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HOUSE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMONWEALTH *of* PENNSYLVANIA

House Democratic Policy Committee Hearing

Diverse by Example: Increasing Participation in Academia

Wednesday, February 2, 2022 | 10:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

Representatives Stephen Kinsey and Gina Curry

PANEL ONE

10:45am

Dr. Gary King, Professor Biobehavioral Health
Penn State College of Health and Human Development

Dr. Dominiqua Griffin, Alumni
Penn State University

PANEL TWO

11:15a.m.

Marcus Whitehurst, Vice Provost for Educational Equity
Penn State University

Kathleen Bieschke, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs
Penn State University

Dr. Suzanne C. Adair, Associate Vice President for Affirmative Action
Penn State University

PANEL THREE

11:45a.m.

Julio Palma, Assistant Professor of Chemistry
Penn State University - Fayette

Julie Reed, Associate Professor of Native American and American
History
Penn State University Park

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PANEL FOUR

12:15p.m.

Jason Carter, Executive Director, Professional Educator Programs
Educational Testing Service

Malik McKinley, Director of Client Relations, Professional Educator
Programs
Educational Testing Service

**Written Testimony for the PA House Democrat Policy Committee
Educational Testing Service (ETS)
February 2, 2022**

Subject: Increasing Diversity in the Educator Pipeline in Pennsylvania

From: Jason Carter, Executive Director, Professional Educator Programs, ETS
Malik McKinley, Director of Client Relations, Professional Educator Programs, ETS

J. Carter: About ETS and our Commitment to a More Diversified Education Workforce

Educational Testing Service (ETS) is a nonprofit research and assessment organization that was started in 1947 with the mission of advancing quality and equity in education through research and assessments. Our first testing program was the National Teacher Exam, which eventually transitioned into the Praxis Program many know of today.

Today, ETS works with education professionals throughout the world to develop, administer and score over 50 million assessments in 180 countries in over 9,000 locations. Over 40 states and territories use Praxis as their main teacher licensure assessment.

The Role of Praxis in Education

All states want teachers to have the knowledge and skills needed for safe and effective practice before they receive a license. To address this desire, Praxis tests are designed to assess test takers' job-relevant knowledge and skills.

The Praxis tests provide states with the appropriate tools to make decisions about applicants for a teaching license. In this way, the Praxis tests meet the basic needs of state licensing agencies and helps states ensure educators are well prepared throughout the following means:

- Praxis tests align with state and national content standards; complement existing state infrastructures for teacher licensure; and are appropriate for both traditional and alternate-route candidates.
- States adopt Praxis tests as one indicator that teachers have achieved a specified level of mastery of academic skills, subject area knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge before being granted a teaching license.
- Praxis tests reflect what practitioners across the United States believe to be important for new teachers. The test scores are portable across states and directly comparable, reinforcing interstate eligibility and mobility.

- The Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators (or Praxis Core) tests are designed to measure whether teaching candidates have the academic competency in reading, writing, and mathematics to prepare for a career in education.
- Praxis Subject Assessments cover general or specific content knowledge in a wide range of subjects across elementary school, middle school, or high school.

Our Commitment to Developing Unbiased Tests

Developing comprehensive and effective tests to ensure educators are well-prepared to lead in the classroom is paramount, but so is creating a testing system that reflects a diverse teacher workforce. ETS has long remained committed to creating tests that reflect the unique backgrounds of all those who look to enter the workforce as educators through the following processes:

- ETS works with Education Preparation Programs (EPPs) and the state agencies which oversee the preparation and licensure of new teachers to ensure that our tests provide an equal opportunity for every test taker to demonstrate readiness to teach — regardless of race and background.
- ETS also works closely with stakeholders to include the voices of teacher candidates of color and minority serving EPPs in every stage of the development process. This focus helps verify that our tests are free of cultural bias.
- ETS conducts statistical analysis on our assessments — using processes like Differential Item Functioning — to ensure that they do not include test items that disadvantage any population.

Diversity: Recognizing Today's Challenges and Adapting to Meet Them

As our nation has grown more diverse, the demographics of the teacher workforce have not kept pace with the changes in student demographics. Recent statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics indicate nearly 50% of the student population is racially diverse, while only 20% of teachers meet this same standard.

The nation suffers from a significant demographic gap between the teacher workforce and the PK–12 student body, and ETS knows this needs to change. The facts speak for themselves:

- Black males represent 6% of the adult U.S. population, but they represent less than 2% of the three million currently working as K–12 teachers.

- According to a report by the U.S. Department of Education, “The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce,” diversity among teachers significantly benefits students. The report states the following:
 - *“Improving teacher diversity can help all students. Teachers of color are positive role models for all students in breaking down negative stereotypes and preparing students to live and work in a multiracial society. A more diverse teacher workforce can also supplement training in the culturally sensitive teaching practices most effective with today’s student populations.”*
-

M. McKinley: ETS and Its Commitment to Diversity

ETS not only recognizes the need for diversity among classroom leaders, but our team remains focused on being part of the effort to address this need. Commitment needs to be reflected by actions, and ETS is proud to ensure diversity remains a priority area of improvement.

As part of this effort, ETS has continued to research ways to better engage minority communities and create new opportunities to becoming classroom leaders. To be successful in this space, it requires an honest and sincere approach. ETS has addressed this through the following:

- ETS researchers have investigated and documented what EPPs are doing to meet the challenge of the diversity gap. In 2016, we conducted a survey of EPPs across the country to understand how programs attract, admit, support and graduate teaching candidates from underrepresented groups.
- ETS conducted interviews and site visits with EPP faculty and administrators who completed its diversity survey — identifying strategies that support candidate success and explaining the challenges experienced by these programs. ETS also published several reports in 2019 discussing findings and providing guidance to the education community.
- ETS and the National Education Association have co-published the report, *Toward Increasing Teacher Diversity: Targeting Support and Intervention for Teacher Licensure Candidates*.
 - This focused on the performance gap in demographic subgroups of teacher candidates on The Praxis Series® assessments. The report also offers insight into strategies and interventions that can better support minority candidates in meeting full licensure requirements.

Our Work: A State-by-State Assessment

ETS has worked with policymakers and agency officials in several states to promote and encourage new measures to expand diversity among educators. Some of these efforts have included:

- **Alabama:** Partnered with NEA to train faculty, offer discounts, and host in-person “bootcamps” for teacher candidate of color at one of the state’s Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs).
- **Connecticut:** Engaged policymakers, EPPs, community members and alternate route programs by:
 1. Disseminating research and information;
 2. Helping EPPs with faculty testing informational sessions; and
 3. Initiating a joint effort with the Hartford Public Schools to support a “grow your own program” for paraprofessionals on a pathway to becoming a teacher.
- **Indiana:** Collaborated with the Indiana Commission on Higher Education to sponsor a “Diversity in the Teacher Workforce” symposium, where researchers, policymakers and education community members could explore research-based approaches that promote diversity.
- **Kentucky:** Working with the Louisville Teacher Residency Program (LTR), which produces a diverse cohort of quality teachers by creating a recruitment pipeline of recent graduates and current upper-level students.
- **Virginia:** Worked with the Virginia Secretary of Education and the Governor’s Task Force on Diversifying the Teacher Pipeline by providing best practices and research findings on successful strategies for increasing teacher diversity.

Community-Centered Partnerships

In addition to work done at the state level, ETS continues to engage community partners and organizations with a vested interest in promoting diversity among classroom leaders. Our efforts included the following:

- Worked with the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, the Western Pennsylvania Consortium of Educators, and others to conduct a Black Male Educator series of convenings focusing on three factors: recruitment, development, and retention.
- Facilitated teacher-diversity discussions with a subset of the American Federation of Teachers, which presented an opportunity for leaders from National Education

Association, the NAACP and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education to discuss the topic and focus on various needs.

- In consultation with Tennessee Black Caucus of State Legislators, ETS worked with Tennessee State University to launch a project that supported and improved teacher quality in hard-to-serve areas across the state.
- Partnered with the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) to form a collaboration to create the Young Scholars Program, which is designed to attract minority undergraduate students who are interested in research, assessment, statistics and education.

Identifying Best Practices and Constantly Striving for Improvement

Diversifying the education workforce must remain an ongoing and evolving effort. To keep the goals in focus, ETS believes work must carry across all aspects of an individual's education journey by following these best practices:

- During a Student's K-12 Experience
 - Work toward promoting exposure at middle and high school levels.
 - Identify ways to garner early college credit for interested students.
 - Advocate for teacher assistance opportunities.
 - Maintain targeted partnerships between local districts and IHEs.
- During Collegiate Life
 - Invest financially in recruitment and retention of minority students.
 - Diversify the faculty of IHEs.
 - Create and nurture targeted partnerships between CCs and IHEs.
 - Develop mentorship programs and support proactive advising efforts.
- During the Teaching Experience
 - State investments in diversity staff.
 - Increase teacher pay, benefits, housing, loan forgiveness, classroom autonomy, and future leadership opportunities.
 - Strengthen supports for teachers who feel isolated or burnt out; need support or engagement.

Closing

ETS recognizes that speaking on diversity and promoting its importance only matters if there are plans in place to support the message. Our team remains committed to promoting diversity among classroom leaders, and we welcome all opportunities to work with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the state's elected leaders to solidify this position.

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