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### Diversity and Postsecondary Education: Are Local Teacher Preparation Programs Really Preparing Educators for Supporting and Teaching Diverse Populations in the Classroom?

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Diversity and postsecondary education:

Are local teacher preparation programs really preparing educators for supporting and teaching diverse populations in the classroom?

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Course: Cultural Diversity in the School (EDU 3620)

Institute: Merrimack College

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### **Abstract**

This intensive research endeavor is focused in the realm of education, specifically inclusion in classroom settings. This paper will be examining local teacher preparation programs by analyzing their requirements for diversity education and training. The overall purpose of this research project is to increase awareness of the disconnect between inclusion and diversity education, inspire others to want to do something to better serve the diverse populations in local school districts, and to begin discussion about changing diversity requirements in local teacher education programs. This paper will begin by defining and distinguishing inclusion and diversity education. Next the paper will provide a breakdown of diversity requirements of several postsecondary institutions with teacher education as well as the districts these schools are located in and near. Next, the paper will introduce trauma, its connections to the diverse populations analyzed, and its status in teacher preparation programs. Following this, the paper will then discuss the disconnect between the diversity in these districts and the diversity education in local teacher preparation programs. Finally, the paper will close with talking about the challenges new educators will face but speak of the opportunity there is to prevent this and suggest adding more diversity requirements to local teacher preparation programs.

**Inspiration: My current struggles as a student teacher**

My placement for my practicum has been in a local urban elementary school with a diverse school population. This school has a high number of students with a low socioeconomic status, a high rate in special education services, and a large population requiring ESL (English as a second language) services. I found myself on almost a daily basis struggling with the students I was working with. I love helping them grow and learn, but on top of my weakness of classroom management I found myself greatly challenged in meeting their needs. Reflecting upon my postsecondary education, I learned plenty of the history, development, and theory driving education. However, learning how exactly to support students from diverse populations has been a different story, and I find myself reviewing simply the lists of strategies I was provided. I was constantly questioning myself and found myself in situations where I needed to seek the aid of my supervising practitioner. I spoke with inservice teachers, including some new to the field, to learn if they have had similar struggles. I learned that many of them do, and some have been under such great stress from their work that some of their colleagues have left the field of education entirely while others stayed and continued to stress their way through it all (I learned one teacher became physically ill and began losing her hair from the stress a couple years ago, and another spent every day after school last year crying at her desk).

Learning more from my colleagues, I now realize it is not just a struggle for the teachers and specialists working in this school; many of the students struggle greatly as well. With the students I have worked, several are homeless, several others have been abused in the past, and

countless are with families that are financially struggling. In this school and others, I've heard of several of these children attending their parents' funerals due to drug overdoses. It is a wonder that many of these students even attend school, let alone perform as well as they are.

Hearing these stories of true struggle, I began wondering: is this situation of feeling unprepared to handle diverse student populations unique to our district, or is this an issue with other local school districts? That is when I came to this point where I wanted to research something meaningful and have it connected to diversity in education. Thinking about my experiences from my practicum, I knew I wanted to focus on this project. The challenges I have experienced in the field have inspired me to begin examining the requirements of local teacher preparation programs to learn whether teachers are receiving the coursework and training necessary to support and serve the student populations they will be responsible for. With the help of an affiliate, I have now been guided toward this project where I can channel my desire of diversity, inclusion and education into a meaningful and purposeful endeavor.

Before this paper begins examining the diversity requirements of several local post secondary institutions, Inclusion and Diversity Education will be defined. These two concepts from the field of education will be defined and distinguished from one another, serving as a foundation to discussing the issue: the disconnect between them and why that is hurting new educators entering the field. The hope is this paper will raise awareness of those entering the field and inspire them to take action and help add requirements to local teacher preparation programs. Teachers should be prepared to help every child reach their full potential regardless of the challenges they may face. But if our preparation programs are not giving us the tools we need

to be effective and knowledgeable educators, that hope is nothing but a dream; the goal is to make that a reality.

### **What is Inclusion? Current legal definition and history**

Inclusion has a specific definition relevant to the field of education. With regard to preK-12 classrooms nowadays, inclusion is recognized as a practice in which students with a variety of disabilities are introduced to the general classroom setting and integrated with the general population for curriculum and other activities typical to a routine school experience (Forman). Disability categories include those impairments that prove to be obstacles to physical, intellectual, emotional, sensory, and neurological function (Forman). Some examples of such disabilities include below-the-waist paralysis, Attention Deficit with Hyperactivity (ADHD), visual impairment or blindness, and Executive Function Disorder (a specific neurological impairment that affects functioning and ability in the areas of organization, attention, planning, emotion regulation, and others) (Forman) (Understood).

Legal recognition and practice of inclusion has been due to the push for social justice and human right spanning over the past several decades. The first legal action taken for inclusion occurred in 1973 with the enactment of the Rehabilitation Act which states that no individual can be denied access to any programs or forms of assistance funded by the federal government (United States Access Board). Specifically, Section 504 of the legislation states no one can be denied access to such services, nor be subject to any form of discrimination, on account of disability (United States Department of Labor). In mind that many educational institutions receive federal funding, many schools fall under this legislation and it directly relates to the service and instruction of students in these institutes. Special education attorney Peter Wright

states that Section 504 has its context in education as well, stating this section ensures any “child with a disability has equal access to an education” and “the child may receive accommodations and modifications,” which is specifically referring to the forms of services students with disabilities may receive in order to have equal access to said education (Wright).

Another major form of legislation that developed over the course of several decades was the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which began as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act signed into law by Lyndon Johnson in 1965 as a reaction to the “war on poverty”. This, however, changed due to the rulings of *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* and *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia*, both of which resulted in verdicts supporting and protecting the rights of students with intellectual and learning disabilities. These court cases led to significant consequences, including an investigation to learn how many children with disabilities were receiving services across the United States. The investigation concluded that less than half of the eight million children identified with disabilities were receiving adequate services, whereas the rest were receiving substandard services or none at all and stayed at home.

Reactions to this resulted in the passing of Public Law 94-142, also known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, in 1975. This new legislation, in addition to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, required states that received federal grants and aid to provide equal access to education for all children, regardless of whether they had a disability or not. Overtime, more changes were made to the legislation to include more populations in education, including students with traumatic brain injuries and Autism Spectrum Disorder (University of Kansas). In 1997, what was changed to Public Law 101-476 (still “The Education for All Handicapped

Children Act”) became what is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (or IDEA) and was reauthorized by former president Bill Clinton to ensure all students, regardless of ability, received access to the same curriculum. The last time IDEA was amended was in 2004 when standards for educators rose, in terms of both accountability and educational outcomes, and early intervention (programs focusing on targeting areas of concern in academic or overall development) was implemented for students showing atypical or delayed development. Finally, funds were allocated if it appeared there were a disproportionate percentage of minority students placed in special education programs (University of Kansas).

All of these changes to the law’s official title and what services or programs provided came back to why questions about students with disabilities were raised in the first place: it became an issue of human rights and what legislators were then doing to better provide accommodations to specific populations that needed additional support in the classroom. Up until the early half of the twentieth century, depending on the culture or society they found themselves in, the disabled were seen as anything from a curse on a family or a financial liability to others. In some cases, certain cultures outcast them completely, and the widespread stigma did not begin to be countered until the education of disabilities and the passing of legislation was pushed during the 1970’s in the United States and other countries across the world (Munyi). Much progress has been made in improving the human rights of citizens with disabilities and others (those of different races, genders, etc). However, the preparation of those responsible for working with those who have disabilities or other non mainstream features, such as educators, it should be called into question whether progress has been made in this area as well; are teachers,

who are working with diverse student populations, receiving adequate training and knowledge in their preparation programs to help all of their students learn and grow?

### **What is Diversity Education? Current concept in the field**

As a response to the legislative changes in representation and support of people with disabilities, sociocultural perceptions didn't just reach schools at the institutional level, but it also entered classrooms. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, several countries around the world were adopting this form of education including the United States, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Brazil, New Zealand, and many others. Initially, at least in the United States, diversity education had its roots in the civil rights movement. Therefore, diversity education primarily focused on teaching about equity and race in its early years. As time progressed, depending on where it was being implemented, diversity education became a tool in classrooms as a means of recognizing the many facets of any individual in the student population. In the larger sense, more notably outside of the United States, diversity education has taken shape as a form of public policy in other countries including Canada and Australia (Nieto).

Whatever its form may be, diversity education is serving as a tool of awareness to teach new generations of the masses about various, non mainstream groups in society and learning to accept them. However, if handled improperly, diversity education will fail to address any of the inequality it serves to resolve. For example, if it becomes a tool for seemingly spreading awareness rather than having a deep impact or reaction to real inequity (an example could be promoting "ethnic" music but still failing to teach all students about all forms of music), then it has failed at being implemented properly (Nieto). Diversity education should have the power to

teach all students not just about others, but also give everyone access to this information. Otherwise, it loses its power to be transformative for school populations introduced to it.

Additionally, as diversity education has its roots in social justice (Nieto) similar to inclusion (Forman), this becomes a matter of upholding human rights. Specifically, diversity education has four components that extend well beyond simply being nice to others and target the heart of the problem. The first component is focused on acknowledging and dismantling inaccurate and harmful information about specific student populations. Another component focuses on providing all students the resources they need to access content and the curriculum in the classroom. A third component is bringing attention to the specific skills and strengths inherent in all students coming into schools. The final component is about raising critical thinking skills of students and inspiring them to bring about social change (Nieto).

Thinking of diversity education at the postsecondary level, in teacher preparation programs, this would take on the form of coursework and practicums or placements. Here, preservice teachers would be learning about diverse populations, inclusion, accommodations and modifications for students, and many other facets to effective teaching. Furthermore, the components mentioned before would apply here to for the preservice teacher being trained- they need to be educated and redirected on mistruths, know how to make the curriculum accessible to all students, learn how to promote the strengths and talents of all students, and increase critical thinking and problem solving skills of these students regardless of their needs or circumstances. However, questions have recently been raised about the effectiveness of these programs and whether or not they are really preparing preservice teachers for meeting the needs of diverse student populations. The challenge isn't the increase in inclusion or integration, but rather in

preparing new educators for these changes in the field. Many teacher preparation programs across the country offer one required course for teachers in supporting students with disabilities, and the concern is this isn't enough to adequately prepare teachers for the challenges they will face in the classroom (Mader). The absolute minimum any teacher should gain in a preparation program is two courses covering education of students with disabilities and/or language needs. Even this is questionable with the rises of populations with disabilities. The U.S. Department of Education has noted increases in special education enrollment over the past several years, specifically in the categories of Autism Spectrum Disorder and other health impairments not otherwise specified. There are additional variables having an impact on these changes including additional diagnoses or reevaluations, pushes for response to intervention (formal sequential program as response to specific students not making appropriate academic gains in the classroom and is used as a step prior to referral for testing of possible disabilities). However, numbers do show an increase in over 200,000 more students across the country enrolling in special education programs between 2011 and 2014 (Samuels). Data shows there have been increases in nearly all five categories of specific populations across all Massachusetts districts discussed in this report (Selected population enrollment). Tables beginning on Page 24 show a comprehensive breakdown of population percentages in five selected populations and their changes over the past two school years in the eight districts analyzed for this report. As a result of all of these factors and changes, the impact of inclusion is greatly hurt because teachers are not given the tools and training to support students of diverse populations in order to achieve mastery of needed content (Mader). This is especially a concern with the increases in these student populations that needed highly trained and knowledgeable educators to support them.

At the local level, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, it should be called into question whether teacher preparation programs here are adequate in preparing preservice teachers for handling the diverse populations inside school systems across districts; every program should be verified if teachers are receiving the tools, support, and knowledge they need to adequately meet the needs of all students, especially as populations are constantly experiencing change depending on the current sociocultural-political climate. But whether local preparation programs are accomplishing this through the coursework they're offering now is something to consider.

### **Distinguishing Inclusion and Diversity Education**

While both related to diversity and the need to address it in the classroom, both inclusion and diversity education differ significantly from one another in terms of their implementation and purpose. Before examining the practice of both in local school districts, inclusion and diversity education should be clearly defined and contrasted from one another, especially when both are being practiced to different degrees in terms of adequacy and consistency.

Inclusion, as discussed before, refers specifically to the practice of integrating students with disabilities into the least restrictive classroom setting and providing them the supports they need to have equal access to the curriculum as their peers (Forman). Diversity education, as discussed before, is a form of teaching meant to raise awareness of specific populations in mainstream society. In the context of teacher preparation programs, diversity education would come in the form of coursework, practicums, and any additional training designed to prepare teachers to supporting these populations in their own classrooms (Mader).

The significance of establishing a contrast between the two comes down to who is accountable for the outcome of them. Inclusion comes down to the school responsible for serving the students in them, and this can include services from accommodations and modifications of the learning environment or curriculum to the status of the least restrictive environment (LRE) (a learning environment most suitable for a student with specific learning needs, designed to be as close as possible to a mainstream learning experience and giving them the opportunity to be among, interact, and learn with their mainstream peers) accessible for the student(s) in question (Forman). Diversity education, in this context, becomes the responsibility of teacher preparation programs to adequately train preservice teachers for their roles in the field. Whether teachers are learning how to challenge and support students from various populations is the question. Examining current preparation programs may begin to provide some clarification on where these programs are right now in training new educators for the field. Further, if there is a disconnect between the adequacy of teacher preparation programs and the diverse populations of districts in proximity to these, a discussion could begin on how this can be resolved. Following is a data breakdown of credit requirements for several teacher education programs in the commonwealth of Massachusetts followed by an analysis of their content.

### **Diversity requirements for teacher preparation programs in local institutes**

**\*Note for the following tables:**

- Number of credits vary depending on program: Early Childhood Education (PreK-2), Elementary Education (1-6), Middle School Education (5-8), High School Education (8-12), or Moderate Disabilities (PreK-8).

- Credits displayed are strictly for the teacher preparation program component and does not include credits for core requirements specific to that college or university (all postsecondary institutions scanned have graduation prerequisites of 120-130 credits for a bachelor's degree)

### Merrimack College

Requirements (any teacher preparation program)	48-70 credits (major) 20 credits (minor)
Diversity courses available (any teacher preparation program)	4 courses, 14 credits (major) 1 course, 4 credits (minor)
Required diversity courses (any teacher preparation program)	3 courses, 10 credits (major) 1 course, 4 credits (minor)

Source:

<https://www.merrimack.edu/academics/education-and-social-policy/education-and-community-studies/majors/education/>

### Lesley University

Requirements (any teacher preparation program)	39-45 credits (major) 20-24 credits (minor)
Diversity courses available (any teacher preparation program)	7 courses, 21 credits (major) 4 courses, 13 credits (minor)
Required diversity courses (any teacher preparation program)	3-4 courses, 9-16 credits (major) 0-4 courses, 0-13 credits (minor)

Source: <https://lesley.edu/academics/explore/area-of-study/education/degree-level/undergraduate>

### University of Massachusetts in Lowell

Requirements (any teacher preparation program)	60 credits (major) 18 credits (minor)
Diversity courses available (any teacher preparation program)	10 courses, 31 credits (major)

	1 course, 3 credits (minor)
Required diversity courses (any teacher preparation program)	10 courses, 31 credits (major) 1 course, 3 credits (minor)

Source:

<https://www.uml.edu/Catalog/Undergraduate/Education/Programs/Degree-pathways/DP-education-EMD-2017.aspx>

### Salem State University

Requirements (any teacher preparation program)	68 credits (major) 21-30 credits (minor)
Diversity courses available (any teacher preparation program)	3 courses, 9 credits (major) 3 courses, 9 credits (minor)
Required diversity courses (any teacher preparation program)	3 courses, 9 credits (major) 3 courses, 9 credits (minor)

Source: [http://catalog.salemstate.edu/preview\\_program.php?catoid=36&pooid=4145&returnto=7333](http://catalog.salemstate.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=36&pooid=4145&returnto=7333)

### Teacher preparation program content analysis summary

The concern of enough coursework and adequate training have been raised in this report (Mader). Considering the bare minimum of some coursework covering students with language needs and/or disabilities, most of the postsecondary institutions analyzed provide this and possibly an additional course in inclusion. Nearly all of the institutions analyzed had up to seven total diversity courses available, up to four of which were required (the rest were optional and/or electives). The exception would be University of Massachusetts in Lowell (University of Lowell) which requires ten courses related to topics in diversity to be fulfilled in its fused education program including elementary education and moderate disabilities. Another concern with the credits available in most of these institutions is little to no information about populations aside

those receiving special education and or language services, specifically those suffering from socioeconomic disadvantages. With most preparation programs only requiring one course in meeting the needs of ELL students as well, it's something to consider if the bare minimum in exposure is adequate in meeting the needs of this population as well. Additionally, trauma was only found as optional coursework in one of the institutions surveyed (trauma and its relevance in this research is discussed later in the report). Therefore, nearly all of the courses available in these programs are almost exclusively for examining the needs of students requiring special education services and not necessarily the needs of other student populations. These institutions are giving special education much more attention than the average U.S. college or university, but their focus on other student populations does raise concern on whether preservice teachers are being prepared to meet their needs. A clearer picture of this dilemma will become more apparent with the data breakdown of each district in the next few sections of this report.

### **Identification of selected population identifiers**

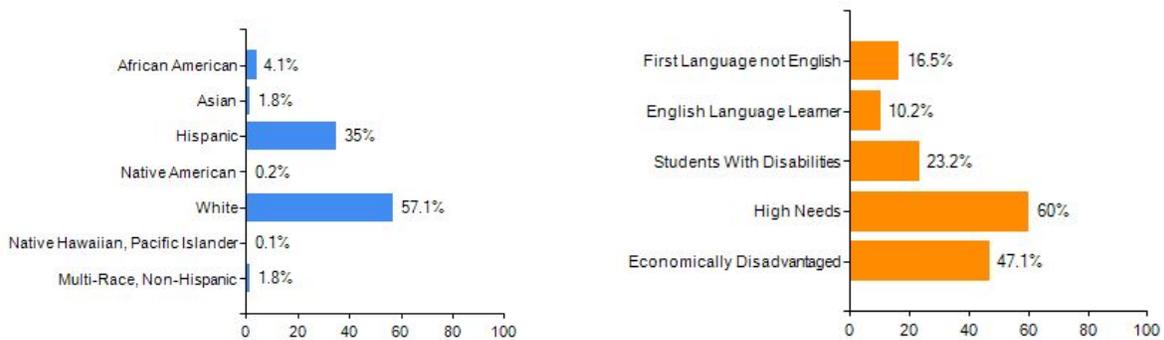
The data displayed on the following pages depicts the current demographics of eight selected districts from the state of Massachusetts (Haverhill, Lawrence, Methuen, Andover, Georgetown, Boston, Salem, and Lowell). The visuals display two representations of the same data. One set of graphs (left side of each page) displays the racial demographics of each district whereas the other set of graphs (right side of the page) displays selected populations. These “selected populations are groups of students in school districts that require additional support and resources to adequately teach and care for. The five selected populations recognized in Massachusetts are “First language not English”, “English Language Learner” (a student currently

enrolled in a program to learn English), “Disabilities”, “socioeconomically disadvantaged”, and “high needs” (any student identified as coming from a family with a low income, an ELL, a former ELL who has been out of the program for less than two years, a child diagnosed with at least one disability, or a child coming from a family of low socioeconomic status) (Selected population descriptors). Following all of these charts are two composite graphs showing running averages for all eight districts, both for race and selected populations.

**The diversity demographics of local school districts**

**Haverhill**

**Graph 1: Demographics of Haverhill School District**

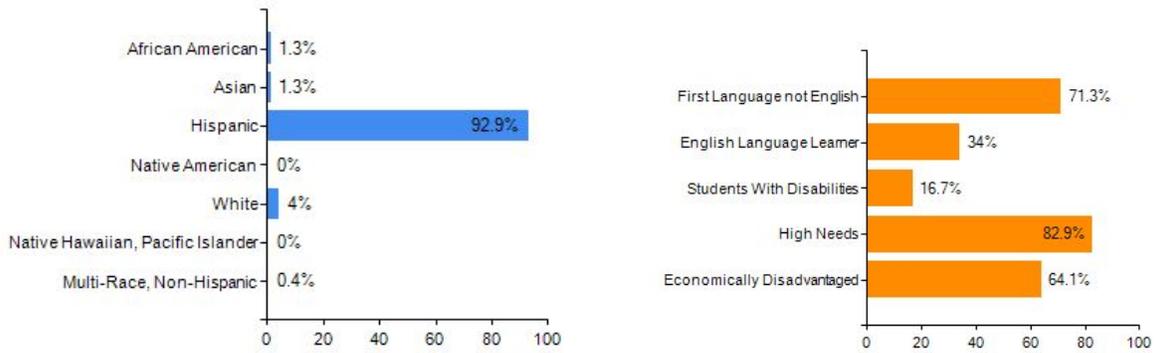


**Source:**

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=01280000&orgtypecode=5>

**Lawrence**

**Graph 2: Demographics of Lawrence School District**

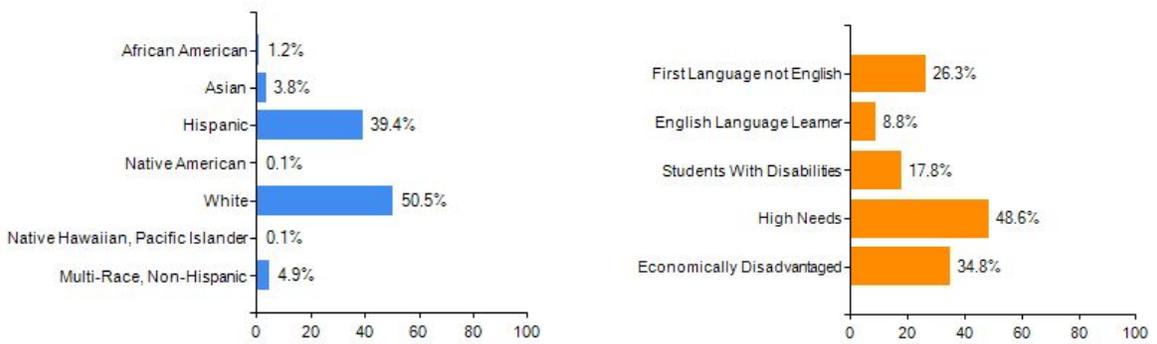


Source:

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=01490000&orgtypecode=5>

**Methuen**

**Graph 3: Demographics of Methuen School District**

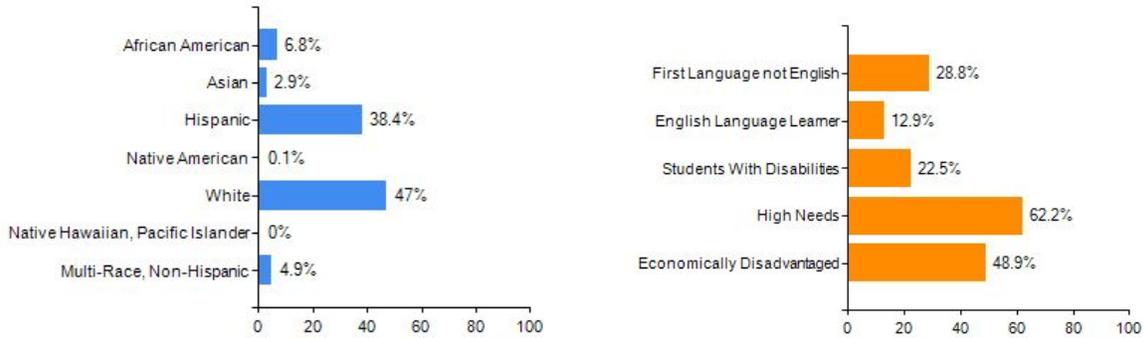


Source:

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=01810000&orgtypecode=5>

**Salem**

**Graph 4: Demographics of Salem School District**

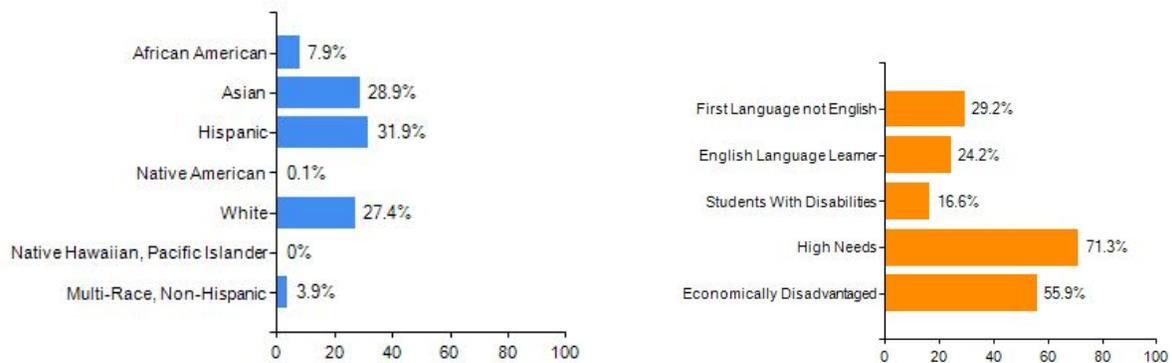


**Source:**

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=02580000&orgtypecode=5>

**Lowell**

**Graph 5: Demographics of Lowell School District**

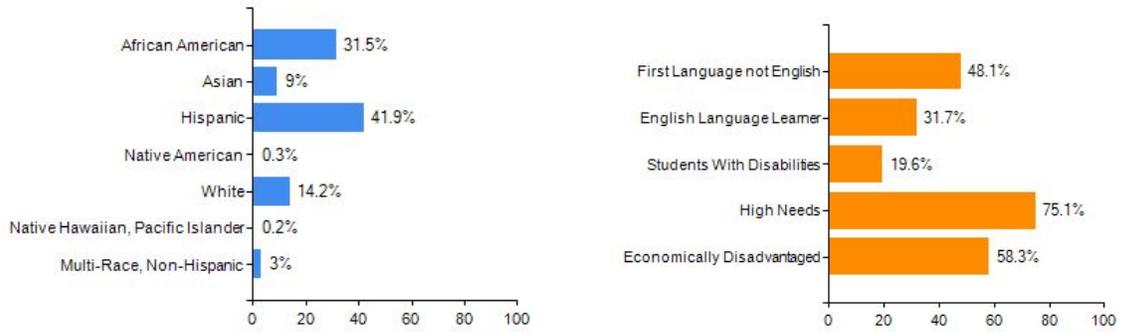


**Source:**

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=01600000&orgtypecode=5>

**Boston**

**Graph 6: Demographics of Boston School District**

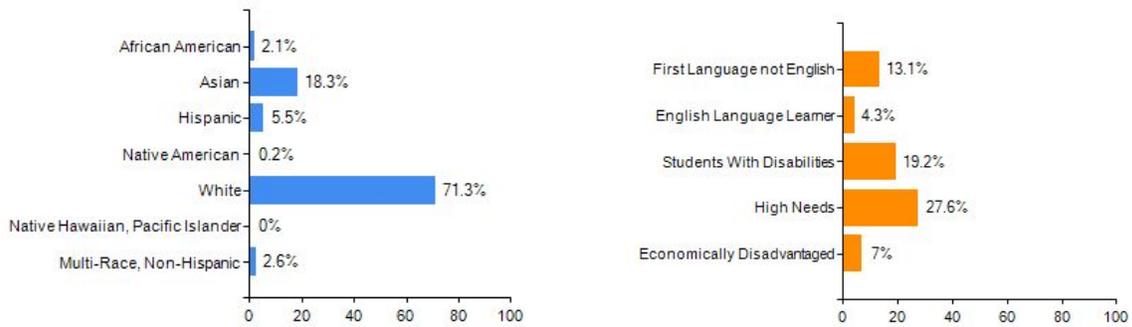


**Source:**

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=00350000&orgtypecode=5>

**Andover**

**Graph 7: Demographics of Andover School District**

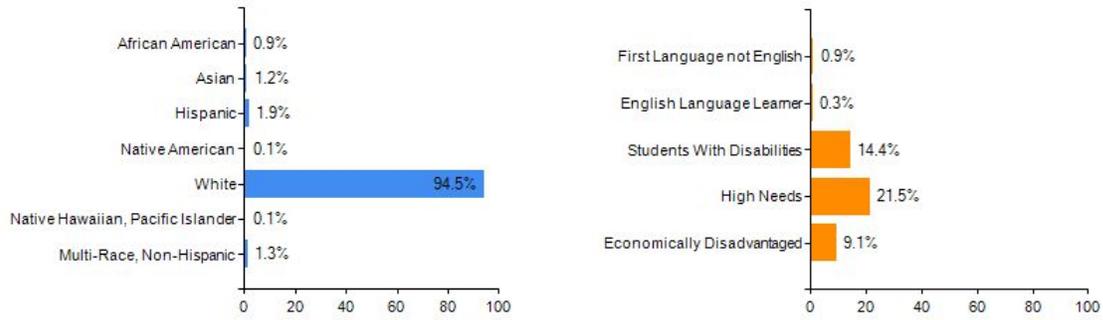


**Source:**

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=00090000&orgtypecode=5>

**Georgetown**

**Graph 8: Demographics of Georgetown School District**



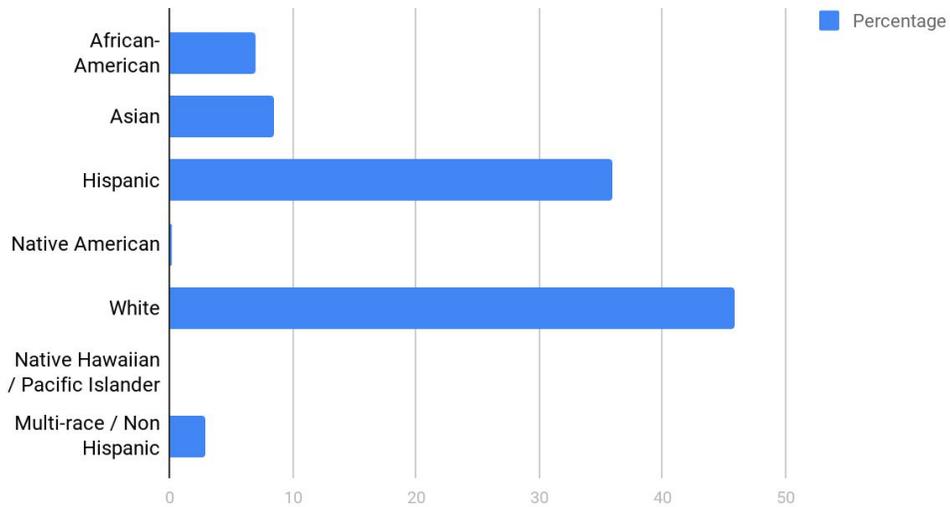
**Source:**

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=01050000&orgtypecode=5>

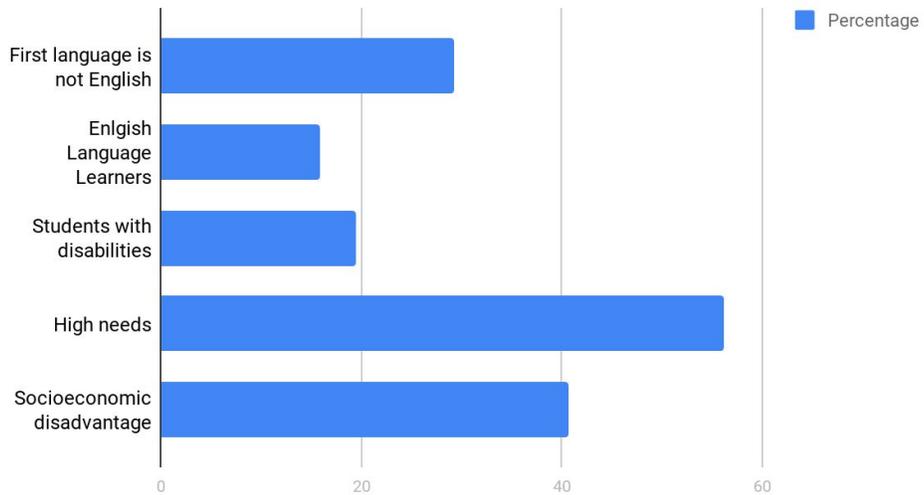
**Graph 9: Composite of all districts**

**Sample size: Approximately 106,300 students**

Composite of racial demographics



Composite of selected populations demographics



### **Summary of racial and selected population demographics**

The data breakdown of both the racial and selected populations further provides insight into the misalignments with minority representation in education as well as the adequacy of teacher preparation programs in effectively address the needs of diverse populations. Overall, nearly forty percent of all student currently enrolled in the commonwealth of Massachusetts are of a racial minority, which is significant compared to its counterpart: just seven percent of educators from the 2016-2017 academic year were identified as being a racial minority (Rocheleau). Further this gap has been increasing, as student populations continue to diversify while teacher populations have not. This large discrepancy in race is a concern for teacher diversity in Massachusetts as well as addressing the achievement gaps present between white and minority student populations. The issues of diversity and minority representation also speak to stakeholders of the concern with the continuous cycle of racial minorities facing poor living conditions, inadequate education, and limited options in college or career paths. Data is now showing statistically significant findings when students have access to educators who are racially similar to them including diminished absenteeism and suspension rates (Rocheleau).

Why this matters is because it is yet another facet to diversity that needs to be addressed in teacher preparation programs; are preservice teachers being trained in teaching students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds? Centered on accommodating these characteristics is what is known as culturally responsive teaching, a form of pedagogy designed to target the culturally relevant ways different student populations effectively respond to (Hammond). Culture is deeply embedded into the thinking and learning processes of everyone, and considering the characteristics of any child and their background are essential to building instruction and other

aspects of the curriculum that appeal to their specific learning needs. Aspects of a child's culture to consider are whether their cultural mindset is individualist or collectivist, which would play a significant role in the teacher balancing independent and group work for assignments around content. Another aspect of Culturally responsive teaching requires the educator to become deeply knowledgeable of various populations, countering personal biases and misunderstandings of different cultures as a measure to avoid it from the teacher effectively teaching and supporting the student; stereotypes and misconceptions of various populations and their cultural backgrounds could greatly hinder an educator's ability to teach students (Hammond). The pedagogy is a vital tool to be acknowledged and practiced, and it can apply to the cultural backgrounds and needs of other selected populations including English Language Learners.

The data above also reveals the large selected populations that would require additional support in their academics and other areas. Nearly all eight districts show twenty percent or higher of all students having disabilities, ten percent or higher of all students requiring language services, forty percent or higher of all students coming with socio economic struggles, and twenty percent or higher of all students with general high needs (DESE). Further, as previously mentioned, all of these areas, in nearly every district, have seen gradual increases in all areas for the past few years (Selected population enrollment). With regard to the current diversity requirements of the local teacher preparation programs scanned and analyzed, it should come into question why there are few given the diversity of multiple school districts in the state of Massachusetts, the eight identified of which are currently responsible for teaching over 100,000 of the commonwealth's students.

**Table 1: Changes in Selected Populations Enrollment Data**

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

[http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state\\_report/selectedpopulations.aspx](http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/selectedpopulations.aspx)**Haverhill**

Population	Percentage of full enrollment (2015-2016)	Percentage of full enrollment (2016-2017)	Percentage of full enrollment (2017-2018)
First language not English	14.8 %	16.2 %	16.5 %
English Language Learner	6.8 %	8.7 %	10.2 %
Students with disabilities	20.3 %	22.8 %	23.2 %
High Needs	55.3 %	58.2 %	60.0 %
Socioeconomically disadvantaged	41.3%	45.1 %	47.1%

**Lawrence**

Population	Percentage of full enrollment (2015-2016)	Percentage of full enrollment (2016-2017)	Percentage of full enrollment (2017-2018)
First language not English	70.4 %	71.2 %	71.3%
English Language Learner	31.0 %	30.7 %	34.0 %
Students with disabilities	18.2 %	19.4 %	16.7 %
High Needs	81.9 %	83.3 %	82.9 %
Socioeconomically disadvantaged	63.0 %	64.9 %	64.1 %

**Methuen**

Population	Percentage of full enrollment (2015-2016)	Percentage of full enrollment (2016-2017)	Percentage of full enrollment (2017-2018)
First language not English	24.6 %	25.2 %	26.3 %

<b>English Language Learner</b>	<b>8.0 %</b>	<b>8.2 %</b>	<b>8.8 %</b>
<b>Students with disabilities</b>	<b>15.6 %</b>	<b>17.0 %</b>	<b>17.8 %</b>
<b>High Needs</b>	<b>44.8 %</b>	<b>46.1 %</b>	<b>48.6 %</b>
<b>Socioeconomically disadvantaged</b>	<b>30.2 %</b>	<b>31.8 %</b>	<b>34.8 %</b>

### Andover

<b>Population</b>	<b>Percentage of full enrollment (2015-2016)</b>	<b>Percentage of full enrollment (2016-2017)</b>	<b>Percentage of full enrollment (2017-2018)</b>
<b>First language not English</b>	<b>11.5 %</b>	<b>12.3 %</b>	<b>13.1 %</b>
<b>English Language Learner</b>	<b>3.1 %</b>	<b>3.8 %</b>	<b>4.3 %</b>
<b>Students with disabilities</b>	<b>18.1 %</b>	<b>18.6 %</b>	<b>19.2 %</b>
<b>High Needs</b>	<b>25.0 %</b>	<b>26.1 %</b>	<b>27.6 %</b>
<b>Socioeconomically disadvantaged</b>	<b>6.3 %</b>	<b>6.3 %</b>	<b>7.0 %</b>

### Georgetown

<b>Population</b>	<b>Percentage of full enrollment (2015-2016)</b>	<b>Percentage of full enrollment (2016-2017)</b>	<b>Percentage of full enrollment (2017-2018)</b>
<b>First language not English</b>	<b>0.5 %</b>	<b>0.5 %</b>	<b>0.9 %</b>
<b>English Language Learner</b>	<b>0.2 %</b>	<b>0.3 %</b>	<b>0.3 %</b>
<b>Students with disabilities</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>12.2 %</b>	<b>14.4 %</b>
<b>High Needs</b>	<b>19.9 %</b>	<b>19.1 %</b>	<b>21.5 %</b>
<b>Socioeconomically disadvantaged</b>	<b>8.5 %</b>	<b>8.8 %</b>	<b>9.1 %</b>

### Boston

<b>Population</b>	<b>Percentage of full enrollment (2015-2016)</b>	<b>Percentage of full enrollment (2016-2017)</b>	<b>Percentage of full enrollment (2017-2018)</b>
<b>First language not English</b>	<b>47.8 %</b>	<b>48.2 %</b>	<b>48.1 %</b>

<b>English Language Learner</b>	<b>30.8 %</b>	<b>31.2 %</b>	<b>31.7 %</b>
<b>Students with disabilities</b>	<b>19.6 %</b>	<b>19.5 %</b>	<b>19.6 %</b>
<b>High Needs</b>	<b>72.4 %</b>	<b>74.4 %</b>	<b>75.1 %</b>
<b>Socioeconomically disadvantaged</b>	<b>49.5 %</b>	<b>55.5 %</b>	<b>58.3 %</b>

### Salem

<b>Population</b>	<b>Percentage of full enrollment (2015-2016)</b>	<b>Percentage of full enrollment (2016-2017)</b>	<b>Percentage of full enrollment (2017-2018)</b>
<b>First language not English</b>	<b>28.7 %</b>	<b>27.9 %</b>	<b>28.8 %</b>
<b>English Language Learner</b>	<b>13.7 %</b>	<b>12.7 %</b>	<b>12.7 %</b>
<b>Students with disabilities</b>	<b>21.5 %</b>	<b>21.5 %</b>	<b>21.5 %</b>
<b>High Needs</b>	<b>58.5 %</b>	<b>60.3 %</b>	<b>60.3 %</b>
<b>Socioeconomically disadvantaged</b>	<b>43.6 %</b>	<b>46.6 %</b>	<b>46.6 %</b>

### Lowell

<b>Population</b>	<b>Percentage of full enrollment (2015-2016)</b>	<b>Percentage of full enrollment (2016-2017)</b>	<b>Percentage of full enrollment (2017-2018)</b>
<b>First language not English</b>	<b>30.0 %</b>	<b>30.0 %</b>	<b>29.2 %</b>
<b>English Language Learner</b>	<b>25.0 %</b>	<b>25.1 %</b>	<b>24.2 %</b>
<b>Students with disabilities</b>	<b>15.5 %</b>	<b>16.1 %</b>	<b>16.6 %</b>
<b>High Needs</b>	<b>70.2 %</b>	<b>71.0 %</b>	<b>71.3 %</b>
<b>Socioeconomically disadvantaged</b>	<b>50.4 %</b>	<b>54.1 %</b>	<b>55.9 %</b>

**Trauma: Another dimension and its significance in teacher preparation**

Trauma, a strong emotional response to a significantly stressful or terrifying event, can have a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of children. It goes beyond having an emotional scar on a child; trauma can even affect the development of the brain, especially in the areas of language and memory. These damages are more profound when children are victims to traumatic events at young ages, usually under five, as well as numerous exposures to significant events. When a child is experiencing a dangerous and or terrifying ordeal, anywhere from abuse to a parent with a drug addiction, their brain's development is hindered if it is constantly under pressure to react to events using a "fight or flight" response. Overtime, especially with additional traumatic events, a child's brain is dramatically altered, and as a result their ability to learn is greatly hindered. The ability to read, write, and memorize content in the classroom are all limited due to the trauma the child experienced (Flannery).

The purpose of including this in terms of the districts and populations examined relates primarily to students that either come from families identified as having socioeconomic needs or students with socioemotional needs that would classify under Massachusetts' definition of emotional impairment (Defining disability). Considering the high percentages of both of these subpopulations in all of the school systems analyzed, trauma should be examined as it has a significant impact on the student populations exposed to it. Relating to the opening remarks of the challenges students face, one of them does connect to the ongoing Opioid crisis. In Massachusetts, over one-thousand overdose-related deaths have been confirmed each year since 2014, last year reporting over fifteen hundred. This does not include several hundred other overdose attempts that did not end as casualties. The school discussed in the opening comes from

a district, Haverhill, that reported nearly forty overdose-related deaths last year alone, an increase from several years prior. Boston, another district analyzed in this study, reported nearly two-hundred drug-related deaths last year, an increase of nearly forty additional cases from the previous year. Additionally, dozens of other districts across Massachusetts are seeing increases in deaths over the past several years (Opioids). These populations are hitting young and middle-aged adults the most, and the results are tragic for the children witnessing them.

The crisis of drug addiction is but one outlet of trauma student populations may be exposed to. Another source of trauma can be poverty, and overtime the continuity of it in a child's life can have dramatic effects on them. The impact trauma can have on children can affect attributes such as attention and impulse control (Collins). The impact of trauma extends beyond purely academics and negatively affects any child in several other ways. A traumatic event can lead to additional characteristics and challenges including poor self-regulation, frequent negativity, hypervigilance, difficulties in forming relationships with others, and challenges in executive functioning. The ways in which these symptoms can manifest in the classroom can lead to negative interactions with peers and staff, low self-esteem, inability to relax in learning environment, and difficulties with memory of content and planning of assignments and other tasks (Miller). Further, a specific type of trauma, complex trauma, is the culmination of exposure to multiple traumatic events and or a chronic vulnerability to traumatic events over a long period of time and it can impact children in many other ways. Complex trauma can hurt one's self worth, affect the development of the brain and nervous system, impact the ability to regulate emotions, leave one vulnerable to many triggers, and can delay or halt cognitive skills including reasoning and problem solving (Effects of trauma).

Trauma may be covered in basic psychology courses which are typically core requirements for many undergraduate programs, including all of the ones analyzed. However, thinking specifically of the impact it can have on behavior or learning may not be covered in a required course. In fact, every institute analyzed, with the exception of one, does not have any courses covering trauma. The exception is Lesley University, which offers a four-course program all centered on trauma as an optional program. Aside this, none of the institutions analyzed have programs or courses covering trauma within the context of the classroom. The real concern with this is if teachers are receiving any training or information through their programs in handling students with difficult backgrounds or histories and be able to help them function in the classroom. The only local institution to have any courses focusing on this specific area is Lesley University, and it's not even available to undergraduate education majors. Overall, preservice educators are receiving little to no exposure to trauma and its role in education within local teacher preparation programs. Considering the ties between the student populations and trauma and the impact trauma can have on the ability for a child to grow and learn, it is concerning to see only one of the four institutes analyzed have any coursework or training that is designed to prepare new educators for handling this when it manifests in the classroom.

### **The disconnect between Inclusion and Diversity Education:**

#### **Comparative analysis summary of teacher preparation programs and diverse populations**

The previous pages are compiled of various data including both the student population demographics of eight different school districts in Northeastern Massachusetts as well as the basic requirements of teacher preparation programs of four institutes located within close

proximity of many of said districts. Additional information includes the demographics of multiple districts within proximity of all these post secondary institutes. Comparing the two in quality and scope, there's a mismatch between the required diversity course load and training and the diverse populations in several districts within this area of Massachusetts. Most institutions in this part of the Commonwealth offer four required courses at most and only covering a few of the many diverse populations aforementioned as well as exposure to culturally responsive teaching, whereas several districts are witnessing increasing rates of several diverse populations in nearly every category as well as diverse racial and ethnic populations faced with teacher pools containing very little diversity at all.

### **Retention rates in the districts of this study**

**Table 2**

<b>School district</b>	<b>Retention rate (2014)</b>	<b>Retention rate (2015)</b>
<b>Haverhill</b>	<b>90.1 %</b>	<b>87.8 %</b>
<b>Lawrence</b>	<b>73.7 %</b>	<b>72.3 %</b>
<b>Methuen</b>	<b>93.3 %</b>	<b>90.4 %</b>
<b>Andover</b>	<b>91.6 %</b>	<b>89.0%</b>
<b>Georgetown</b>	<b>83.9 %</b>	<b>85.7 %</b>
<b>Boston</b>	<b>80.5 %</b>	<b>78.1 %</b>
<b>Salem</b>	<b>86.1 %</b>	<b>77.5 %</b>
<b>Lowell</b>	<b>90.8 %</b>	<b>91.4 %</b>
<b>State average</b>	<b>87.6 %</b>	<b>86.8 %</b>

Source: [http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state\\_report/staffingRetentionRates.aspx](http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/staffingRetentionRates.aspx)

Excluding charter schools, a few of the above districts have some the lowest retention rates of public school systems in the state of Massachusetts, specifically Lawrence, Boston, and Salem. Even for others with relatively higher retention rates, such as Haverhill, Methuen, and Andover, their rates have been dropping up to a few percentage points each year. Georgetown is only experiencing a rise after several years of decline, and Lowell has had no consistency in its retention; this district's retention rates have been rising and falling several percentage points since data started being collected in 2009 (Retention rates). Overall, these numbers are significant and go beyond other reasons for resignation such as personal and health reasons; these districts are losing hundreds of teachers and the gaps aren't necessarily being refilled with new ones, as their overall retention rates continue to drop.

### **Discussion: The challenges now facing new educators**

Preservice teachers in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have a variety of challenges facing them in their ability to adequately meet the needs of diverse populations. Several local teacher preparation programs have limited requirements in diversity training and coursework. An increasing racial gap between teacher and student populations in schools will further challenge the implementation of culturally responsive teaching and the need to correct the achievement gap. Almost no local teacher preparation programs provide access to coursework on trauma and its impact on learning on function. In several districts across multiple counties in this area of Massachusetts, most are seeing across-the-board increases in selected populations including students with disabilities, English language Learners, and the socioeconomically disadvantaged.

The additional population of children that have suffered trauma add yet another layer of complexity to the roles of new educators.

All of this should be great cause for concern, especially with accountability; with these great challenges facing new educators in Massachusetts, who is responsible for building teacher preparation programs the way they are, and why haven't they undergone adjustments to match the changes many districts are now experiencing with their student populations? It's no wonder why some teachers become physically sick from the stress of their work, why some cry themselves dry after school, and why others are leaving the field completely. If we care about future generations, and the educators that will be responsible for helping them learn and grow, then what steps can be taken to better support them?

### **Conclusion: A call for action**

The local teacher preparation programs now available for preservice teachers entering the field are as effective as we allow them to be. As the districts around said institutions continue to diversify, it will become imperative that we take the steps necessary to adjust our programs accordingly to meet the needs of the populations teachers will be responsible for in our classrooms. It is one thing to be inclusive of all different kinds of students; it is another to be adequately prepared in shaping the curriculum, instruction, and the learning environment to meet the emotional and developmental needs of them. This field should not be overwhelming and stressful, but challenging and rewarding. Despite the great diversity of school populations throughout many districts in Northeastern Massachusetts that are constantly experiencing change, these students can be a true pleasure to work with. Regardless of the services or supports

they need, many of these students bring us great joy; they are the reason many of us wished to enter the field and have a positive impact on them.

Therefore, the time is now to reach out to program supervisors and directors and work with them to provide all educators adequate and diverse training and coursework suitable to teach and support the children future educators will all be responsible for. Actions need to be taken to adjust and expand the requirements for teacher preparation programs accordingly to better prepare new educators for whatever part of the field they intend on entering so that what impact they have is nothing short of extraordinary. These children are our future, and they deserve nothing less than the best educators can offer.

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