

# The State Role in Supporting District-Charter Collaboration: Opportunities for Action

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With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), state leaders have faced greater pressure to promote innovation, improve school performance, and address issues of equity. Collaboration between traditional schools and districts and the charter school sector can be a key lever for advancing all three objectives because it offers public schools the opportunity to learn from best practices in each sector, to collaborate in addressing common challenges, and to coordinate to provide resources and information to students and their families.<sup>1</sup> District-charter collaboration can also improve the efficiency of school operations by taking advantage of economies of scale. Therefore, when successful, collaboration across sectors can improve the quality of schooling available to students and provide more equitable access to schools of choice.<sup>2</sup>

While district-charter collaboration is a local endeavor, a state can encourage it, help to incentivize and facilitate it, and help to sustain and scale successful collaborative practices. This guide is intended as a resource for state education agency (SEA) leaders, other state-level policymakers, and their staff to prompt their thinking about what such support could look like in their own state or, if that support is already underway, how it might be expanded.

For purposes of this guide, the term *district-charter collaboration* refers to all forms of coordination and cooperation between a traditional school district and/or its schools and one or more entities from the charter sector, including individual or networks of charter schools, a charter management organization, and a charter school authorizer.<sup>3</sup> It discusses four areas of need that cross-sector collaboration could help address and related

1 Allender, S., Browning, A., Chait, R., Dwyer, C., Keirstead, C., & Nabors, A. (2019). *Fostering collaboration between district and charter schools, A toolkit for state and local leaders*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd. Retrieved from <https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/resource-district-charter-schools-toolkit.pdf>

2 Ibid.

3 Authorizers are the entities that, under state charter school law, review and approve applications for new charter schools, set academic and operational expectations for those schools, and oversee their performance. In some states, poor school performance automatically results in closure, but when that is not the case, authorizers must decide how to handle charter schools that do not meet the terms of their charter, or contract.

opportunities for states to encourage and support that collaboration:

- Promoting equity by providing families with comparable information about their school options;
- Serving students with disabilities and English learners;
- Identifying and sharing best or promising practices across sectors; and
- Recruiting and retaining educator talent.

Charter statutes and policies vary significantly by state. For that reason, in thinking through the strategies and examples that follow throughout this guide, it's important that readers consider what would or would not work in their own state context and what new legislation or funding might be needed to support a promising strategy.

## Origin of This Guide

In early 2019, the Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center (MACC) operated by WestEd convened teams representing four states in the Mid-Atlantic region to learn about promising strategies from states and communities that had participated in successful district-charter collaborations and to engage with their district and charter colleagues.<sup>4</sup> The focus of the meeting was on using collaboration between district and charter schools or related entities to

improve the quality of, and access to, schools in both of these public school sectors.

From team discussions, it became apparent that the field sees value in having greater cross-sector collaboration. Participants shared many promising examples and ideas for joint district-charter work, but they also spoke of needing greater state support for such efforts. In addition, in preparing profiles of collaborative initiatives in Boston and in the District of Columbia, MACC researchers identified important strategies for collaboration that are relevant to states.<sup>5</sup>

## Setting the Stage for Cross-Sector Collaboration Statewide

SEA leaders and state policymakers have multiple avenues for promoting and advancing district-charter collaboration. This section identifies four ways in particular that states can set the stage for successful cross-sector collaboration at the local level: promoting the need for and success of collaboration, forestalling or mitigating cross-sector conflicts, leveraging those who can build cross-sector connections, and restructuring SEAs to support cross-sector collaboration.

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4 In preparation for the January 2019 convening, the MACC developed a toolkit for guiding state and local policymakers in facilitating cross-sector initiatives to improve education quality in both traditional public schools and charter schools. *Fostering Collaboration Between District and Charter Schools: A Toolkit for State and Local Leaders* provides a research-based framework for district-charter collaboration, along with related learning and action resources.

5 Chait, R., & Keirstead, C. (2019). *Putting students first: Profiles of district-charter collaboration in the District of Columbia and Massachusetts*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd. Retrieved from <https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/resource-putting-students-first-profiles-of-district-charter-collaboration-1.pdf>

## Promoting the Need for and Success of Collaboration

State education leaders have a unique stage from which to speak to their board, SEA staff, district and school leaders, education stakeholders, and the community at large about such education imperatives as equity, innovation, and school improvement. In states where district-charter collaborations have resulted in increased access to quality schools, leaders can point to such collaboration as a desired practice that should be replicated. They can also take advantage of their own prominence to highlight successful collaborative efforts from which others can learn. For example, a chief state school officer might alert the news media of plans to visit a thriving cross-sector information fair for families on the hunt for a school. Similarly, during a state-of-the-state address, a governor might point to an exemplary district-charter collaboration that focuses on teacher professional learning.<sup>6</sup>

## Forestalling or Mitigating Cross-Sector Conflicts

Long-standing tensions between charter school advocates and opponents have created a cross-sector terrain that is fraught for education leaders and stakeholders alike. When state education chiefs know and deeply understand the positions of the different interest groups that have an opinion about school choice, and about charter schools in particular, they can look for ways to bring these groups together in search of common ground in a shared quest to improve

students' education experience and outcomes. For many important initiatives, success depends on a leader's ability to build alliances that reduce the dominance of particular groups and that work toward compromises based on the best interests of students. One former chief has put it this way: "The education reform debate — charters, common core, labor management — [has] become stale, and a broader focus and new allies let us act on behalf of kids again."<sup>7</sup>

## Leveraging Those Who Can Build Cross-Sector Connections

Boundary spanners can be key to effective cross-sector collaboration. For the purposes of this guide, boundary spanners are organizations, and the individuals within them, that work in or with both public school sectors — traditional and charter — to advance education outcomes and that are seen by all involved as having no bias toward one sector or the other. In this neutral role, they can act as translators of a sort, helping solidify historically shaky cross-sector relationships and serving as even-handed thought partners working to develop consensus in the service of a larger, shared education goal. Boundary spanners can serve an especially important role in communities where mistrust and combativeness between the district and charter worlds have been the norm.<sup>8</sup> Boundary-spanning organizations that work effectively across sectors, either on their own or in partnerships, can help shift entrenched perspectives that prevent district-charter

6 Medler, A. (2016). *What states can do to promote district-charter collaboration*. Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education. Retrieved from <https://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/crpe-medler-what-states-can-do-dist-charter.pdf>

7 Hill, P., & Jochim, A. (2017, March). *The power of persuasion: A model for effective leadership by state chiefs. Linking state and local improvement*. Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education.

8 Yatsko, S., & Bruns, A. (2015). *The best of both worlds: School district-charter sector boundary spanners*. Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education.

collaboration and, in doing so, actively facilitate collaboration.

Raise DC is one example of a boundary spanner. This nonprofit organization facilitates cross-sector alignment among local stakeholders to improve education from cradle to career. One of its cross-sector initiatives ensures that information about middle school students from either traditional or charter schools who are transitioning to a high school in either sector is shared in advance with their new school. The intent is that, with this information, all high schools will be better able to meet the needs of their incoming students. To sustain the initiative, in part by providing a source of ongoing funding, the Office of the State Superintendent in DC (OSSE) subsequently took over its management. This kind of cross-sector effort is one on which a boundary spanner and an SEA might partner.

The Boston Compact, in Massachusetts, is another boundary spanner and another example of the type of partnership a state policymaker could initiate or support. First convened by former Boston mayor Thomas M. Menino, the Compact is supported by philanthropies, businesses, and others, including the Boston Schools Fund. Its mission is to support the growth of high-quality, high-demand schools of all types. (Other examples of such partnerships are described in the MACC [Toolkit](#).)

## Restructuring SEAs to Support Cross-Sector Collaboration

Many SEAs have long operated with a traditional siloed structure that can be an obstacle to

integrating strategies and funding streams to meet their strategic objectives. A state's school choice program or its charter school program may be in one of those silos, while school improvement initiatives, teaching and learning, Title I, special education, and testing and accountability, for example, are all in other silos. SEAs' continued efforts to integrate and improve their systems and structures so as to become purpose-driven rather than compliance-driven provide an opportunity to eliminate silos and, thus, more tightly link school choice and/or charter school programs with other SEA divisions, offices, or departments.<sup>9</sup> Enabling all divisions to more easily communicate and coordinate among themselves — indeed, making it the norm to do so — can lead to better alignment and less duplication of efforts and can help maximize the resources available for improvement in districts and in both public school sectors.

To this end, SEAs can include choice and/or charter representation on cross-division teams and other collaborative structures focused on the shared goal of improved outcomes for all students. In addition to ensuring that those SEA staff who are charged with carrying out choice or charter school work, specifically, have the appropriate expertise, SEAs can make sure that staff in other key divisions (e.g., Title I, English learner) fully understand how their work relates to and should support traditional and charter schools alike. Whatever steps an SEA might take to better integrate its school choice and/or charter school efforts systemwide, it is essential that all of its strategic plans and communications documents reinforce the concept of an integrated

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<sup>9</sup> Different SEAs use different terminology for the parts of their organization (e.g., divisions, offices, departments). For the sake of consistency, this publication refers to divisions.

approach, with consistent messages about shared goals irrespective of public school sector.

In addition to revisiting their systems and structures, SEA divisions can jointly and strategically employ resources to support their policy goals, including innovative cross-sector programs.<sup>10</sup> For example, states could use technical assistance or administrative funds from the federally funded Charter Schools Program (CSP) to support cross-sector partnerships focused on solving a particular challenge common to both sectors, such as instruction for students who are English learners or who are designated for special education.<sup>11</sup>

## Key Areas of Need for Collaboration

As noted earlier, this guide proposes four particular areas of need in which district-charter collaboration can play an important role in fostering innovation, improving school performance, and providing more equitable access to schools. These areas are *providing useful information about school choice options; serving students with disabilities and English learners; identifying and sharing promising practices across sectors; and recruiting and retaining educator talent*. For each area of need, this section describes the background and need, identifies how the need might be addressed and what states can do to help, and provides examples of relevant collaborative efforts.

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<sup>10</sup> Medler (2016).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

## Providing Useful Information About School Choice Options

### BACKGROUND AND NEED

Public school choice programs are premised on the understanding that a child's neighborhood school might not always be the best fit for that student. Choice programs provide more options, such as magnet schools, charter schools, or the ability to enroll in any school districtwide.

Charter schools were conceived to play an especially important role in a choice program: Free to innovate, they have the potential to come up with new approaches to teaching and learning that can successfully meet the full range of student needs. In doing so, they not only serve their own students but also provide models for other public schools to adopt or adapt, thus contributing to a more robust array of public school options.

If the charter school vision is to be achieved, and if choice programs writ large are to be useful for all families, parents and guardians must be given complete, accurate, and comparable information about all education options. Only then can they make good decisions about which schools will best meet their children's needs. With ESSA's emphasis on innovation, improved school performance, and equity, state leaders have an interest in ensuring that the public has transparent and comparable information about all schools that are within a student's geographic reach — information that showcases the excellence possible in different school types. In the absence of comparable information points being available for all schools, a problem in one

school can be generalized to the entire sector (e.g., a high expulsion rate in one charter school leading people to assume that all charters have high expulsion rates) and parents aren't able to make well-informed decisions. With this in mind, districts and charter school entities need to collect, analyze, and disseminate credible information about how well their schools are doing in supporting a variety of goals for students with different learning characteristics and needs.

## ADDRESSING THE NEED

Families need useful information about their children's education options. Offering school choice as an approach to improving education opportunities and outcomes presupposes that parents or guardians are able to make informed decisions because they have received accurate, meaningful, easily understandable, and comparable information about all schools in their service area. Studies of charter schools and traditional public schools continue to show wide variation in performance by school locale, type (i.e., charter or traditional), and/or student population characteristic (e.g., ethnicity, poverty, disability, language)<sup>12</sup> — hence the need to give parents clear information about the schools from which they can choose. Providing clear and comprehensive school information for families with the highest needs is particularly important.

One study found that, on average, low-income parents had less knowledge than higher-income parents about school performance and discipline.<sup>13</sup> Without explicit attention by leaders in both school sectors to organizing and disseminating meaningful and comparable information, they and other families are left to do their own research on schools, to make decisions on partial information, or to be left out of the choice conversation.

What kind of information do parents want? Research about how families choose schools for their children suggests that academic factors are most important, with other valued factors including school safety, geographic location, extracurricular activities, and composition of a school's student population.<sup>14</sup> Parents with higher education levels are more likely than others to choose a school other than their neighborhood school and, also, to place more weight on high academic performance.<sup>15</sup> But families' school preferences may rest on factors other than what districts and charters typically report about school features and specialties, for example, teacher demographics that allow one to assess race or ethnicity match between teachers and students<sup>16</sup>; profiles of student demographics, to assess diversity<sup>17</sup>; achievement levels by ethnic/racial and language subgroups; school climate indicators; indicators related to school discipline; progress in closing

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12 LiBetti, A., Burgoyne-Allen, P., Lewis, B., & Schmitz, K. (2019, January). *The state of the charter sector: What you need to know about the charter sector today*. Washington, DC: Bellwether Education Partners.

13 Schneider, M., Teske, P., Marshall, M., & Roch, C. (1998). Shopping for schools: In the land of the blind, the one-eyed parent may be enough. *American Journal of Political Science*, 42(3), 769-793.

14 Glazerman, S., Nichols-Barrer, I., Valant, J., Chandler, J., & Burnett, A. (2018, November). *Nudging parents to choose better schools: The importance of school choice architecture*. [Working Paper 65]. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research.

15 Ibid.

16 For more information about the research related to the impact of race match, see Gersenshon, S. (2019, June). *Student-teacher race match in charter and traditional public schools*. Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

17 For more information about integration and charter schools, see Potter, H., & Nunberg, M. (2019, April 4). *Scoring states on charter integration*. Washington, DC: The Century Foundation.

performance gaps among student subgroups; and teacher turnover/attendance. Some state-level or community-based organizations, including parent advocacy groups, can help districts and charters by letting them know what additional information is important to families.

Comparability of information for all schools in a family's service area is essential to supporting choice. The meaningfulness of choice is further enhanced by common enrollment opportunities, such as enrollment fairs, or easily accessible and understandable online enrollment systems that feature comparable information about school operations and performance.<sup>18</sup> It's also essential, of course, that information be provided in languages that are common in a community and that, in sharing the information — whether online or in printed materials — special attention be paid to presentation and formatting to make the content as accessible as possible to all audiences.<sup>19</sup>

## WHAT STATES CAN DO TO HELP

### **Model provision of useful, family-friendly data.**

SEAs can promote the need for education systems to ensure that the same school data are available for all schools, irrespective of sector, and that those data are meaningful, easily understandable, and readily accessible to all families. They can start by modeling their own commitment to providing family-friendly information in an easily accessible format with data points of interest to families through their use of statewide school report cards. Even if a state decides that its school-level report cards should share only the basic data

elements associated with school rankings in its accountability system, it can opt to provide a richer picture of state schools by sharing additional data of interest to parents (e.g., climate indicators, postsecondary success measures) through such dissemination vehicles as state dashboards.

While SEAs have important roles to play in making school data available to parents, local districts and charter entities — individually and jointly — have equally important roles because they are closer to the families in their community and may be seen by more families as the go-to organizations for school information. SEAs can set a tone and establish conditions that facilitate and guide this local data sharing. For example, they may mandate that certain data be collected by all schools and districts, create common definitions for the data elements, and explain the rationale for using these elements.

At a fundamental level, SEAs communicate expectations about performance standards for all public schools, including charter schools. For example, they may establish as a priority charter schools' commitment to, and capacity for, ongoing collection and dissemination of accessible and transparent information about school performance. Ideally, this priority would be reflected in criteria for charter school approval.<sup>20</sup>

States can also encourage the two public school sectors to collaborate in sharing information with families about all public schools in their common service area. Information might be shared, for

18 Glazerman et al. (2018).

19 Ibid.

20 National Association of Charter School Authorizers. (n.d.) *State Board of Education Authorizers* [website]. Retrieved from <https://www.qualitycharters.org/state-policy/multiple-authorizers/state-board-of-education-authorizers/>

example, through enrollment fairs and an online enrollment system that provides school-by-school information.

In addition, SEAs can foster collaboration by permitting districts to include all schools in calculations for district accountability purposes. For locally authorized charters, districts and charters might voluntarily agree that all schools be included in district accountability ratings, highlighting the strong performance of both charter and traditional public schools and encouraging improvements in all schools with lower performance.<sup>21</sup>

When the Spring Branch (Texas) district superintendent invited two high-performing charter schools (YES Prep and KIPP) to share space in two middle schools in the district, the three-way SKY Partnership was formed. The partnership is a district-charter collaboration between these three entities to share best practices and improve student achievement. The performance scores of these charters count toward the district's accountability ratings and the district receives professional learning and direct access to effective programs and strategies the charter organizations have developed and implemented. The charter schools receive facilities, and their students have access to a wide range of district-supported opportunities.<sup>22</sup> The schools then collaborated in creating a YES Prep high school program of choice within a Spring Branch high school.

## COLLABORATION IN ACTION

When encouraging improvements in collaboratively sharing school information with families, states may want to share examples of existing models or efforts, such as those that follow.<sup>23</sup>

**Sharing family-friendly information about schools in both sectors.** Denver, Colorado, and Washington, DC, serve as examples of how large school systems can provide family-friendly reporting to help parents make informed choices. Both provide online reports with comparable information for all public schools, whether charter or traditional.

Denver Public Schools (DPS), which is a district authorizer, calculates an indicator of each school's progress in closing academic achievement gaps, and it [provides information online](#) along with videos for parents on how to interpret the information. Moreover, it offers information in key languages used in the community (e.g., Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, French, Russian, Vietnamese). In addition to inviting and making it easy for parents to examine and compare varied information elements about district schools, DPS provides the following philosophic explanation of how its schools, charter and traditional alike, fit together: "Our family of schools is similar to an actual family, where different members are part of one cohesive unit but have different roles as well as different strengths. All DPS schools — regardless of model types — are equally part of our family

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21 Medler (2016).

22 Whitmire, R. (2014, Fall). Inside successful district-charter compacts. *Education Next*, 14(4). Retrieved from <https://www.educationnext.org/inside-successful-district-charter-compacts/>

23 These examples, and others that follow in subsequent sections, have not necessarily had rigorous evaluations, but interviews with state and local education leaders and/or preliminary research indicate that these strategies hold promise.



of schools and are equally held accountable to performance standards, while also meeting different needs, taking different approaches, and having various forms of flexibility.”<sup>24</sup> In Washington, DC, where almost half of all public school students are enrolled in charter schools, charter management organizations and charter schools operate as their own LEAs. DC has undertaken some collaborative work from which other education agencies at both levels can learn. One key example is when OSSE, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), and the DC Public Charter School Board, in consultation with charter schools, the Deputy Mayor for Education, and New Schools Venture Fund, partnered to publish annual school reports called “Equity Reports.”

The initiative grew organically from conversations between DCPS’s chief of data and accountability and the charter school board’s deputy director. They realized that they were collecting and reporting similar data through their respective websites — DCPS through its school report cards and the board through its school quality reports for each charter school. They concluded that it would be more useful for parents if they were to use a common reporting template with all the same data elements. These Equity Reports reflect the shared goal of providing the same caliber of education to all students regardless of their race, ethnicity, economic status, special education status, or other factors. OSSE later took over the production of the reports and also made them

available on its own website in order “to give our schools, families and communities transparent and comparable information related to equity across all DC schools.”<sup>25</sup> Although OSSE no longer publishes the Equity Reports, those reports informed development of its current school report cards, which include both charter and district schools.

Data sources and tools such as those described above can also provide useful information for local education agency (LEA) staff and outside organizations that support parents in making decisions about schools. Work in this issue area may be the easiest first step for collaboration because it builds on a traditional state role.

## Serving Students with Disabilities and English Learners

### BACKGROUND AND NEED

In both the traditional and charter school sectors of public education, there is a near-universal achievement gap between students with disabilities or students who are English learners and other students without those designations. On the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress, for example, only 16 percent of grade 4 students with disabilities achieved the proficient level in mathematics compared to 44 percent of grade 4 students without disabilities.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, in that same year, only 14 percent of grade 4 students who were English learners achieved the proficient level in mathematics compared to 43 percent of same-grade students who

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24 Denver Public Schools, Portfolio Management Team. (n.d.). *Family of schools* [webpage], para. 2. Retrieved from <https://portfolio.dpsk12.org/dps-family-of-schools/>

25 DC.gov. (n.d.). *Office of the State Superintendent of Education, Equity reports* [webpage]. Retrieved from <https://osse.dc.gov/page/equity-reports>

26 Nation’s Report Card. (n.d.). *NAEP Mathematics Report Card* [webpage]. Retrieved from [https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/math\\_2017/nation/achievement/?grade=4](https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/math_2017/nation/achievement/?grade=4)

were not English learners.<sup>27</sup> Graduation rates for students with disabilities and students who are English learners are lower as well — 67.1 percent for students with disabilities and 66.4 percent for English learners in 2016/17, compared to 84.6 percent for all students.<sup>28</sup>

Because both public school sectors struggle to effectively serve these students, this might be a natural area for some collaboration. Developing effective strategies to educate students with disabilities, in particular, seems ripe for joint work, due in part to the expense and wide-ranging expertise needed to serve students across the full continuum of special education designations. Some of the strategies outlined below might also be helpful for serving other students with unique learning needs or circumstances, such as students who are experiencing homelessness.

## ADDRESSING THE NEED

To start with, all public schools, irrespective of sector, need to be able to more easily and quickly share information with each other about students' disabilities and learning needs. One challenge that both charter and district schools encounter in serving students with an IEP is that they don't get data on incoming students in a timely enough manner to adequately plan how best to serve the students in the coming school year.

Small size can also be an inhibiting factor in a school's ability to fully serve either English learners or students qualifying for special education services. Small schools may have

difficulty acquiring or developing the range of staff capacity needed to serve students across all special education designations. For example, a charter school with just one student in need of speech therapy may struggle to deliver that service. Charter schools may also have difficulty acquiring a facility with enough classrooms for both general education students and for small groups of students who have a low-frequency disability that might call for having them in separate classrooms. Most charter schools do not have the support of a district central office or of a charter management organization that can provide services and guidance with respect to special education or instruction for English learners.<sup>29</sup> Due to limited staffing, small schools may also struggle to manage compliance requirements.

Ideally, charter schools should be able to purchase services and other compliance support from a district's central office. For example, that charter school with one student in need of speech therapy would be able to buy the services of a district speech pathologist. Charter schools serving students who are English learners could also purchase translation services from district offices as needed to facilitate written communication with families.<sup>30</sup>

In purchasing such services, charter schools expand their capacity to serve students with disabilities and English learners, benefiting from the district's economies of scale. At the same time, a district benefits from having an additional source of revenue and, also, by contributing

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27 Ibid.

28 National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d). *High school graduation rates* [webpage]. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=805>

29 LiBetti et al. (2019).

30 Ibid.

## Legal Framework for Special Education in Charter Schools

Requirements for educating students receiving special education services are outlined in federal, state, and local statutes and regulations,<sup>a</sup> which set the context in which district and charter schools serve this population. For example, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires that all public schools provide each student who is eligible for special education an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that describes how the school will meet the student's learning needs.<sup>b</sup> Schools must also provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to students with disabilities in the least-restrictive environment, with FAPE defined by Congress and the courts as “a continuum of services and supports necessary to provide a student with a disability access to the general education curriculum.”<sup>c</sup>

Charter schools that operate as independent LEAs are responsible for ensuring that all of these legal requirements are met, including provision of a continuum of services for students with disabilities.<sup>d</sup> Charter schools that are part of an LEA receive special education services from the district's central office.<sup>e</sup> The charter school's agreement with its authorizer also outlines how the charter school will provide special education services and how responsibilities are distributed.<sup>f</sup>

a. Rhim, L. M., & O'Neill, P. (2013). *Improving access and creating exceptional opportunities for students with disabilities in public charter schools*. Washington, DC: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/52feb326e4b069fc72abb0c8/t/5a78e8b1c8302590d7f3c617/1517873331199/NAPCS-Disabilities-Report-03.pdf>

b. Ibid.

c. Ibid., p. 7.

d. National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools, Illinois Network of Charter Schools, & National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. (2018). *Building capacity to provide quality special education services and supports: A toolkit of emerging best practices and opportunities for charter support organizations*. Retrieved from [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/52feb326e4b069fc72abb0c8/t/5b2a602e758d467abe82a21a/1529503867402/CSO+White+paper\\_WEB.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/52feb326e4b069fc72abb0c8/t/5b2a602e758d467abe82a21a/1529503867402/CSO+White+paper_WEB.pdf)

e. Ibid.

f. Ibid.

to greater public school capacity to serve all students within its community, including students with disabilities and students who are English learners.

In theory, the district and charter sector could also collaborate to provide services that address the full continuum of students' special education needs. For example, a number of district and charter schools could coordinate to employ specialists for different special education designations that could serve multiple schools.

Charter schools typically have greater autonomy and flexibility than traditional public schools when it comes to developing unique programming that meets the needs of their students, such as personalized or blended learning, project-based learning, or other innovative programs, including those designed to serve specific student populations. Those charter schools that have had success serving students who receive special education services or who are English learners likely have practices that traditional schools will want to know

about.<sup>31</sup> For example, some charter schools are serving students with learning disabilities effectively in innovative, inclusive classrooms.<sup>32</sup> Charter schools have also developed innovative instructional models for students who are English learners, such as two-way dual language immersion programs.<sup>33</sup>

## WHAT STATES CAN DO TO HELP

**Provide appropriate information to charter schools.** As a precursor to working collaboratively with traditional public schools to improve education for these two important student groups, all charter schools must fully understand their own responsibilities for serving these students. To that end, states can ensure that relevant SEA staff (e.g., Title I, Title III, special education) thoroughly understand charter schools and can provide targeted support regarding this particular issue. Because single-site charter schools, especially, are unlikely to have staff who can provide the necessary professional learning for their teachers, states can also work to ensure that county offices of education, intermediate school districts, and other such regional agencies provide needed professional learning opportunities and other services to all public schools, traditional and charter alike.<sup>34</sup> In providing this professional learning, these regional entities can also identify

schools in both sectors that have strengths in serving students with disabilities and English learners from which other schools can learn.

**Enable improved cross-sector sharing of special education data.** States can facilitate and expedite sharing special education data among schools in ways that comply with federal and state privacy requirements and practices for student data. States can create a process by which districts and charter schools can securely share special education data with each other, so that schools in both sectors can better prepare for serving incoming students with disabilities.

**Facilitate learning about innovative models.** States can identify and share information about schools in both sectors that are improving student achievement for students with disabilities or students who are English learners. They can also leverage boundary spanners (see below) to assist them in identifying innovative practices. They can offer competitive grants for cross-sector partnerships focused on developing innovative models for improving instruction and student outcomes for students with disabilities and those who are English learners.

**Support economies of scale.** States can support charter schools' purchase of services and other support from district central offices by facilitating

31 Ibid.

32 Rhim, L. M., & Lancet, S. (2018). *How personalized learning models can meet the needs of students with disabilities: Thrive Public Schools case study*. Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education. Retrieved from <https://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/crpe-case-study-thrive.pdf>; National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools. (2018). *Case brief, Two Rivers Public Charter Schools*. Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/52feb326e4b069fc72abb0c8/t/5bb519f071c10b7ebdf919ad/1538595313082/Case+Brief++Two+Rivers+Public+Charter+Schools+8-17-18.pdf>

33 Williams, C. P. (2019). *English learners and school choice: Helping charter schools serve multilingual families*. Washington, DC: The Century Foundation. Retrieved from <https://tcf.org/content/report/english-learners-school-choice-policies-delivering-charter-schools-equity-potential/>

34 Rhim, L. M., Sutter, J., & Campbell, N. (2017). *Improving outcomes for students with disabilities: Negotiating common ground for district and charter school collaboration*, p. 28. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2017/01/31/297746/improving-outcomes-for-students-with-disabilities/>

conversations about this type of collaboration. They can also provide guidance and technical assistance to districts and charter schools about how these collaborations might work within schools' particular legal and fiscal context.

**Help ensure equitable access.** Another important state role is to facilitate equitable access to schools of choice for students with disabilities and English learners. As discussed in the section on parent information, states could support districts in developing cross-sector parent information resources and outreach strategies in multiple languages and for multilingual communities. Uniform or universal enrollment systems are emerging as a powerful tool to support more effective outreach to all families.

## COLLABORATION IN ACTION

When encouraging local cross-sector collaboration to improve education for students in special education and students who are English learners, states may want to share examples of existing models or efforts, such as those that follow.

**District special education support.** Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) created a range of options for charter schools under its jurisdiction to receive special education services from LAUSD for their students.<sup>35</sup> For these charter schools, LAUSD offers three ways to join its regional consortium to provide special education services (called a Special Education Local Plan Area, or SELPA). In option 1, LAUSD

provides all special education services to students in the charter school. In option 2, LAUSD provides supports to charter schools for due-process claims, student placement, and other special education compliance processes, while the charter schools themselves provide special education services to their students. In option 3, charter schools provide all special education services to students and manage compliance processes, but the funding for special education still comes through the LAUSD SELPA.

**Facilities for center-based programs.** Denver Public Schools renovates existing school facilities to make room for center-based programs designed to serve students who require significant supports.<sup>36</sup> DPS began the program as a way of providing students with significant disabilities greater access to the charter schools within DPS's purview.<sup>37</sup> Charter schools benefit both from having greater capacity to serve students with severe disabilities and from related facility improvements that benefit all of their students. The number of center programs in charter schools grew from 2 in 2012 to 27 as of fall 2019.<sup>38</sup> DPS also operates Learning Labs that serve schools and teachers in both sectors. The labs are designed to facilitate shared professional learning on how best to serve students with disabilities and students who are English learners.

**Cross-sector professional development.** The Boston Compact,<sup>39</sup> a multiyear cross-sector initiative featured in the MACC [Toolkit](#), offered

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35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 B. Richardson, Office Support III, Student Equity and Opportunity, Denver Public Schools (personal communication, October 2, 2019).

39 For more information, see Chait & Keirstead (2019).

a three-year professional learning program for teachers from the traditional, charter, and parochial sectors to build capacity for improving the performance of English learner students.<sup>40</sup> The Compact worked with WestEd’s Quality Teaching for English Learners program as a partner to provide professional learning for teachers, peer coaches, and instructional leaders in 22 Boston public, charter, and Catholic schools. The initiative worked to prepare teachers to help students who are English learners to develop the disciplinary and linguistic practices they need to meet the demands of 21st-century learning standards.<sup>41</sup>

## Identifying and Sharing Promising Practices Across Sectors

### BACKGROUND AND NEED

Practices worth sharing can originate in all types of schools, in both the charter and traditional school sectors. But because the charter school model is intended to generate innovation, a charter-rich environment is, in theory, likely to generate a greater variety of instructional and operational strategies compared to a traditional district. However, structures or processes in either sector are not always in place for confirming that a practice is worth disseminating or, if something is shown to be a promising or best practice, for disseminating it.

### ADDRESSING THE NEED

To start with, criteria must be established for determining whether a practice is worth sharing. One criterion, for example, might be that a practice must be adaptable to a variety of contexts in both sectors.<sup>42</sup> Once criteria are in place, districts, charter management organizations, and schools must understand how and have the wherewithal to develop evidence that a practice meets the criteria — whether it can be considered a promising or best practice. Finally, when practices have been identified and shown to meet the criteria, structures and resources are needed to facilitate sharing them with other public schools in both sectors.

### WHAT STATES CAN DO TO HELP

States can promote the need for sharing best practices and create structures and provide resources that facilitate such sharing.

#### **Provide identification criteria and technical assistance on establishing an evidence base.**

Criteria for determining whether a practice is promising or best should align with ESSA’s requirement that improvement strategies and programs supported by federal funding meet one of four evidence levels defined under ESSA.<sup>43</sup> Once identification criteria have been set, states can provide technical assistance (TA) at the local level (e.g., for districts, CMOs, or cross-sector groups) on how to establish the required evidence base for what a school believes to be a

40 Chait & Keirstead (2019).

41 WestEd. (2019). *Boston Compact English Learner Initiative* [web-based project description]. Retrieved from <https://www.wested.org/project/boston-compact-english-learner-initiative/>

42 Allender, S. & Evan, A. (2019) *Identifying promising practices in charter schools: A framework for an evidence-based approach*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

43 Hale, S., Dunn, L., Filby, N., Rice, J., & Van Houten, L. (2017). *Evidence-based improvement: A guide for states to strengthen their frameworks and supports aligned to the evidence requirements of ESSA*, p. 2. San Francisco, CA: WestEd. Retrieved from <https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Evidence-Based-Improvement-Guide-FINAL-122116.pdf>

promising or best practice. States may also want to identify schools that are doing particularly well with underserved student groups (e.g., designated English learners) and provide TA to the schools and/or their district to help them identify and document what they see as practices that contribute to that success.<sup>44</sup> In working with districts or schools on identifying best practices, it can be helpful to provide guidance about continuous improvement so a school understands the value of identifying best practices, implementing them, evaluating them, and making adjustments and mid-course corrections.<sup>45</sup>

A key role states can play in helping districts and schools that struggle to successfully educate underserved populations is that of a practice broker — finding promising or best practices in either sector and disseminating them so other schools and districts can adopt, adapt, or otherwise learn from them. SEA staff are in a good position to play this brokering role because, compared to local education entities, they have a broader view of what’s happening across their state and are able to be more neutral in identifying promising practices.

To date, any state-level role of identifying and disseminating promising or best practices from high-performing charter schools has typically resided in an SEA’s choice or charter schools division, largely because, under the federal CSP, any state that receives a CSP grant is required to share promising or best practices from charter

schools with all other schools. However, the role would likely have greater impact if it were to sit within an SEA division with a relatively broader charge (e.g., school improvement) or were established as an agency-wide initiative. SEAs could then more easily foster cross-sector partnerships that share these practices, including offering them as a resource for Comprehensive School Improvement and/or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement Schools.

**Facilitate the sharing of best practices.** Once a state has guided districts and schools in identifying promising or best practices, it can facilitate the sharing of the practices within and across sectors. Dissemination activities vary from light-touch awareness-building efforts, such as posting information on websites, to developing guidebooks that can deepen awareness but not necessarily lead to full implementation, to more-intensive efforts such as providing TA or engaging educators in fellowships or residencies for ongoing professional development. Research suggests that the majority of dissemination efforts for practices involve some type of professional development.<sup>46</sup>

The right mode of dissemination depends on the type of, and purpose for, information being disseminated. For example, a website and conference presentation might be good vehicles for sharing high-level awareness-building information with school and district leaders who need to identify practices that might meet

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44 Allender & Evan (2019).

45 For more information on identifying and documenting best practices, see Allender & Evan (2019).

46 Maas, T., & Lake, R. (2018). *Passing notes: Learning from efforts to share instructional practices across district-charter lines*. Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education. Retrieved from <https://www.crpe.org/publications/passing-notes-share-instructional-practices-across-district-charter-lines>; Steiner, L., Way, A., & Hassel, B. (2006). *Assessment of Charter Schools Program dissemination funding*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd. Retrieved from [https://wested.org/online\\_pubs/cs-dis-funding.pdf](https://wested.org/online_pubs/cs-dis-funding.pdf); Lake, R., Yatsko, S., Gill, S., & Opalka, A. (2017) *Bridging the district-charter divide to help more students succeed*. Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education. Retrieved from <https://www.crpe.org/publications/bridging-district-charter-divide>

their needs. Websites are also good vehicles for recognizing high performers so that other schools in either sector can identify the schools from which they may want to learn. This type of recognition can also serve as an incentive for schools to participate in dissemination projects. In addition, websites can serve as a warehouse for easily accessible information and as a way to capture and document best practices. Several SEAs have websites that include case studies, descriptions, and even videos of promising practices or dissemination programs.<sup>47</sup> However, once educators have been able to get a high-level view of practices that seem especially relevant to their circumstances, they'll need a way of obtaining more in-depth information about the practices, particularly if they intend to implement a new practice.

Broadly speaking, the more complex a practice is, the more intensive the dissemination needed for successful uptake. For example, conveying a best-practice leadership development program is likely to require more dissemination time and resources compared to a set of practices on addressing chronic absenteeism. SEA leaders interviewed for an evaluation of dissemination activities funded by the federal CSP questioned the impact of brief workshops and the dissemination of guidebooks.<sup>48</sup> Several leaders indicated their

belief that “the most successful [dissemination] projects involved mentoring or other ongoing, ‘hands-on’ relationships between schools.”<sup>49</sup>

Other more in-depth strategies for sharing instructional practices are cross-sector residencies or fellowships, which “intensively train teachers or principals in a particular school model with the intention that they will employ the model and transfer the knowledge to whatever school they work in next.”<sup>50</sup> These dissemination strategies entail providing intensive, ongoing training in a particular model or set of skills to teachers and/or principals across sectors to enable them to implement the model or skills in a current or future role. An additional dissemination strategy, identified by some SEA leaders interviewed for this report, is intentionally connecting schools to share promising or best practices.<sup>51</sup> The approach is to match a school or schools with challenges in a particular area to a school or schools with strengths (e.g., promising or best practices) in that same area. While interviewees spoke of the use of the connecting-schools strategy only within the charter sector (and managed by a state’s charter school office), it seems likely that it could easily be used across sectors.

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47 See, for example, the following websites that share best practices: Massachusetts Department of Education. (n.d.). *Profiles of dissemination* [webpage]. Retrieved from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/bestpractices/Profiles.html>; DC.gov. (n.d.). *Office of the State Superintendent of Education, Public Charter Best Practices Archive* [webpage]. Retrieved from <https://osse.dc.gov/page/public-charter-best-practices-archive>; NYSED.gov, Charter School Office. (n.d.). *2013-2016 New York Charter School Dissemination Program Grant* [webpage]. Retrieved from <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/newsarchives/2015/CSPDisseminationGrants.html>

48 Steiner, Way, & Hassel (2006).

49 Ibid., p. 49.

50 Maas & Lake (2018).

51 J. Laghetto, Finance and Data Coordinator, Massachusetts Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign (personal communication, April 8, 2019); B. Becker, Charter Schools Program Manager, Office of the State Superintendent of Education (personal communication, March 26, 2019); B. Kottenstette, Director of Colorado Schools of Choice Office (personal communication, April 2, 2019); D. Frank, Executive Director, New York Charter Schools Office (personal communication, April 10, 2019).



## COLLABORATION IN ACTION

When encouraging districts and schools to identify and disseminate promising or best practices across the two public school sectors, states may want to share examples of existing models or efforts for doing so, such as those that follow.

**Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, research and dissemination of best practices.** This SEA supports the documentation and use of evidence-based practices through various initiatives across the agency. The Accountability and Assistance Office's State System of Support disseminates research and publications on effective practices in school turnaround, including a suite of videos. Its Office of Planning and Research sets forth and carries out a research agenda focused on five strategies aimed at preparing all students for success after high school, covering a number of topics. The SEA's *How Do We Know Initiative* provides educators with resources to build their capacity to use, build, and share evidence about effective practices. Through the agency's website, educators access resources to measure implementation and impact of initiatives and practices as part of their improvement strategy, thereby helping address the ESSA federal requirement for use of evidence-based practices. Finally, the charter school program of the School and Program Options Office supports the

dissemination of best practices through grants and additional resources.

**Professional learning communities.** Two Rivers Public Charter School in the District of Columbia runs an annual yearlong professional learning community (PLC) for what it calls *deeper learning*. The school defines deeper learning as the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills; character (responsibility, perseverance, and a growth mindset); and collaboration and communication,<sup>52</sup> which, for this PLC, are all focused on “aligning instruction, designing and implementing assessments, and using data around critical thinking and problem solving to deepen instruction.”<sup>53</sup> Each year's PLC consists of a cohort of 10–15 teachers representing DC schools from both sectors who first come together for a three-day summer institute facilitated by Two Rivers' chief administrative officer. There, teachers engage in reading, discussing, and learning about critical thinking and problem solving; designing rubrics and performance tasks; and learning about instructional methods to deepen learning. Each teacher then chooses a thinking routine to implement in the classroom. The teachers come together three times throughout the year to discuss implementation and learn from each other.<sup>54</sup> They then share their learning more broadly at an “Evening of Learning” event, consisting of seminars attended by both district and charter teachers and staff.<sup>55</sup>

52 Two Rivers Public Charter School. (n.d.). *Deeper learning* [web page]. Retrieved from <https://www.tworiverspcs.org/learning-approach/curriculum/deeper-learning>

53 Two Rivers Public Charter School. (n.d.). *Deeper learning cohort* [web page]. Retrieved from <http://www.learnwithtworivers.org/deeper-learning-cohort.html>

54 J. H. Williams, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Two Rivers Public Charter School (personal communication, March 14, 2019); Two Rivers Public Charter School. (n.d.). *Deeper learning cohort* [webpage]. Retrieved from <https://www.learnwithtworivers.org/deeper-learning-cohort.html>

55 K. Husain, Director of External Relations, Two Rivers Public Charter Schools (personal communication, November 8, 2018).

**Professional learning.** The KIPP Through College + College Access For All: College Match Partnership offers district high school principals and counselors the opportunity to participate in a series of intensive professional learning trainings and consultancy-based workshops that have been collaboratively designed by the KIPP Through College Program Office and the New York City Department of Education's College and Career Planning team. Participants in the sessions learn about promising college counseling practices from both KIPP and the district that are aimed at increasing students' college completion rates.<sup>56</sup>

**School leader residency.** The Residency Program for School Leadership in New Haven, Connecticut, is a partnership between Achievement First, a high-performing charter network with 37 schools in five cities across Connecticut, New York, and Rhode Island, and New Haven Public Schools (NHPS). The program is intended to prepare assistant principals, coaches, and teacher leaders to become NHPS principals. The yearlong program includes the following components: two weeks of intensive professional development during the summer; a one-semester position working at an Achievement First school under a mentor principal, followed by a position working as

a leadership team member under a high-performing principal in an NHPS school; weekly evening seminars and other ongoing professional development focused on school leadership; and weekly individualized coaching sessions.<sup>57</sup>

## Recruiting and Retaining Educator Talent

### BACKGROUND AND NEED

It is widely known that many U.S. schools, particularly those serving low-income students and students of color, struggle to attract and retain high-quality talent.<sup>58</sup> Research on 30 years of national teacher data (1987–2016) revealed some sobering statistics, among them that, as of the 2018 analysis, 44 percent of new teachers were leaving the profession within five years; the typical teacher had one to three years of experience (a sharp decline from the 15 years of experience the modal teacher had in 1987/88); high-poverty, high-minority, urban, and rural public schools had among the highest rates of turnover; and about half of all teacher turnover was taking place in 25 percent of public schools.<sup>59</sup>

The costs for high rates of educator attrition are significant, both fiscally and, especially for students in high-needs schools, educationally.<sup>60</sup>

56 New York City Department of Education Info Hub. (n.d.). *District-charter partnerships* [webpage]. Retrieved from <https://infohub.nyced.org/partners-and-providers/charter-schools/district-charter-partnerships>; Paul Byrne, Senior Director, District-Charter Partnerships (personal communication, April 23, 2019).

57 Center on Reinventing Public Education. (n.d.). *Residency program for school leadership overview*. Retrieved from [https://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/New%20Haven\\_ResidencyProgramOverview\\_Jan2012.pdf](https://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/New%20Haven_ResidencyProgramOverview_Jan2012.pdf)

58 Ingersoll, R. M., Merrill, E., Stuckey, D., & Collins, G. (2018). *Seven trends: The transformation of the teaching force - Updated October 2018* (Research Report #RR 2018-2). Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania. Retrieved from [https://repository.upenn.edu/cpre\\_researchreports/108](https://repository.upenn.edu/cpre_researchreports/108); Garcia, E., & Weiss, E. (2019, March). *The teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.epi.org/files/pdf/163651.pdf>

59 Ingersoll et al. (2018, pp. 11-20).

60 Sutchter, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2016). *A coming crisis in teaching? Teacher supply, demand, and shortages in the U.S.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, Retrieved at [https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/A\\_Coming\\_Crisis\\_in\\_Teaching\\_REPORT.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/A_Coming_Crisis_in_Teaching_REPORT.pdf)

Because, as shown in recent research,<sup>61</sup> there is a positive impact on learning when students of color have teachers of the same race or ethnicity, the educational costs of attrition may be even more significant for these particular students. The analysis of 30 years of teacher data showed that, as of school year 2015/16, 51 percent of public school students were from underrepresented groups while only 19.9 percent of their teachers were individuals of color, suggesting that many students of color are unlikely to have teachers of the same race/ethnicity.<sup>62</sup>

These percentages by no means tell the whole story. On the positive side, during the three decades reflected in the analytic data set, the teaching force actually became more diverse, with a growth rate for teachers of color about three times that of White teachers.

Yet, for multiple reasons, the overall teaching force remains primarily White and non-Hispanic. One reason is turnover: Although individuals of color have entered the profession at higher rates than Whites have in recent decades, they also leave at higher rates.<sup>63</sup> As to why, the researchers point to working conditions: “The same difficult-to-staff schools that are more likely to employ minority teachers are also more likely to offer less-than-desirable working conditions . . . and and these conditions account for the higher rates of minority teacher turnover. These high

levels of turnover, of course, undermine efforts to diversify the teaching force.”<sup>64</sup>

The dual challenge then is to recruit and prepare the right teachers for the schools that most need them, while also establishing the conditions that, by allowing teachers to be successful, make them want to stay.

## ADDRESSING THE NEED

Traditional and charter schools can collaborate to address human capital challenges that affect both sectors, with the intent of improving recruitment, increasing retention, increasing the diversity of the teaching workforce, and better preparing teachers for all types of schools and students. In tackling these challenges collaboratively, the sectors can target their combined resources and can benefit from economies of scale. Each can also benefit by learning of promising practices from the other sector.

## WHAT STATES CAN DO TO HELP

### **Collect and analyze educator workforce data.**

SEAs are in the driver’s seat when it comes to analyzing the educator workforce in their state. Knowing that the quality of the teaching workforce is the single most critical in-school factor for student success and the quality of the leader workforce is the next most important factor, SEAs have a responsibility to analyze their workforce data. These analyses can point to

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61 Egalite, A., Kisida, B., & Winters, M. (2015). Representation in the classroom: The effect of own-race/ethnicity teacher assignment on student achievement. *Economics of Education Review*, 45, 45–52. Retrieved from [https://sites.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/Papers/Egalite-et-al-2015-FLTM\\_EER.pdf](https://sites.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/Papers/Egalite-et-al-2015-FLTM_EER.pdf); Goldhaber, D., Theobald, R., & Tien, C. (2015). *The theoretical and empirical arguments for diversifying the teacher workforce: A review of evidence*. Seattle, WA: Center for Education Data and Research Policy Brief. Retrieved from <http://m.cedr.us/papers/working/CEDR%20WP%202015-9.pdf>

62 Ingersoll et al. (2018, p. 15).

63 Ibid, p. 16.

64 Ibid, p. 20.

gaps in the educator pipeline, thereby pointing to needed changes in policy.

In particular, SEAs will want to pay close attention to (1) the supply side of the pipeline to identify the areas facing the greatest shortages of teachers; (2) the extent to which candidates representing racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity are entering and remaining in the workforce; and (3) the rates of attrition and levels of effectiveness of teachers and leaders across districts and schools and, in particular, in high-needs schools and districts.

Determining what states, districts, and charter schools have available in the way of educator data is the first step. Specific teacher-related data should include, for example:

- Number of teacher completers of educator preparation programs, by program;
- Number of teachers certified, by field and grade level;
- Number of education preparation graduates and certified candidates hired;
- Number of teachers hired with alternative preparation/certificates;
- Length of educator retention, by educator preparation program and certification;
- Rates of teacher retention, by number of years;
- Survey data on teacher satisfaction and reasons teachers leave; and
- Student survey data relating to school and classroom experience.

All such data should be analyzed by demographics: school district type, poverty; student race/ethnicity, English learner designation, special education designation; and educator race/ethnicity.

Collecting and analyzing similar data for district and school leaders can illuminate gaps in the administrator and principal pipelines. Through an analysis of educator data across school types, states can look for any patterns or outliers related to hiring, retention, and educator effectiveness across school types and sectors.<sup>65</sup>

**Promote and highlight best practices.** High-performing schools showing low rates of educator attrition can be identified and tapped for what they might reveal about systems, structures, and working conditions that lead to educator satisfaction and retention. SEAs can incentivize cross-sector talent initiatives through competitive grants and are then in a position to disseminate best practices through their websites. They can also invite presentations on these practices at face-to-face and virtual convenings. With ESSA's requirement for the use of evidence-based practices, documenting the features of effective talent systems would provide valuable resources to all schools and districts looking for evidence-based practices for attracting, recruiting, supporting, and retaining an effective educator workforce.

**Encourage and incentivize the leveraging of resources across sectors.** For example, many SEAs have policies requiring and/or supporting mentoring and induction programs for new teachers, a proven strategy for increasing both teacher retention and improving student

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<sup>65</sup> A number of resources with more information on using talent data effectively are available from The Center for Great Teachers and Leaders, including *Decision Points: Defining, Calculating, and Addressing Gaps in Access to Effective Educators* and *Insights on Diversifying the Educator Workforce: A Data Tool for Practitioners*.

outcomes.<sup>66</sup> The establishment of cross-sector residencies, through which teachers or leaders learn more about their position while on the job, is another strategy that can benefit from leveraging resources across sectors. Such programs can be costly for individual districts and schools to operate. SEAs may be able to facilitate cross-sector collaboration in which costs are shared to bring effective mentoring and induction programs to scale across sectors.

**Share strategies for increasing the diversity of the educator workforce.** Efforts to diversify the educator workforce provide opportunities to learn across sectors. States can ensure that their own strategies to increase the diversity of the teacher workforce include opportunities to learn across sectors.<sup>67</sup> They can encourage the same for local educators. A recent study of teacher diversity in North Carolina, for example, found that Black students enrolled in charter schools were more than 50 percent (13 percentage points) more likely to have a Black teacher than Black students in traditional public schools; at the same time, there was no difference between sectors in the likelihood of White students having a White teacher.<sup>68</sup> This result suggests that in one state, at least, traditional schools can look to charter schools for strategies for recruiting and retaining a diverse teacher force.

**Preparing educators for all environments.** With states increasingly holding teacher preparation programs accountable for results,<sup>69</sup> and with more data being collected to assess programs' effectiveness, colleges and universities have a vested interest in working to ensure that their teacher candidates have the supports needed for early career success in a variety of education settings. State agencies — SEAs or others — that are responsible for approving teacher and leader preparation programs and for establishing licensure requirements have a unique opportunity to communicate a clear message that cross-sector collaboration is important. These agencies, as well as boards of education, can bring educator preparation programs to the table to reflect on data and discuss strategies for collaborating across sectors to improve pre- and in-service education. In addition to strengthening pre-service curricula, strengthening clinical practice in teacher preparation is clearly one of the most important strategies for improving the competence of new teachers and the overall capacity of the teaching force.<sup>70</sup>

Many pre-service programs for educators have formed partnerships with districts and schools that have led to improved teacher practice and retention. An SEA can encourage a successful preparation program to work

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66 Ingersoll, R., & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research. *Review of Education Research, 81*(2), 201-233. doi: 10.3102/0034654311403323. Retrieved from [https://repository.upenn.edu/gse\\_pubs/127](https://repository.upenn.edu/gse_pubs/127)

67 For more information about strategies states can implement to increase the diversity of the teacher workforce and implement culturally responsive practices, see this [guidance document](#) produced by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO): Warner, S., Duncan, E., Rivera, P., & Moffat Miller, C. (2019). *A vision and guidance for a diverse and learner-ready teacher workforce*. Washington, DC: CCSSO. Retrieved from [https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/Vision%20and%20Guidance%20for%20a%20Diverse%20and%20Learner-Ready%20Teacher%20Workforce\\_FINAL010919.pdf](https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/Vision%20and%20Guidance%20for%20a%20Diverse%20and%20Learner-Ready%20Teacher%20Workforce_FINAL010919.pdf)

68 Gershenson (2019).

69 Teacher Preparation Analytics. (2016). *Accountability in teacher preparation: Policies and data in the 50 states & DC*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers. Retrieved from <https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/50StateScan092216.pdf>

70 Darling-Hammond, L. (2014). Strengthening clinical preparation: The holy grail of teacher education. *Peabody Journal of Education, 89*, 547-561.

with both district and charter schools if it isn't already doing so. Through involvement in such partnerships in communities of choice, educator preparation programs have the opportunity to both support and learn from the experiences of their candidates and graduates working in traditional public and charter schools. Finally, a state's education leadership standards and licensure requirements can underscore the importance of cross-sector collaboration and cross-school learning.

## COLLABORATION IN ACTION

When encouraging local cross-sector collaboration to improve recruitment and retention of educator talent, states may want to share examples of existing models or efforts, such as those that follow.

**DC Staffing Data Collaborative.**<sup>71</sup> The DC Staffing Data Collaborative is a partnership between OSSE, LEAs who choose to participate (both DC Public Schools and charter LEAs), educator preparation programs, and TNTP, a national nonprofit that supports schools, districts, and states in developing and implementing policies and practices that ensure effective teaching. The collaborative provides data and analyses to participating LEAs to inform the development of effective strategies for recruitment, professional development, and retention. In exchange for providing their staffing data to TNTP, “participating LEAs receive regular reports

on targeted and timely topics, such as school culture, staffing, and differential retention (or retention of high performers).”<sup>72</sup> The collaborative then convenes LEAs and education preparation programs to discuss data and develop strategies to address common challenges.

**Teacher recruitment.** Teach Indy is a collaborative initiative to recruit teachers to both charter and traditional public schools in Indianapolis.<sup>73</sup> Initiative partners are The Mind Trust, Indianapolis Public Schools, and the mayor's Office of Education Innovation. The website provides resources and information for prospective educators and makes the case for teaching in Indianapolis.<sup>74</sup> It also includes a job board that allows prospective applicants to view and apply for jobs at many traditional and charter schools in Indianapolis.

**Teacher residencies.** Teacher residencies are teacher preparation programs in which a prospective teacher has a yearlong classroom apprenticeship while taking education courses and participating in professional development. Teacher residencies that serve both sectors offer an opportunity for district and charter schools to benefit from economies of scale in preparing new teachers and for new teachers to share ideas and strategies across sectors. The Boston Plan for Excellence's Boston Teacher Residency (BTR), a nationally known and replicated clinical preparation program, combines a yearlong classroom apprenticeship with master's degree

71 DC.gov. (2019). *Office of the State Superintendent of Education, The DC Staffing Data Collaborative* [website]. Retrieved from <https://osse.dc.gov/publication/dc-staffing-data-collaborative>

72 OSSE and TNTP, Staffing Data Collaborative. (n.d.). *Coming together to build and sustain an effective teacher workforce in DC: Lessons from the DC Staffing Data Collaborative*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/Coming%20Together%20to%20Build%20and%20Sustain%20an%20Effective%20Teacher%20Workforce%20in%20DC%202018.pdf>

73 Mind Trust. (2018, March 27). *Joint effort launched to recruit more teachers to Indy's urban core*. Indianapolis, IN: Author. Retrieved from <https://www.themindtrust.org/news/teachindylaunch/>

74 Teach INDY [website]. Retrieved from <https://www.teachindynow.org/>

coursework. Residents are enrolled, with reduced tuition, in a master's degree program at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, receive a living stipend and health benefits, and receive ongoing professional support based on a three-year teaching commitment. Between 2003 and 2016, BTR prepared more than 600 new teachers, 49 percent of whom are teachers of color. BTR has helped bolster teacher retention in the district, with 71 percent of its graduates continuing to teach in Boston Public Schools through year six, compared with 51 percent of their peers who did not go through the program.<sup>75</sup>

## Conclusion

This guide is not all-inclusive in reviewing the areas of need that would benefit from district-charter collaboration and the inherent challenges of such collaboration, in suggesting roles states can play to foster and support cross-sector collaboration, or in providing examples of successful cross-sector collaboration. The intent is simply to prompt deeper thinking on the part of state leaders about district-charter collaboration's potential to help public education better serve its chief constituencies — students and their families — and, in doing so, to advance SEAs' own education responsibilities and objectives under ESSA.

For some state leaders, the suggestions in this paper for supporting district-charter collaboration will represent a continuation of steps already in progress. For others, in states with different governance structures and histories, taking more proactive steps to support and promote collaboration may at first seem like a stretch. To help readers consider how the suggestions and other information might apply in their own situations — and to motivate action — this publication includes, as an appendix, a set of self-reflection questions linking strategies to potential challenges states may be facing (e.g., families not being aware of all school choice options).

Collaboration across sectors is hard work for all involved, including those at the state level who are attempting to encourage and support it. Each step will open up opportunities for state leaders, along with new questions, as they pursue collaborative strategies to strengthen all schools for all students.

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<sup>75</sup> Partelow, L., Spong, A., Brown, C., & Johnson, S. (2017, September). *America needs more teachers of color and a more selective teaching profession*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2017/09/14/437667/america-needs-teachers-color-selective-teaching-profession/>; Boston Plan for Excellence. (2019). *Boston teacher residency* [website]. Retrieved from <https://www.bpe.org/boston-teacher-residency/about/impact/>

## Appendix: Self-Reflection Questions About Cross-Sector Collaboration

The tool below is offered for state education agencies (SEAs) and others who, having read the guide, want to further explore how its ideas might apply in their own setting and how they might begin to plan action accordingly.

The first step in considering how and where a specific SEA might prompt or support cross-sector collaboration is to clarify where those efforts are most needed. Column one in this self-reflection tool provides a range of commonly heard challenges related to public education broadly. Column two pairs each challenge with some collaboration-related ideas drawn from the narrative. In column three, readers can note what they see as the connection to their own context, including any policy changes that would be required and possible barriers that might interfere with implementation.

This guide is oriented toward SEA leaders, and some of the ideas can be initiated and carried out by state chiefs and their staffs or other state-level leaders. However, implementation of many of the collaboration-related options presented in the guide may require working with partners. After reading the guide themselves and identifying challenges that resonate in their context, SEA leaders can decide what, if anything, they want to take on themselves through the SEA and what, if anything, they want to take on with outside partners. At that point, they can invite relevant staff or outside partners to read the paper and complete self-reflection notes in advance of a discussion.

No matter who is joining in the process, the instructions are straightforward: Scan the first column to identify challenges that apply in your situation. Use the second column to consider collaboration-related ideas for potential state action. Use the third column to make notes about possible connections to your situation, including any policy changes that would be required, and possible barriers that could interfere with implementation.



**CHALLENGE:** Many families, including those from historically marginalized groups, are not fully aware of all the public school options available for their children.

Opportunities for State Leadership	Next Steps for Your State
<p><b>State leaders support regional enrollment events and showcase opportunities in district and charter schools.</b></p> <p>See guide pages 7–8.</p>	<p><i>Example: We could establish a task force made up of members from both sectors to organize a regional enrollment fair.</i></p>
<p><b>SEAs provide web-based information about schools, with family-friendly data elements and formats that go beyond minimum accountability requirements, thereby serving as a replication model for districts and charters.</b></p> <p>See guide pages 7–8.</p>	
<p><b>SEAs offer translation services to ensure that local school reports are offered in commonly spoken languages.</b></p> <p>See guide page 10.</p>	

**CHALLENGE:** Students with learning disabilities and students who are English learners continue to have low achievement in both charter and traditional schools.

Opportunities for State Leadership	Next Steps for Your State
<p><b>SEAs, intermediate units, and other providers offer professional learning services to both traditional schools and charter schools on serving students with learning disabilities and students who are English learners.</b></p> <p>See guide page 12.</p>	
<p><b>State leaders organize a professional learning event focused on raising achievement levels for particular groups of students, using best practices from high-performing charter and traditional public schools.</b></p> <p>See guide pages 15-17.</p>	
<p><b>State leaders facilitate the efforts of district and charter schools to develop innovative ways of blending or complementing each other's services for special populations.</b></p> <p>See guide pages 10-13.</p>	
<p><b>SEAs offer competitive grants to assist charters in serving special populations.</b></p> <p>See guide page 12.</p>	

**CHALLENGE:** Schools that serve students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds have difficulty recruiting and retaining experienced and high-quality teachers.

Opportunities for State Leadership	Next Steps for Your State
<p><b>SEAs collect and analyze data on educators to identify strengths and gaps in talent.</b></p> <p>See guide pages 19–20.</p>	
<p><b>SEA divisions, including the ones working with charter schools, and representatives of higher education convene to develop talent recruitment and retention strategies.</b></p> <p>See guide pages 21–22.</p>	
<p><b>SEAs incentivize cross-sector mentoring and induction programs.</b></p> <p>See guide pages 20–21.</p>	
<p><b>SEAs or other state educator certification agencies experiment with alternative pathways to certification to encourage greater diversity in the workforce.</b></p> <p>See guide pages 21–22.</p>	

**CHALLENGE:** Students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds continue to have low achievement in both charter and traditional schools.

Opportunities for State Leadership	Next Steps for Your State
<p><b>State leaders identify schools in both sectors that are successfully serving students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds and provide the schools with resources and opportunities to develop evidence for promising or best practices and to share those practices with other schools.</b></p> <p>See guide pages 14-16.</p>	
<p><b>State leaders provide resources for cross-sector residency programs that prepare teachers and leaders to effectively serve students in high-poverty schools.</b></p> <p>See guide pages 22-23.</p>	
<p><b>State leaders provide resources for cross-sector professional learning communities focused on problems of practice.</b></p> <p>See guide pages 17-18.</p>	

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