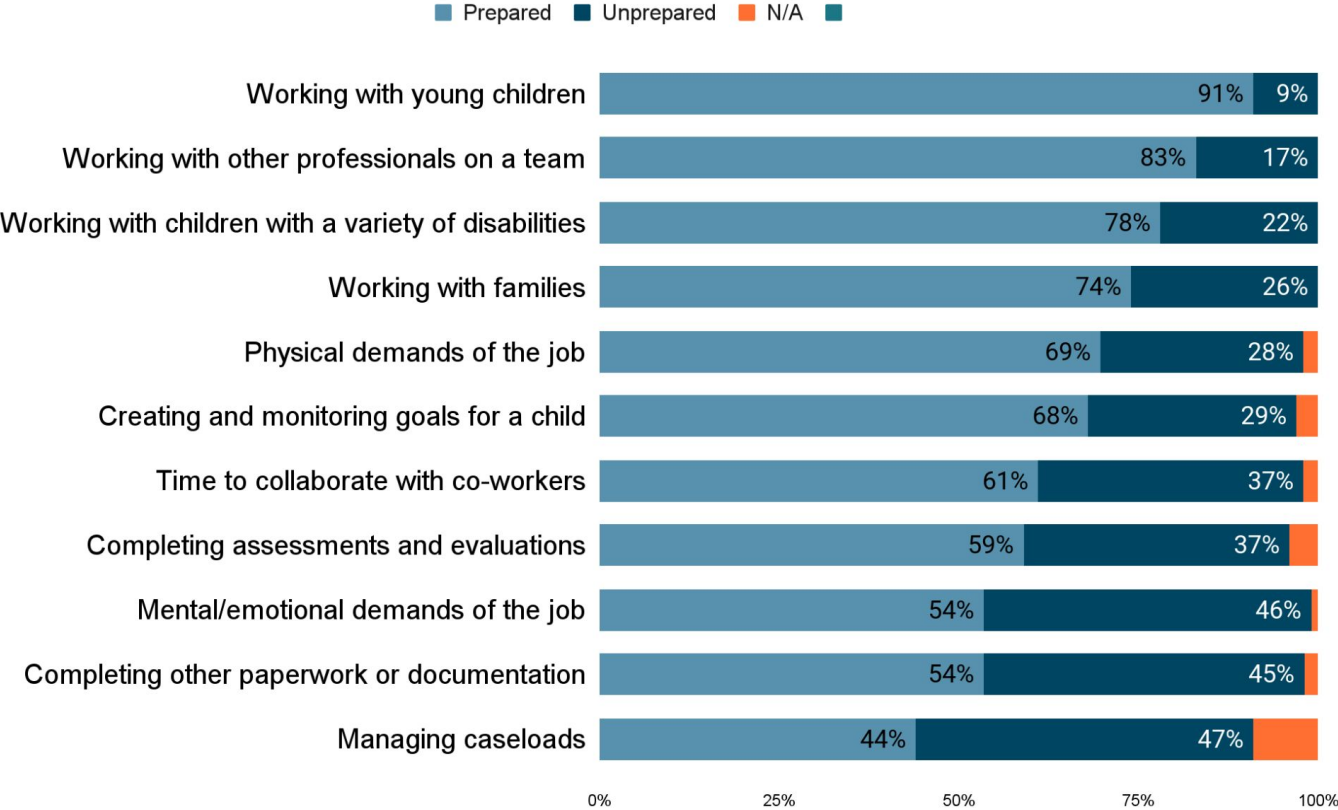
# Survey Results: Early Experiences in the Field

**What made you interested in starting a career in early childhood special education? (check all that apply) (n=444)**

**Percentage**

Working with young children	82%
Working with a child with a disability	70%
Working with families	47%
Values of the profession matched my own	38%
Working with other professionals on a team	30%
Work hours fit my needs	26%
Salary/benefits fit my needs	16%
Good growth opportunities	11%

# Survey Results: Thinking back your experiences in early childhood special education, how well prepared were you for the following types of activities when you first started in this career?





# Survey Results: Work History

	Currently (n=431)	Previously (n=422)
<b>What professional roles do you currently have or have previously had in early childhood special education? (check all that apply)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Early childhood special education teacher	43%	39%
Early interventionist	19%	24%
Program director, principal, or other administrator	16%	13%
Speech-language therapist or assistant	14%	17%
Coach/mentor/master teacher	13%	19%
Home visitor	12%	31%
Lead teacher (child care, preK, Head Start, general ed)	7%	28%
Early childhood family education (ECFE) staff	5%	19%
Occupational therapist or assistant	4%	5%
Early childhood special education paraprofessional	4%	14%
Physical therapist or assistant	2%	2%
K-12 special education teacher	2%	11%
Family child care provider	0%	6%
Assistant teacher (child care, preK, Head Start, general ed)	0%	0%
Other - Coded	7%	7%

# Survey Results: Work History

	Currently (N=422)	Previously (n=422)
<b>What types of early childhood settings have you worked as a professional in early childhood special education? (check all that apply)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
School-based pre K (public)	64%	30%
Early childhood special education (Part B, 619)	61%	23%
Early intervention (Part C)	40%	24%
Head Start/Early Head Start	20%	25%
Community child care center	12%	23%
Family child care	7%	16%
School-based pre K (private)	7%	16%
Other	2%	2%
Clinical setting (inpatient or outpatient)	2%	13%
Not currently working (either retired, furloughed/laid off)	0%	1%

# Survey Results: Covid-19

## How has your most recent job(s) been impacted by COVID-19? (N=455)

	Number	Percentage
My hours stayed the same	333	73%
I could work from home	322	71%
I was trained on health and safety protocols	237	52%
I was trained on virtual learning methods or tools	229	50%
I took on more duties or responsibilities	203	45%
I had access to paid sick time	174	38%
My duties or responsibilities stayed the same	109	24%
I was able to flex my schedule	108	24%
My duties or responsibilities were reduced	14	3%
None of these	8	2%
I voluntarily reduced my hours	6	1%
I was furloughed or laid off	6	1%
My hours were reduced by my employer	5	1%
<i>Other - trained myself on new skills</i>	4	1%

# Survey Results: Those Who Left The Field

Are you currently employed in the early childhood field and working with a child with a disability?	Number	Percentage
Yes	428	95%
No, I am working in another field	16	4%
No, I am retired	4	1%
No, I am furloughed	1	0%
No, I am seeking employment in another field	1	0%
No, I am seeking employment in the early childhood field	1	0%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Survey Results: Those Who Left the Field

<b>What are you doing now that you are not in the early childhood special education field? (check all that apply) (N=21)</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Working in related field (general education, psychology, social work)	8	38%
Still in my profession by in a different setting (clinical, working with older populations of children or adults)	7	33%
I'm retired or not working	0	0%
<i>Other - Admin</i>	2	10%
<i>Other - sub</i>	1	5%
<i>Other - working part time</i>	1	5%

# Survey Results: Those Who Left the Field

How satisfied are you in your new career or field? (N=21)	Number	Percentage
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Very unsatisfied	0	0%
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Somewhat unsatisfied	2	10%
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Somewhat satisfied	11	52%
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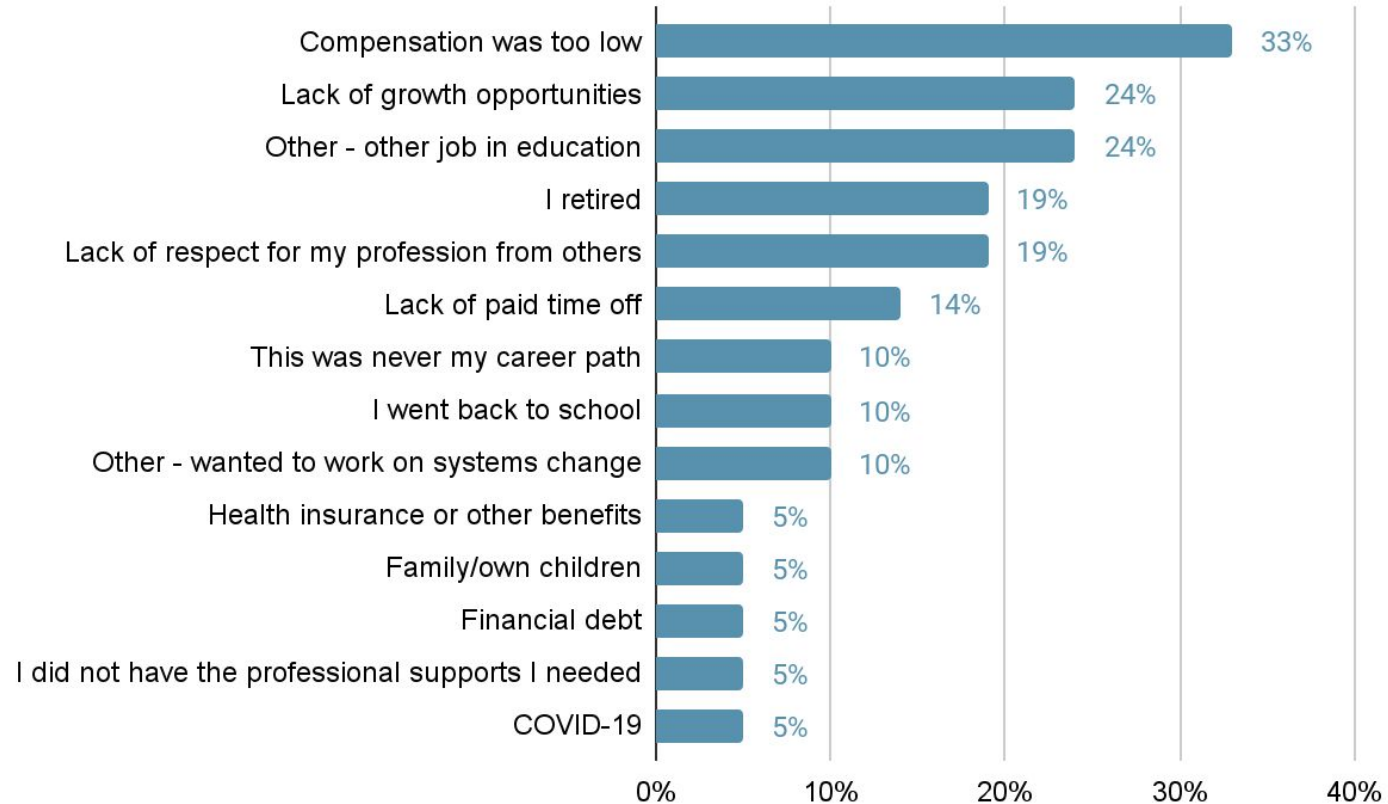
Very satisfied	8	38%
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# Survey Results: Those Who Left The Field

## 21 (5%) respondents had left the field

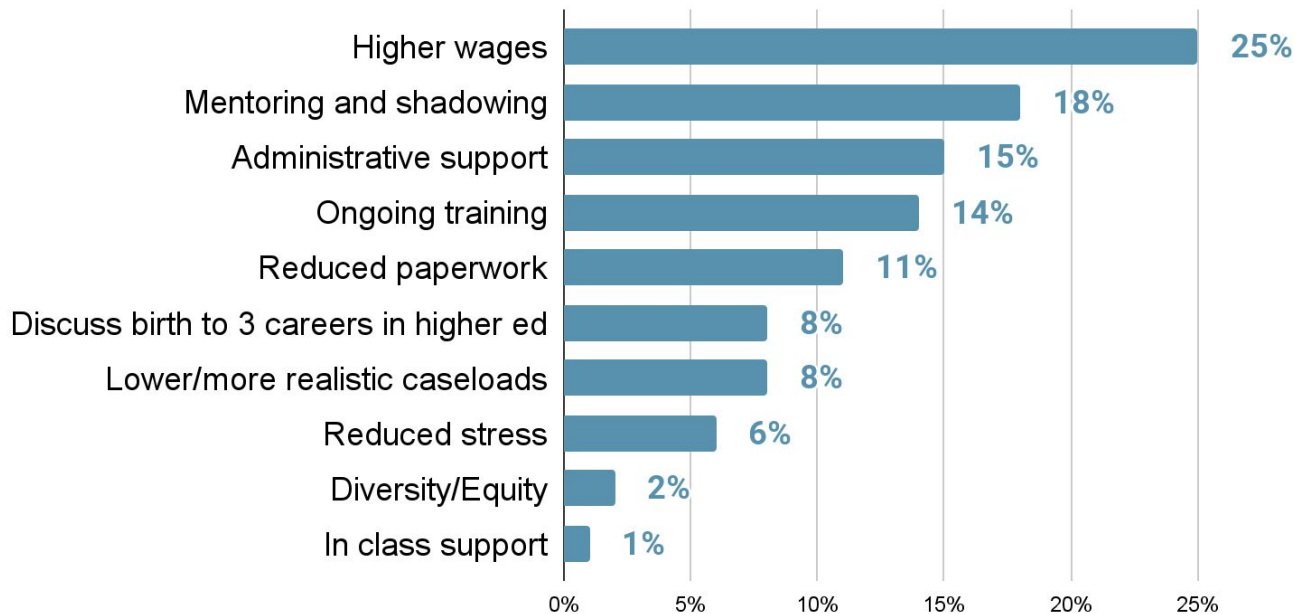
- About  $\frac{1}{3}$  working in another related field (general education, psychology, social work)
- About  $\frac{1}{3}$  working in their profession, but in another setting (clinical, working with older populations of children or adults)
- Some retired, furloughed, or seeking employment
- Almost all “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” in their new career

# Survey Results: Those Who Left the Field (N=21)





## Survey Results: If there is one thing you could do to improve recruitment and retention of early childhood professionals, what would it be? *Open-ended*



## Survey Results: Recommendations

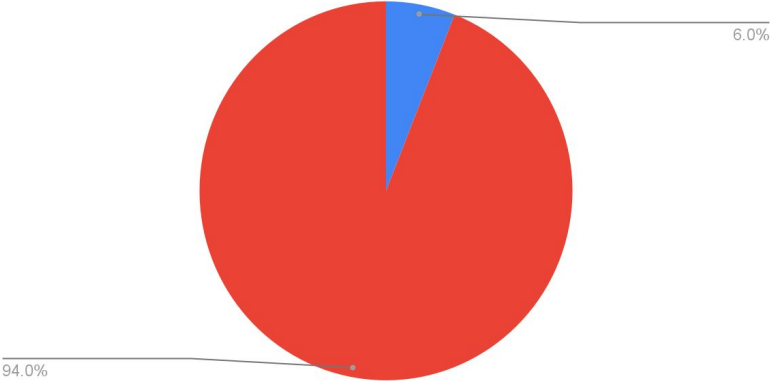
If there is one thing you could do to improve recruitment and retention of early childhood professionals, what would it be? (n=314)

	Number	Percentage
Higher wages	77	25%
Mentoring and shadowing	56	18%
Administrative support	48	15%
Ongoing training	43	14%
Reduced paperwork	34	11%
Discuss birth to 3 careers in higher ed	25	8%
Lower/more realistic caseloads	24	8%
Reduced stress	18	6%
Diversity/Equity	7	2%
In class support	3	1%

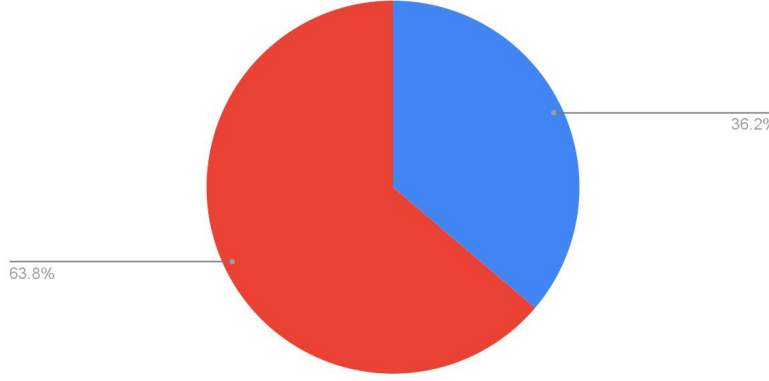
Is additional data needed?

# Our survey data does not reflect our students!

What percentage of K-12 teachers in Minnesota identify as white?



What percentage of K-12 students in Minnesota identify as races other than White?



# Why is this important?

- Minnesota has some of the nation's largest measurable differences in educational achievement across student race and ethnicity.  
<https://www.minneapolisfed.org/~media/assets/pages/education-achievement-gaps/achievement-gaps-mn-report.pdf>
- One of the ways to improve outcomes for students of color is to increase the number of teachers of color.  
<https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/TeachersOfColor-report.pdf>
- Black students who have just one black teacher have better outcomes.  
<https://releases.jhu.edu/2018/11/12/black-students-who-have-one-black-teacher-more-likely-to-go-to-college/>

How can we make sure teachers of color are included in our data?

# Focus group and interview process and methodology

- 1 focus group, 2 personal interview, n=6
- All identified as people of color
- Two identified as people who have a disability
- All participants either currently or previously working with students with disabilities in early childhood.
- 2 no longer in education, but working in related fields.
- Recruited through personal relationships, Black Men Teach, LEND program and word-of-mouth.

# Focus Group and Interview Results

- Asked the same questions as were asked in the survey
- Resulted in a series of “launchpads” and “barriers” on career trajectory
- Broke into three categories based on life stage
  - Formative Years
  - Pre-service Years
  - In-service Years



## FORMATIVE YEARS

...I THINK THE BIGGEST THING FOR OUR HURDLES IS REPRESENTATION BECAUSE IT TOOK ME A REALLY LONG TIME TO SEE SOMEONE OF ANY LEVEL OF CEREBRAL PALSY THAT WAS IN ANY FIELD, ANY REPRESENTATION ON TV.

I COME FROM WEST AFRICA. THAT SOCIETY IS A PLACE WHERE DISABILITY IS NOT TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION AT ALL. EVERYONE SHYS AWAY FROM A CHILD WITH DISABILITIES OR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.

JUST POSTING JOBS ON A WEBSITE MIGHT NOT BE THE BEST METHOD TO RECRUITING. YOU MIGHT NEED TO FIND JUST POSTING JOBS ON A WEBSITE MIGHT NOT BE THE BEST METHOD TO RECRUITING. YOU MIGHT NEED TO FIND A SPOKESPERSON FROM THAT COMMUNITY TO DO A QUICK VIDEO MESSAGE WHERE THAT CAN BE SENT OUT OR SPREAD AROUND THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITIES.

### Career Trajectory - Formative Years

+

Good personal experience with education system

Personal experience or family member with disability

Recruitment by person of color

Awareness of community need

-

Poor personal experience with education system

Community specific stigma around disability

Lack of representation

Lack of knowledge of pathways

Recruitment centered around white audience

Racism embedded in entrance exams/ application process



## Early experience with teaching

“I think that a lot of communities of color for folks who are interested in teaching [occurs] because they had at least one teacher that meant something to them and they wanted to be able to give that back...Having that positive experience does encourage [the career path] to be replicated by the person who experiences it.”

## Community-specific stigma

“I come from West Africa. That society is a place where disability is not taken into consideration at all. Everyone shys away from a child with disabilities or people with disabilities.”

# Representation

“I don't think a lot of people know that this is an occupation or an opportunity because it's not the thing that is brought in front of their face all the time. So if you can bring it to them sooner, they'll put it into their mind that it's an opportunity later. Unless they've had like a sibling or a family member or they know somebody who's been in the field didn't know this path was even an option.”

# PRESERVICE

STUDENT TEACHING IS A BARRIER FOR SOME. MANY HAVE TO QUIT THEIR JOBS IN ORDER TO TAKE ON A STUDENT TEACHING POSITION. AND THAT IS JUST NOT FEASIBLE FOR SOME.

FOR ME, THE BIGGEST [OBSTACLE] ... WHICH IS UNFORTUNATE, FOR ANYONE WITH A DISABILITY, IT WAS THE ASSUMPTION OF INCOMPETENCE. INCAPABILITY.

I WAS THE ONLY PERSON OF COLOR WHEN I WAS GETTING BOTH MY TEACHING LICENSE AND MY DIRECTOR'S CREDENTIALS. IT IS HARD WHEN THERE ARE NO PEOPLE WHO LOOK LIKE YOU. YOU DON'T HAVE PEOPLE TO GUIDE YOU, SUPPORT YOU, UNDERSTAND WHAT THE CHALLENGES ARE.

## Career Trajectory - Preservice

+

Instructors and mentors from communities of color

Partnerships with non-profit organizations serving communities of color

Clear pathways

Awareness of community need



-

Financial Obstacles

Inaccessible colleges/universities

Institutional Racism

Institutional Ableism

Lack of knowledge of pathways

Incompetent diversity training

Financial burden of practicum

# Application Process

“There are super hard barriers to being accepted into the program. You have to have a GPA that is this high. You have to have these scores on your standardized tests. You have to have this amount of volunteer work. This many hours of shadowing. And we know these things are barriers for people of color. We know these things are barriers for people from disadvantaged communities. None of these things mean that I’m going to be the best OT. You cut out a lot of people.”

# Licensing

“I have a lot of friends that have their master’s degree and finished student teaching but are not tier 3 licensed because of the MTLE’s. That is creating significant disproportionality. Most of the friends that I know are people of color. That really limits their prospects: they don’t have the freedom to apply anywhere they want.”

## Diversity Training

“Race and culture are treated like an afterthought. I remember that race is a thing. Culture is a thing! I remember in one class they had a white person teaching about diversity and I thought ‘What is this?’ Half of the people of color in the class walked out. It was so insulting.”



## Financial Obstacles

“Six months without pay is a challenge. I do think that there are great benefits for that but everyone doesn't have the family structure, the financial structure or support to maintain and to have a practicum that's unpaid. So if there is an incentive that can be utilized, I think that's huge.”

# INSERVICE

THERE WAS NO MENTORSHIP. AS A FIRST YEAR TEACHER, NO MENTORSHIP. NO SUPPORT.

YOU ARE JUST LEFT TO YOURSELF TO DROWN. TO FIGURE THINGS OUT ON YOUR OWN. TEACHERS OF COLOR FEEL THAT THE MOST. . .

THE MTL EXAMS ARE A BARRIER. IT HAS REALLY BEEN A STRUGGLE FOR ME.

THE EXAMS ARE NOT FRIENDLY TO PEOPLE OF COLOR.

I FEEL LIKE THEY ARE MEANT TO KEEP CERTAIN PEOPLE OUT RATHER THAN PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE KNOWLEDGE. INCAPABILITY.

I THINK THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE I FACE HAS BEEN FINDING RESEARCH THAT FIT NON WHITE COMMUNITIES.

I'LL SAY IT THAT WAY.

A LOT OF THE INFORMATION AND RESEARCH HAS BEEN NORMED ON WHITE COMMUNITIES.

## Career Trajectory - Inservice

+

Instructors and mentors from communities of color

Partnerships with non-profit organizations serving communities of color

Awareness of community need

Clear pathways

-

Incompetent diversity training

White centric testing/evaluation

Inaccessible schools

Institutional Racism

Institutional Ableism

Financial - return on investment



# Climate

“Being one of the only teachers of color in special education, there is just so much working in a large predominantly white population of staff. So many comments, so many people belittling your capacity, your ability, your potential. When you do speak out, being viewed as a threat. Being viewed as the angry Black woman. Fighting for students needs. Calling out disproportionality. Seeing the disparities. Fighting for resources that students need. For me personally, that is almost what drove me out of the field. The mental health toll that it takes. You see young kids of color going down the school-to-prison pipeline in front of your eyes. And here you are, sitting in front of administrators and colleagues, but now you’re the problem.”

# Climate

“...teachers were really looked down upon when they asked someone for help. Like that was a sign of lack of competency. There was no room for curiosity or other learning. Which is really ironic in a school. In the teaching field, when you meet a colleague to ask them ‘How do I do this?’ ‘I am finding this difficult.’ They look at you like you are not supposed to be there. ‘How dare you not know how to do this?’ ”

# Community Need

“As to what keeps me in the field? I have two children who are autistic. I have no choice. I can’t afford to quit. I have thought about it twice, because of the anxiety, but I was able to get help from supervisors at the time, and that’s what keeps me going. Honestly, I cannot afford to quit because of the needs of my own children. Because of the needs in my own community. Because of the overwhelming gap — the lack of services in (my) community is something that keeps me up at night.”

“It really feels to me like I could never quit because there is so much work to be done—to advocate, to help parents know what special education is. I could never leave.”

## Ableism

“For me, the biggest (obstacle) ... which is unfortunate, for anyone with a disability, it was the assumption of incompetence. Incapability.”

# Recommendations and next steps: 8 categories, 41 suggestions!

Career Pathways

Climate

Financial Obstacles

Mental Health

Training/Mentorship

Workload

Anti-racism

Anti-ableism

# Career Pathways

- Encourage early exposure to the field of early childhood special education
- Hire entry level teachers
- Encourage alternative pathways to licensure as a means to improve recruitment and retention of staff from diverse backgrounds
- Improve opportunities for upward mobility and career growth
- Build partnerships with trusted community organizations to encourage recruitment from diverse communities



# Climate

- Consider Individualized Family Plans for older students (3+) as a mechanism to improve dynamics between families and school staff.
- Improve school climate to be more inclusive of students with disabilities and those working with them (remove silos).
- Provide education on the fact that the presumption of competence must apply to staff as well as students.

# Financial Obstacles

- Address cost prohibitions in licensing exams. Provide financial support to cover cost of exams
- Address the financial burdens of field placements
- Provide reimbursement for transportation to and from placements
- Improve teacher wages

# Mental Health

- Provide mental health support for teachers and staff
- Improve access to trauma-informed practices and integrate them into school services for both students and staff

# Training/Mentorship

- Improve mentorship opportunities for new teachers
- Ensure entry level teachers have access to mentors
- Ensure teachers of color have access to mentors of color
- Explore PEER network program
- Provide time-management training and support for ECSE teachers to help with paperwork management
- Provide support for teachers in budget management/resource management in the context of their role

# Workload

- Improve access to wrap-around services for students so that the burdens of assisting students and families with additional needs do not fall on teachers
- Ensure understanding of case management and paperwork--what can we learn from other careers such as social work, etc
- Evaluate how much teacher paperwork is required by the law, and how much is in excess of legal requirements

# Anti-racism

- Evaluate MTLE and licensing processes for racial/economic bias.
- Evaluate entrance requirements in higher ed for racial/economic bias.
- Evaluate student teaching/practicum requirements for racial/economic bias.
- Increase anti-racism, anti-ableism, implicit bias, diversity, cultural responsiveness training in pre-service and in-service programs.
- Ensure that these programs are taught by people with lived experience.
- Acknowledge that institutional racism, disproportionate school discipline, school to prison pipeline are issues that affect teacher recruitment and retention as well as students.
- Engage in conversations about microaggressions and how to avoid them among staff as well as students.
- Consider the historical trauma of the educational system on communities of color.

# Anti-ableism

**Ableism** is a system that places value on people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, intelligence, excellence and productivity. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in anti-Blackness, eugenics, colonialism and capitalism. This form of systemic oppression leads to people and society determining who is valuable and worthy based on a person's appearance and/or their ability to satisfactorily [re]produce, communicate, excel, and "behave." You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism.


A working definition by Talila "TL" Lewis. Updated January 2020.

# Anti-ableism

- If we want to recruit teachers with disabilities, we must ensure that schools are accessible
- Involve people with disabilities in Professional Development
- Encourage high school teachers of students with disabilities to talk to their students about careers in teaching
- Eliminate financial disincentives so that individuals with disabilities will not lose access to services if they are competitively employed
- Encourage representation of diverse communities (including disability) in marketing materials
- Recognize that people are multiply marginalized
- Instruct schools on their responsibilities to comply with ADA for teachers and staff as well as students
- Recognize that stigma around disability looks different in different communities
- Address stigma around disability, especially in marginalized communities



*“Who better to teach students with disabilities than adults with disabilities? If we want to solve this workforce crisis, we need to dismantle the barriers that are making this field inaccessible to those most qualified to teach.”*



# *Thank you!*

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