



Creating an Action Plan and Sustaining Efforts to Increase Educator Diversity

A Toolkit for District & School Leaders



REGION 2
Connecticut
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Contributors

Connecticut State Department of Education

Charlene Russell-Tucker
Commissioner of Education

Dr. Shuana K. Tucker
Chief Talent Officer

Christopher Todd
Bureau Chief, Talent Office

Dr. Regina M. Hopkins
Education Consultant, Strategy Lead

Andrea Wadowski
Graphic Designer

Region 2 Comprehensive Center

Saroja R. Warner, PhD, NBCT
Director, Talent Development and Diversity
WestEd

Erin Browder, EdD
Senior Program Associate
WestEd

Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast and Islands

Meg Caven, PhD, M.Ed.
Senior Research Associate
Education Development Center

Contents

Contributors	ii
Introduction and State Context	1
The state context: Then and now	1
Efforts to date: A continuum focus	1
About this Toolkit	2
Getting Started: Preplanning Tasks	3
Assemble a team	3
Explore the Guidebook for Hiring and Selection and conduct a root cause analysis	3
Establish a shared vision	3
Creating a strong theory of action	4
Developing the Action Plan	5
Identify goals	5
Assign roles and responsibilities	5
Identify strategies and key activities	6
Identify indicators of progress	6
Determine the resources required	6
Anticipate risks and plan for mitigation	7
Establish communication and engagement efforts	7
Ongoing Progress Monitoring	8
Become familiar with the progress monitoring and self-evaluation tool	8
Establish progress monitoring routines	8
Use the tool to monitor progress and self-evaluate	8
Establish a shared view of progress	9
Appendixes	10
Increasing Educator Diversity Plan Template	11
Increasing Educator Diversity Plan: Progress Monitoring and Self-Evaluation Tool	12
Lessons Learned & Best Practices: A Summary of Recurring Themes	18

Introduction and State Context

The racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity of Connecticut’s educator workforce does not reflect the diversity of its students. In summer 2015, the Connecticut State Board of Education (SBE) and the Commissioner of Education recommitted to their ongoing efforts to ensure that equitable access and opportunities are at the forefront of collaborative inquiry and collective responsibility to advance public education statewide. The resulting blueprint was *Ensuring Equity and Excellence For All Connecticut Students: The Connecticut State Board of Education’s Five-year Comprehensive Plan (Plan), 2016–21*, setting forth the state’s vision for public education.

In partnership with the Connecticut State Department of Education (SDE), the SBE embraced the responsibility to: (1) develop and support strategies, structures, conditions, partnerships, policies, and legislation intended to promote high expectations for all learners; and (2) provide schools with teachers and leaders who reflect and value racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity as reflected in their culturally responsive and relevant educational practices. To build a representative and inclusive educator workforce requires intentionality, innovation, and the elimination or transformation of structural and systemic barriers for aspiring and credentialed educators of color. “Research illustrates the importance of greater teacher diversity because of the substantial benefits teachers of color provide to all students, and to students of color in particular.”¹ The goal of Connecticut’s efforts to advance educator diversity and culturally responsive and relevant practice in schools is to improve outcomes for all students so that Connecticut’s school children will graduate ready to succeed in college, career, and civic life.

The state context: Then and now

In 2016, when the SBE adopted its 2016–21 Plan, the proportion of certified educators of color in the state was 8.3 percent. Progress toward accomplishing the outcomes identified in the Plan would be measured in part by whether the SDE, responsible for Plan implementation, could meet the SBE goal of increasing the racial diversity of Connecticut’s educator workforce by bringing the proportion of certified educators of color up to 10 percent. An increase of 1.7 percent required 1,000 more certified educators of color by 2021.

The SDE Talent Office implemented several strategies designed to reach the goal outlined in the Plan to attract, support, and retain great teachers and leaders with an intentional focus on increasing the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Connecticut’s educator workforce. Over the last five years, working in partnership with school districts across the state, more than 1,900 new educators of color have been hired in Connecticut, thereby exceeding the SBE goal of 10 percent. Still, there is more work ahead to attract, prepare, hire, support, retain, and grow a racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse and inclusive educator workforce.

Efforts to date: A continuum focus

Continuing to increase the racial diversity of Connecticut’s educator workforce requires a robust continuum of opportunities, legislation, resources, and supports. Here are some of the efforts underway:

- One end of the continuum begins with “grow-your-own” initiatives to attract middle and high school students to the profession with pathway opportunities that combine quality preparation with supports and mentoring (e.g., Educators Rising, Ed Rising – M.E.N., dual credit education courses).
- There are free, one-stop, web-based services that provide information about everything a person needs to become a teacher in Connecticut, including one-on-one expert advice (TEACH Connecticut [Home](#) | [TEACH.org](#) and <https://connecticut.teach.org/#tour>).
- The SDE and Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) partnered in a [NextGen Educators](#) initiative that provides paid K–12 classroom placements for highly motivated college students from CCSU seeking education degrees into Connecticut’s K–12 classrooms.

1. Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). *Diversifying the teaching profession through high-retention pathways* [Abstract]. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/diversifying-teaching-profession-brief>

- Public Act 21-62 ([An Act Requiring a Study by the CT Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority, Establishing a Working Group to Study Certain Issues Concerning Financing for Post-secondary Education and Establishing the Alliance District Teacher Loan Subsidy Program](#)) will provide an interest rate subsidy on CHESLA loans to teachers who commit to teaching in one of Connecticut's 33 highest need school districts. This subsidy provides an incentive for in-state and out-of-state educators.
- In accordance with Public Act (P.A.) 16-41 (An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force), the Connecticut SDE convened the Minority Teacher Recruitment (MTR) Policy Oversight Council. In accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, the council is charged with annually reporting to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly on matters relating to education regarding recommendations put forward to the Commissioner of Education. P.A. 16-41 also requires the SDE to report on the effectiveness of state-funded MTR programs administered by the Regional Educational Service Center (RESC) Alliance and the Office of Higher Education, using results-based accountability measures.
- The RESC MTR Alliance was established pursuant to the Connecticut General Assembly House Bill 8003 Sec. 31 (2008), which authorized an annual allocation for initiatives that included the Pathways to Teaching Program, scholarships for students of color seeking to pursue a career in education, and peer networking events. The RESC MTR Alliance, established by C.G.S. Section 10-155l, is a collaboration between the six RESCs and the boards of education that they serve. The RESC MTR Alliance is to provide assistance to Connecticut public school districts to enable them to recruit, hire, develop, support, and retain a racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse educator workforce.
- The Wallace Foundation University Principal Preparation Initiative provides supports to Connecticut administrator preparation programs for the purpose of developing equity-driven, anti-racist school leaders (e.g., Coaching for Culturally Responsive Leading, Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Virtual Professional Learning Series).
- Connecticut is continuing a partnership with WestEd and the Region 2 Comprehensive Center to pilot the Hiring and Selection Guidebook, develop resources to build district and RESC capacity, and facilitate creation of a data dashboard to track student-level exposure to teachers of color and student-teacher racial matching.
- The SDE supports a district-based program, [Teacher Education and Mentoring \(TEAM\)](#), that aims to ensure beginning teachers get the induction and mentoring support needed to be successful, to accelerate their professional growth, and to reduce attrition.
- Work that is in progress includes efforts to develop policies and strategies to improve teacher licensure and hiring and teaching conditions for current and aspiring teachers of color in order to support their professional growth and retention.

About this Toolkit

This document provides guidance to support district leaders in their efforts to increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the educator workforce. It was designed to complement the state's document titled [Creating a District Plan to Increase the Racial, Ethnic and Linguistic Diversity of Your Educator Workforce: A Guidebook for Hiring and Selection](#) (which this toolkit refers to as "the Guidebook for Hiring and Selection" or simply the "Guidebook"). The toolkit guidance is informed by lessons learned from a pilot conducted with 12 districts between January 2020 and June 2021. This guidance is designed to help district leaders develop an action plan that clearly defines and communicates data-informed goals, strategies, and indicators of progress; specifies key elements of effective implementation; and details how district leaders should engage in cycles of continuous improvement to sustain their efforts and achieve their goals.

Getting Started: Preplanning Tasks

As you prepare to launch an initiative to increase educator diversity in your district, there are a few critical preliminary tasks to prepare to engage in action-oriented change.

Assemble a team

Successful reform initiatives start with a strong core team that shares responsibility for leading, executing work, and advancing goals. Consider assembling a core team of 6–8 people so that the team is small enough to be manageable and large enough to ensure the load can be distributed to maximize human resources. There also needs to be a designated team leader. For help identifying who should serve on the team and their roles, consider the following indicators of a strong core team:²

- The core team is led by an individual who demonstrates a personal commitment to the aspiration and to the equity agenda, and who commands respect from other team members and stakeholders in the community.
- Members of the team have access to key individuals in the local region and/or state who can be tapped to help solve problems and keep the work moving.

It is also important to include a district leader with responsibility and authority in relation to talent management/human resources, a school-based teacher, and a principal. You may also include a representative from an educator preparation provider that is a partner (TFA, Relay, higher education institution) as well as a parent and/or community leader. The core team is ultimately responsible for moving the work forward to increase educator diversity in your district. To that end, the team should have the *right mix of people, talent, and influence to get the job done*.

Explore the Guidebook for Hiring and Selection and conduct a root cause analysis

Once the core team is assembled, routine meetings should be established (weekly or biweekly at the beginning is strongly recommended) to build community and explore the [Guidebook for Hiring and Selection](#) together. Part 1 of the Guidebook includes important resources and content that should provide norms for the core team, including the critical underpinnings of this work related to language and understanding unconscious bias and privilege. The process scenario in Part 2, The Brookside Story, can help you anticipate critical conversations and inform the core team's community-building activities.

The Guidebook also provides step-by-step guidance and tools to help the team engage in data-informed continuous improvement cycles and conduct root cause analyses. Conducting a root cause analysis (RCA) is a process of discovering the root causes of problems to identify appropriate solutions. Although implementing a few strategies to increase educator diversity may feel productive, you will likely see little or no change if you have not first identified the true root cause of the lack of educator diversity. Appendices 2–5 in the Guidebook are useful data tools for preparing for the RCA, as they will help you collect all the data needed for conducting an RCA. Appendix 6 is another helpful resource for use in the RCA process. Conducting the RCA is a prerequisite to identifying goals and creating the action plan for increasing educator diversity.

Establish a shared vision

The final preplanning task is to establish a shared vision and a theory of action for increasing educator diversity in the district. Generally, a vision statement provides a concrete way for stakeholders, especially

2. See also the elements of a strong core team as described in the *Increasing Educator Diversity Plan Progress Monitoring and Self-Evaluation Tool* (element 4).

employees, to understand the meaning and purpose of what the district is doing. Unlike a mission statement — which describes the who, what, and why of your district — a vision statement describes the desired long-term results of your district's efforts. Vision statements are future-based, aspirational, and meant to inspire and give direction to employees of the organization. *In your work to increase educator diversity, the vision statement should motivate the core team to make a difference, be part of something bigger than themselves, and serve as the district's guiding light.*

As a district and school leader, the first step toward a vision statement is determining who will play a role in crafting it. Consider hosting some opportunities for key stakeholders across the district, particularly educators, students, parents, and members of the community, to weigh in and inform the vision for the district in relation to educator diversity. If staff do not buy into the vision, you will never be able to carry it out. The vision statement should be something all staff believe in. Only then will they make decisions and take actions that reflect the district's vision. Appreciating that the core team can draft a vision statement together fairly quickly and that engaging stakeholders in the process can be time consuming, do not slow down your forward movement by waiting for the latter to happen. A vision statement is ever evolving; it will be revisited and revised over time.

A vision statement should be concise, no longer than a sentence or two. You want your entire organization to be able to quickly repeat it and, more importantly, understand it. Do not worry if you feel that a short vision statement does not fully express the intricacies of your vision. You can create a longer version, but it should not be the one you broadcast to the world. You can start by mapping out your most audacious goals. Reviewing your long-term goals in a collaborative setting will help you zoom out to what your organization and the world will look like if you achieve them. That zoomed-out view of your success is really the heart of your vision statement. Respond to the following questions:

- *What will be different for students if your district has more educators of color?*
- *What will be different for educators if your district has more educators of color?*
- *What will be different in your school communities if your district has more educators of color?*

There is nothing wrong with a vision statement that is daring, distinct, or even disagreeable. If a vision statement sets out a generic goal that anyone can agree with, it is likely to produce mediocre results.

Creating a strong theory of action

A theory of action is a short statement that describes your approach to the work and how that work connects to your intended outcomes and to achieving your vision. Appendix 7 in the Guidebook (p. 29) may be a helpful tool for the team to complete together before focusing on developing a theory of action. The tool is designed to help the team determine how to leverage, alter, or create new *mindsets (philosophies), policies, structures, and practices* to create a coherent approach for increasing educator diversity. Additional guidance for using this tool is on page 12 of the Guidebook.

Completing an RCA before drafting a theory of action is strongly recommended. Drawing from what you learned from the RCA and the changes to *mindsets (philosophies), policies, structures, and practices* that need to happen, draft the theory of action to guide your work over the long term. The following are two examples of theories of action:

Example 1: If the district partners with state and ed prep programs to strengthen and expand grow-your-own teacher programs that attract, prepare, and recruit students of color into teaching to make schools culturally responsive teaching and learning environments, then we will attract more teachers of color to our district.

Example 2: If the district partners with parents and community members of color to develop and implement selection protocols and processes to create incentives aimed at attracting and hiring more educators of color, then we will increase the diversity of our educator workforce.

Developing the Action Plan

The *Increasing Educator Diversity Plan* template is designed to support your work to increase educator diversity in your district. The template has several sections, each described below with guidance to help you generate your plan. At the top of the template is space for you to include your vision statement and theory of action. Including these on the plan document provides a useful, and sometimes necessary, reminder about your aspirations for this work, why you are doing it, and what you ultimately hope to achieve.

Identify goals

State your goals in the column headed “Goal.” Your goal statements are an opportunity to clearly articulate what you are trying to do. The template provides space to categorize your goals in relation to parts of the workforce pipeline: recruitment, hiring and selection, and retention. In identifying goals for increasing educator diversity, it is important to consider all parts of the pipeline. Even if you successfully recruit and hire more people of color to your district, you will not achieve your goals for greater educator diversity if you cannot retain them.

Goals must be informed by data. For this reason, conducting an RCA as a preplanning task is strongly recommended (see earlier section, Getting Started: Preplanning Tasks). In addition to being data informed, the goals should be SMAART:

- **Specific.** A specific goal has depth. All teams want to increase educator diversity. A specific goal states more details. For example, increase Black women teachers in science and math, or increase Latinx male teachers in elementary school.
- **Measurable.** A measurable goal is based on a metric. Instead of saying you want to increase the number of educators of color, identify a specific number or percentage.
- **Attainable and Ambitious.** A goal that is attainable is one you can accomplish. It is easy to become overly ambitious with goals when excited about an issue; it is also easy to set goals that are not ambitious enough when the work is challenging. Think long-term ambitious — what big impact do you seek 5 years from now? What are the short-term targets you need to set to get there?
- **Relevant.** This element of your goal is the reminder to stay focused. Is the goal aligned with your theory of action? Consider the theory of action Example 1, above. Would a goal about hosting teachers from abroad (e.g., the Philippines) be relevant? It might help you address shortages and increase diversity in the short term, but it does not help achieve your ultimate aspiration.
- **Time Bound.** The best goals are time bound. Adding this constraint is important for keeping you accountable. Be very specific with dates you choose to make sure they are also realistic. You want to give yourself enough time to implement the necessary strategies, collect data, and reassess. At the same time, you want to ensure that you are moving swiftly toward achieving your targets.

Assign roles and responsibilities

A vital step for achieving goals in your plan is to clearly identify a single accountable owner for each one. That requires designating an individual on the core team who manages the goal and ultimately takes responsibility for tracking progress, reporting back regularly to the team, and ensuring that the team stays on track to achieve the goal. The column headed “Who Manages the Goal?” is where you identify this key person for each goal. To be clear, achieving the goals in the plan is the collective responsibility of the core team. Goal managers are not expected to singlehandedly do all the work to achieve the assigned goal. But if managing the goal is everyone’s obligation, it is likely that no one will take responsibility for ensuring progress is made and the goal is achieved.

There is also space on the plan template to identify managers of specific strategies within a goal. Again, the objective is to ensure that once implementation starts, there is one individual charged with tracking progress on each strategy, regularly updating the team on progress, and making course corrections in a timely manner to ensure that the work stays on track for success.

Identify strategies and key activities

There are three columns in the “Strategies/Key Activities” section of the plan template to identify the specific strategies and key activities you will implement to achieve each goal. In other words, this section of the plan is where you articulate *how* you will achieve your goals. In the respective columns, you will do the following:

- Describe each strategy and/or key activity. (What?)
- Identify the person responsible for moving the strategy and/or key activity forward and tracking progress. (Who owns this?)
- Identify specific milestones and dates for implementing each strategy and/or key activity. (By when?)

However, completing this section of your plan is not simply about filling in the spaces. As you work through developing this part of the plan, go back and reference data collected as a part of the RCA process, specifically data collected using Appendix 5 in the [Guidebook](#). Consider the following as you develop this part of the plan:

- For each goal, rather than identifying one-off activities, determine a *set of strategies* that complement one another, that build upon one another, and that can be sequenced in a way that will help you achieve the goal and ultimately achieve your aspiration for increasing educator diversity.
- For each strategy, what will it take to develop and go to scale? Do you have an explicit plan about the capacity and motivation that need to be built throughout the system?
- For each strategy, what are the activities, tasks, and roles at every level — from the state to the school — necessary for successful implementation?
- Are timelines for undertaking strategies and activities ambitious and reasonable?

Remember, random acts of improvement are not likely to lead to increased or sustained educator diversity in the district. However, implementing a comprehensive set of evidence- and research-based strategies and key activities increases the likelihood of success in achieving SMAART goals.

Identify indicators of progress

Clearly identifying the milestones and accompanying measures that you will use throughout implementation to determine whether you are on track for success is vital to ensure you achieve your aspirations and SMAART goals. Using the “Indicators of Progress” column, a strong plan identifies, for each strategy, multiple milestones along the way for achieving the goal and specifies indicators of progress for each milestone. Waiting for the end of a year, or even a few months, to assess success on goals could be too late and cause progress to be significantly delayed or even derailed entirely. During implementation, checking in on implementation by reviewing indicators of progress will help the team determine where critical course corrections may be necessary to keep the work on track.

Determine the resources required

In the “Resources Required” column of your plan, the team will clearly identify the resources (people, time, money, and technology) needed to implement the strategies and activities in the service of achieving the stated goals. Clarity on the necessary resources is another vital process for ensuring likelihood of success in this work to increase educator diversity. Once all necessary resources for each strategy are identified in the plan, the team is better equipped to consider what resources are available and strategize ways to obtain those

that are not. In the initial phases of this work, the strategies identified for each goal area often include one focused on obtaining necessary resources. For example, a district that wants to expand an existing grow-our-own program may identify as a necessary resource a director to oversee the operations and management of the program at the district level. This “human capital” resource may not exist, in which case one activity for advancing this strategy would be to secure funding for a new position, and recruit and hire someone to fill the role.

Anticipate risks and plan for mitigation

The most well-intentioned and well-planned reform initiative can easily go off the rails if there is little or no attention paid during the planning process to possible risks. Use the “Risks and Mitigation” column to anticipate possible challenges that your plan might encounter and solutions you might pursue. For example, consider the earlier example of creating a new position at the district level for a director for grow-our-own programs. Imagine the team has included creating this position as a key activity in the plan as a part of the strategy to expand such programs. Now imagine that for fiscal reasons, the district is not able to fund the position — then what? A strong plan is one that: (1) anticipates risks and stumbling blocks, including weak relationships, chokepoints, funding shortfalls, and other major issues; *and* (2) proactively identifies possible mitigation strategies. If the strategy for increasing educator diversity is heavily reliant on expanding grow-our-own programs and a director to lead and coordinate that work is essential, then being prepared for all the things that could either prevent a director from being hired or from effectively leading the work would position the team to move the strategy forward.

Establish communication and engagement efforts

Creating a set of communication processes and activities for reporting on progress, supporting the work, and maintaining momentum is another vital process for successful implementation of your increasing educator diversity plan. In addition to establishing communication processes and routines for the core team, it is important to establish lines of communication with senior leaders in the district, at the state level, and with other key stakeholders, leaders, educators, and community members. Consider the following questions when filling out the “Communication/Engagement Efforts” column:

- *Who needs to be consulted/engaged to ensure you achieve your goals?*
- *What concepts, actions, and progress need to be communicated and to whom? With what frequency?*

A strong plan includes a clear communication strategy that details the messages and messengers, the modes of communication, and the frequency and timing of communication.

Ongoing Progress Monitoring

Assembling a core team and creating the plan are just the first steps. Effective implementation of the increasing educator diversity plan will require regular progress monitoring by the team. The *Increasing Educator Diversity Plan Progress Monitoring and Self-Evaluation Tool* is designed to support the team's engagement in cycles of continuous improvement and its achievement of the plan goals.

Become familiar with the progress monitoring and self-evaluation tool

The tool is organized around five essential elements of implementation. Achieving the goals in the plan are contingent on the following:

- **clear goals and a strong theory of action** to guide implementation;
- identification and implementation of **relevant strategies and activities** that are evidence based;
- identification and acquisition of the **resources required**;
- a **strong core team** to lead, manage, and be accountable for implementation of the plan and for tracking progress; and
- establishment of **vital processes** for implementation and progress monitoring.

For each element, the tool lists key questions and characteristics of both a “weak” plan and a “strong” plan in relation to the element. The tool also includes a rating color key and space for the team to record ratings, as well as rationale and evidence for ratings.

Establish progress monitoring routines

Teams are encouraged to establish progress monitoring routines, or regularly scheduled meetings of the core team aimed at reviewing the plan and using the tool to come to a shared view of progress based on evidence. It is advisable to establish progress monitoring routines no less frequently than monthly at the start of the initiative. As the team builds culture and trust, and as strategies are implemented and underway, the team may decide that a different meeting cadence (e.g., bimonthly, quarterly) is more appropriate. Whatever the timing, these meetings should be scheduled in advance and clearly designated as progress monitoring meetings to distinguish them from other project meetings. This dissemination is critical to ensure that the time spent is focused on the objectives of progress monitoring: establishing a shared view of progress using evidence and clearly identifying action steps for each member of the core team to achieve goals. Typically, teams will dedicate between 90 minutes and 2 hours for progress monitoring meetings to allow time to both celebrate accomplishments toward achieving goals, and problem-solve as necessary where things may be off track in the plan.

Use the tool to monitor progress and self-evaluate

Prior to the progress monitoring meeting, each team member should review the elements in the tool, focusing on the key questions for each one. Using the rating color key, each person should determine a rating for each element. In determining the rating, do not think about each key question separately, but rather determine a rating holistically. In other words, consider the preponderance of evidence in relation to all the key questions. For example, element 1 (Clear Goals and a Theory of Action) has four key questions. In considering the responses, and the evidence to substantiate responses, consider overall if the team's efforts are:

- Highly Problematic: requires urgent attention and decisive action, not on track for success (RED)
- Problematic: requires substantial attention, some urgent action (AMBER RED)
- Mixed: some good aspects, but a few require attention (AMBER GREEN)
- Solid: on track for success for increasing educator diversity (GREEN)

The characteristics of a strong plan and of a weak plan are also helpful in determining the overall rating for each element.

In the space provided, each team member should enter their rating (GREEN, AMBER GREEN, AMBER RED, or RED) and write their rationale and evidence for the rating. The rationale and evidence are important for the team's consensus-building exercise that will happen during the progress monitoring meeting.

Establish a shared view of progress

As stated previously, the progress monitoring meeting has two objectives: to establish a shared view of progress using evidence, and to identify action steps for each member of the core team to achieve their goals. The team should identify one person to facilitate the meeting and another to serve as notetaker — recording key ideas and next steps that emerge from the meeting. To increase efficiency of the process, it is also advisable to establish an agenda that indicates how much time will be spent on each of the five elements of the Progress Monitoring and Self-Evaluation Tools, allocating time at the beginning for an engagement or team-building activity, and time at the end for ensuring that everyone is clear about action steps and the next meeting date/time. Assigning someone the role of timekeeper and notetaker is also helpful.

Moving through the tool one element at a time, each team member should share their ratings and the facilitator should support a conversation among the team to come to consensus or a shared view of progress. The rationale and evidence become critical for this part of the process, as each person likely has access to different information (data, evidence) that will inform their ratings and rationales. As the team shares their evidence, they work toward consensus on one rating for each element. More importantly, through this process, the team can identify and celebrate accomplishments (what is on track and working well) and identify areas for attention that could potentially thwart the success of the plan. Using the tool during progress monitoring meetings helps the team identify and address those things that may impede their ability to achieve their goals. At the end of the meeting, the team should walk away with a shared view of progress and a clear understanding of next steps and action items for follow-up.

Appendixes

Increasing Educator Diversity Plan Progress Monitoring and Self-Evaluation Tool

What We Believe

If districts prioritize building a teacher workforce that reflects the demographic diversity of the state's K-12 student population and engage in data-informed continuous improvement processes, then we can build a teacher pipeline that attracts, prepares, supports, and retains a diverse and effective workforce to ensure that each student has equitable access to teachers who can advance learning.

To Achieve this Goal, Districts Must:

1. Define their role in building a diverse pipeline of teachers.
2. Use data to identify challenges, and commit to developing measurable goals and benchmarks and collecting evidence toward progress.
3. Commit resources to implementing evidence- and research-based strategies for meeting goals.
4. Implement engagement and communication strategies to support sustainability.



What this Tool Examines

As we continue to assemble stakeholders and resources, laser focus our goals, and create tactics to move our work forward, this tool will be helpful in focusing initial goal setting, planning, and strategizing. It is designed to build a strong foundation for success in your efforts to increase educator diversity and is organized around five essential elements:



Objectives for Using this Tool

The progress monitoring and self-evaluation tool is designed to support a data-informed continuous improvement process. Routine use of the tool provides an anchor to guide opportunities for the team to celebrate successes, discuss challenges, and problem-solve throughout the implementation process.

District name:

Rating Color Key

- **RED:** Highly Problematic: requires urgent attention and decisive action, not on track for success
- **AMBER RED:** Problematic: requires substantial attention, some urgent action
- **AMBER GREEN:** Mixed: some good aspects, but a few require attention
- **GREEN:** Solid: on track for success for increasing educator diversity

Indicate what areas of the pipeline this plan addresses:

	Recruit	Prepare	Support and Retain
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1. Clear Goals and a Theory of Action

Key Questions

- Is our theory of action clearly articulated and does it establish a direct connection with the goals we identified?
- Have we defined goals that are based on our district’s most current data and any projections we have about the educator workforce?
- Is it clear what success will look like — how things will be different? Have we defined a clear definition of success for each goal — what does it mean to achieve this goal?
- Does this aspiration fit into the overall state vision for increasing educator diversity and the work to achieve educational equity?

Weak Plan

- The theory of action is not well defined, is ambiguous, and/or does not align to goals.
- No current or projected data have been analyzed prior to establishing the goals.
- Desired outcomes are not specified.
- No link exists between what this plan seeks to achieve and other district or state plans for equity.

Strong Plan

- The plan specifies an ambitious, easy-to-understand theory of action with a clear connection to goals that have been set and are based on current and/or projected educator workforce data.
- The plan defines the goals in terms of specific and measurable outcomes based on our district’s most current data, and any projections we have, about the educator workforce.
- If the goals are achieved, there will be a marked difference in the educator workforce that is apparent to everyone.
- The goals and theory of action are linked to overall system commitments and goals.

Rating: (select one)

- | | |
|---|---|
| ■ Red | ■ Amber Green |
| ■ Amber Red | ■ Green |

Rationale:

2. Relevant Strategies and Key Activities

Key Questions

- Have we identified a coordinated and coherent set of strategies for each goal that we have set?
- Are our strategies and key activities research-based and/or informed by best practices?
- For each goal, have we identified a single person who is responsible for monitoring progress and ensuring successful implementation?
- For each strategy, is it clear who needs to do what, what capacity or motivation they will need to make changes, and who will engage them and how?
- Is there a specified end date for each activity and for key milestones that are part of the activity?
- Have we specified how we will know that each strategy is working? How will we know if each goal is on track for success? Do we know how we will collect and monitor this information?

Weak Plan

- No strategies are defined or are vague and unclear and not clearly articulated as part of a coherent plan for change.
- Little or no analysis has been done to ensure that identified strategies will work in our district context or will be successful within our educational system.
- The roles of the people who must implement the strategies have not been defined, and/or there is an incomplete picture of how strategies will be implemented and taken to scale.
- Measures of success are not well defined and activities lack a clear implementation timeline.
- It is unclear how progress toward goals will be monitored.

Strong Plan

- The plan has a clear set of strategies that are based on research and best practices and are likely to increase educator diversity in our district.
- Chosen strategies complement one another, build upon one another, and are sequenced to achieve the plan's goals.
- There has been an analysis of what it will take for each strategy to develop and go to scale. There is an explicit plan about the capacity and motivation that need to be built throughout the system.
- Each strategy specifies the necessary roles at every level — from the state to the school — for successful implementation.
- The plan defines a clear measure of success for each goal, and each activity has a defined set of indicators of success that includes specific and time-bound implementation milestones and evidence of implementation quality.
- The plan includes mechanisms to monitor implementation progress.

Rating: (select one)

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|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red | <input type="checkbox"/> Amber Green |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amber Red | <input type="checkbox"/> Green |

Rationale:

3. Resources Required

Key Questions

- Have we identified the personnel, financial, technological, and other resources that are required for the plan?
- Does the plan include any policy changes? If so, have we identified the key stakeholders we need to work with to ensure successful passage?
- Are there resources for a deliberate and differentiated communications strategy aimed at building a critical mass of support for each goal and the plan as a whole?
- Do we know the support we need from key stakeholders and how to best leverage them for successful implementation of each goal?
- Does the plan consider implications for other systems and initiatives in the district? In the state?
- Have we identified the major risks that might cause the work to go off course? Do we know how we will manage them?

Weak Plan

- Resources are not mentioned or are vague or unrealistic.
- The plan just assumes that a policy change will occur with no consideration of stakeholder engagement.
- No communication strategy is apparent in the plan.
- No risks are identified, or risk assessment is unrealistic, with no attempt at real solutions for management.
- The plan is isolated from other district and/or state initiatives, and there is an apparent lack of coordination with the various district and/or state agencies that need to be involved.

Strong Plan

- The plan gives a clear picture of how the strategies can work with the resources available, or it specifies how the needed resources can be obtained.
- The core team has identified, analyzed, and prioritized stakeholders who will be most critical to the success of any potential policy change.
- There is a clear communication strategy that details the messages, the modes of communication, the frequency and timing of communication, and the messengers.
- The plan details risks and constraints along the delivery chain, including weak relationships, chokepoints, funding shortfalls, and other potential major issues, and there are potential solutions for managing these risks.
- The plan includes the essential work that must occur across institutions, including the state, educator preparation programs, districts, and schools. Interdependencies are well understood and articulated.

Rating: (select one)

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Rationale:

4. Strong Core Team

Key Questions

- Is the team led by a strong, committed leader who is knowledgeable and feels responsible for ensuring that goals are achieved?
- Does the team represent and/or have strong relationships with all the relevant educators in the pipeline, including teachers and school-based leaders?
- Does the team have access to the people and information that they need to involve for problem-solving and keeping the work on track?
- Has the team established relevant partnerships needed to ensure the success of the goals? Do team members engage local stakeholders (influential individuals and groups) to advance the work?
- Are team members motivated and inspired by the goals and theory of action so that they stay determined to make changes in spite of distractions and challenges?
- Does the team proactively onboard new leaders after transitions?
- Has the team set regular meetings and prioritized them?
- Is conflict in this group managed proactively?

Weak Team

- There is no clear person identified who feels responsible for the aspiration and the plan.
- The core team is narrow in its composition and lacks individuals with knowledge, influence, and/or political acumen.
- Members of the team are complacent and sense no urgency about this transformation. Numerous and conflicting priorities shift the team's focus, and little effort is made to solve problems.
- Any leadership transition puts the team into a tailspin and threatens the entire plan.
- The team meets sporadically, and/or members do not prioritize meeting times.
- Conflict is unanticipated and contentious.

Strong Team

- The core team is led by an individual who demonstrates a personal commitment to the aspiration and to the equity agenda and who commands respect from other team members and education stakeholders.
- The team meets regularly and has the right mix of people, talent, and influence to get the job done.
- Members of the team have access to key individuals in the state who can be tapped to help solve problems and keep the work moving.
- The team members demonstrate commitment, determination, and focus and hold themselves responsible for making progress on the plan.
- The team proactively manages transitions so that new leaders quickly become familiar with and supportive of the educator diversity plan.
- Conflict is managed with fact-based discussion and processes that acknowledge the perspectives and emotional arguments of others but do not compromise on core principles.

Rating: (select one)

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Rationale:

5. Vital Processes

Key Questions

- Are we clear that we will be able to show progress toward achieving our long-term goals? Have interim benchmarks been identified?
- Does the team have a system of performance management routines for regular tracking of progress?
- Do the routines use data that are clear, concise, and easy to understand?
- Do the routines encourage productive problem-solving, course correction, and collaboration?
- Are the people with the required leadership skills — particularly system leaders and accountable leaders — involved in and/or informed of these discussions?
- Are team members accessible and available to one another in between formal meetings? Does communication flow readily and smoothly?

Weak Processes

- We have not defined interim progress of the goals.
- Ownership of the overall plan has not been assigned to one person (no individual owner).
- Each strategy has no owner or has multiple owners, and little thought has been given to how to use this team to hold people accountable for making progress toward milestones.
- It is unclear how the team will gather information on strategies and evidence of progress on or success in achieving goals.
- There are no or few established routines to monitor progress, and/or routines are not attended by the right leaders.
- Discussions of progress are blame oriented, problems are not identified until they become crises, and course corrections are not readily apparent.
- Team members are not able to effectively follow up with one another on identified action items between meetings and finding time for this work has been difficult for all involved.

Strong Processes

- Data from strategies and activities indicate that significant progress has been made toward our stated goals.
- The overall plan has a single leader from a senior leadership team of one of the important stakeholder organizations involved in this work.
- Each strategy has a single accountable owner who has regular, planned interactions with members of the core team.
- The core team has planned a set of ongoing and consistent routines for monitoring progress of the strategies and toward the overall aspiration. These routines provide for discussions about progress that are open and transparent and allow accountable leaders to work together to find solutions and make course corrections to keep the work on track.
- Between meetings, team members follow up with one another on identified action items and communicate effectively.

Rating: (select one)

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Rationale:

Lessons Learned & Best Practices: A Summary of Recurring Themes

An Appendix to Creating an Action
Plan and Sustaining Efforts to Increase
Educator Diversity: A Toolkit for District
and School Leaders



REGION 2
Connecticut
New York
Rhode Island

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) produced the Guidebook to Hiring and Selection—*Creating a District Plan to Increase the Racial, Ethnic and Linguistic Diversity of Your Educator Workforce*—to support districts’ efforts to recruit and hire more educators of color. Understanding that districts may need further support putting the guidebook into action, a team comprised of researchers and technical assistance experts led a cohort of 11 district teams in a series of six coaching sessions based on the guidebook. District teams were made up of human resource and talent professionals; school administrators; diversity, equity, and inclusion professionals; and teachers. Coaching sessions aimed to help districts analyze their hiring and staff demographic data to understand the leaks in their hiring pipeline for educators of color; conduct root cause analyses; draft mission and vision statements; and develop specific, measurable, actionable, attributable, realistic, and timed (SMAART) goals and action plans. The COVID-19 pandemic altered plans for in-person sessions, but the switch to virtual convenings enabled the flexible scheduling of individual team meetings, inter-team collaboration, and whole-cohort convenings.

This document summarizes some of the recurring themes and lessons learned that emerged from conversations with district teams. Ranging from data quality to the politics of courageous leadership, these lessons learned reflect the questions and challenges that districts most frequently encountered in their efforts to diversify the educator workforce.

Data Systems, Data Collection, and Analysis

Increasing the diversity of the educator workforce requires a data-driven approach to understanding whether educators of color are entering the hiring pipeline in your district, where flow issues and blockages occur, and the resultant impact on educator diversity. Districts report challenges when it comes to collecting and using data to inform diversification strategies. Myths about the legality of asking for applicant demographics, data quality issues, and confusion about how to use the data once it is gathered are pervasive.

Myths About Legality

To understand how applicants of color are progressing through the hiring pipeline, districts must collect demographic information—specifically race and ethnicity—about job applicants. However, because the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin, many districts collect this information from candidates after they are hired. Consequently, it is impossible to understand the origins of demographic patterns and pipeline issues in the teacher workforce.

It is not illegal to ask job applicants about their racial and ethnic identities. It *is* illegal to require this information of applicants and to use it as a basis for hiring decisions. Best practice in soliciting this information from job applicants is to make the question optional and to include an option such as “choose not to answer” among possible responses. It is recommended to include text from the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Commission that states that “The information provided on this form will be kept separate from your application file and will not be used for any decisions regarding the terms and/or conditions of your employment.” Appendix 3 in the CSDE Guidebook on Hiring and Selection includes a sample voluntary EEO demographic data sheet including this language.

Data Quality

In designing questions to gather data and learn about candidates’ racial and ethnic identities, it is important to consider: (1) what you hope to learn about your applicants; (2) how you think that information will contribute to your district and school culture and climate; and (3) the demographics of your students (i.e., race and ethnicity, home language(s), immigration status, and parent’s experience with post-secondary education). Furthermore, taking the time to consider the challenges students and their families may face in the education system generally,

and your district or school, specifically, can illuminate the types of educator diversity that can best support students' social, emotional, and academic success. Demographic questions on job applications should be tailored to provide the data you need to support and track progress towards successful student outcomes.

There are four general approaches to asking about applicants' backgrounds, and each of these approaches comes with tradeoffs that should be carefully considered. First, best practice from the standpoint of cultural responsiveness is to ask applicants to self-identify their race/ethnicity using a blank text field. This approach centers individuals' experiences and language related to their identities and eliminates the reductionism that individuals may feel when asked to identify with categories from a list that may or may not align with their own self-concept. The challenge with this approach is that few applicants may self-identify with any one racial/ethnic group. As a result, analysts seeking to understand patterns in the hiring process may be required to recode applicants' identities (e.g., Latinx to Hispanic) or aggregate groups (e.g., Colombian, Mexican, Dominican together under Latinx/Hispanic) to make trends visible—thereby forcing applicants into categories in a way that this approach ultimately aimed to avoid.

Second, to preserve most of the specificity and self-identification that the above approach offers, while reducing the labor required to code and group applicants, follow the census design for demographic questions. By asking applicants first for their racial/ethnic identity from a prepopulated list (e.g., Asian), then inviting them to further specify their national origin or ethnic group from a paired list (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Hmong, North Korean), your district gets more detailed information about your hiring funnel and how applicants align with your student population, while also preserving the accuracy of aggregated racial/ethnic groups.

Third, a more traditional approach to demographic data collection to reduce complexity and nuance is simply to ask applicants to self-identify only with the larger racial/ethnic group. This can be done using either a two-question or a one-question format. The one-question format includes Hispanic/Latinx as a racial category alongside options like White, Black/African American, and Asian, while a two-question format first asks respondents whether they are Hispanic/Latinx or not, and then, regardless of the answer, which racial group they identify with. Finally, the two-question design enables, for example, Afro-Latinos to name multiple aspects of their identities, though this could be accomplished by assuring respondents in the one-question format to select all that apply. While there is not a definitive answer about whether the two-question or the one-question approach is preferable, it is important to point out that the two formats yield different estimates of the Hispanic/Latinx population in particular (Patten, 2015).

Analyzing Data

Once data is collected about applicants' racial and ethnic identities, as well as the racial and ethnic identities of current administration and faculty, specific analyses can help you understand the leaks in your hiring pipeline and the areas for growth in the racial composition of your existing staff.

Beginning with your applicant pool, calculate the percentage of candidates' progress through each stage of the hiring process. Disaggregate this data to examine the hiring and staffing patterns for demographic groups that are meaningful to your school or district and its mission and vision. These may be the demographic groups who have historically been most marginalized and underrepresented, or those who reflect the identities of student's identities. Are you tracking the proportion of teachers of color? Black teachers? Multilingual teachers?

For each of these applicant demographic groups, track what proportion makes it through the initial screening, or are offered an interview, or are offered a job compared to the rest of the applicant pool, or are purposefully chosen as a reference group. Keep in mind that as you move through the pipeline you should calculate proportions using the number of teachers in that phase as the denominator. For example, if 100 candidates apply to a position, 40 make it through initial screening, and 10 are invited for an interview, you should represent these ten applicants as 25 percent of the 40 candidates who made it through the initial screening. The table below offers guidance on how to complete this analysis. This approach allows for easier identification of the stages where teachers of color disappear from the pipeline. Identifying the steps where teachers of color are most likely to exit the hiring process can inform targeted interventions for supporting racially diverse educators' candidacy. For example, if teachers of color pass initial

screening at lower rates than white teachers, resources to help teachers prepare for the licensure exam, a recognized barrier for teachers of color, may be effective. If teachers of color are less often offered jobs following interviews, professional development focused on uprooting unconscious bias by application screeners and hiring panelists to promote equity and cultural responsiveness in the interview process may be worthwhile. Additionally, intentionality in having diverse interview and hiring panels can aid efforts to ensure equitable hiring decisions.

Table 1: Disaggregating Data to Understand Your Hiring Funnel

	All candidates		Candidates of color	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
How many candidates submitted applications for teaching vacancies across the district last year?	100	n/a	20	n/a
How many candidates who applied for teaching vacancies passed the school's/ district's initial application screening?	60	60/100=60%	10	10/20=50%
How many teacher candidates participated in a school or district interview?	45	45/60=75%	6	6/10=60%
How many teacher candidates were selected fill a teaching vacancy in the district?	20	20/45=44%	4	4/6=66%

Adapted from the Connecticut State Department of Education's Creating a District Plan to Increase the Racial, Ethnic and Linguistic Diversity of Your Educator Workforce: A Guidebook to Hiring and Selection

Another useful analysis looks at the demographics of the current workforce by seniority or certification level, as well as by grade band. Is there a higher proportion of educators of color in uncertified positions (e.g., paraprofessionals) compared to general education teachers? Are Latinx teachers concentrated in elementary schools? Understanding the distribution of educators of color in your school and district can help inform recruitment practices and teacher and administrator assignments as new educators are brought on board.

Centering Race and Interrogating Bias in Policies and Practices

Data is a necessary tool for centering race and interrogating bias in hiring and retention, but data alone is not enough. Centering race and interrogating bias requires action on the part of district and building leaders. These actions are both behavioral and infrastructural. Consider the following scenario:

When hiring occurs at the school level and decisions are made based on perceived fit, unchecked by district diversity, equity, and inclusion objectives and policies, existing racial demographics of staff and supervisors are often replicated. As roughly 80 percent of educators across the country are white, this colorblind approach results in the replication of whiteness across the educator workforce.

Centering race and interrogating bias means highlighting the assets brought by applicants of color, as well as exposing the racism of uninterrogated hiring decisions. Behavioral interventions should aim to make race, color,

racism, and bias regular and comfortable topics of conversation at all levels—between colleagues, between teachers and building administrators, between school staff and district leaders, and among district staff. This means providing the training and capacity-building opportunities for individuals to have conversations about race and racism in all types of settings and across all levels. Interview questions should acknowledge the impact that race, color, and ethnicity have on schooling, and give all applicants the opportunities to highlight their capacities for culturally responsive practices. For example: “Our school community includes a large Dominican population, what connections do you have to the Dominican community, or how would you approach building trust and connection with your Dominican students and families?”

In terms of infrastructure, resources should be allocated to ensure that racial equity is prioritized throughout the hiring process. For instance, building-level hiring committees should ideally be racially diverse, and should include a member of the equity committee either from within the building or the district, or both. This person’s role is to interrogate the racial dynamics of the hiring process, calling attention to bias and the underrecognized assets brought by candidates of color. Attention should be paid to the ways that the labor of diversity work disproportionately falls on people of color; consider offering some monetary or in-kind compensation to individuals serving in hiring committee roles to acknowledge and value the skills and experience brought to the task.

Leadership, Strategic Alignment, and Buy-in by Boards

Race in public schools has always been a flashpoint. From Ruby Bridges to this year’s pitched battles over teaching critical race theory in the classroom—the issue has always been politicized. To successfully diversify educator workforces, school and district leaders should establish strong leadership anchored to a clear vision. A clear articulation of district and school goals, or both, and a clear understanding of the motivation for pursuing those goals can be protective against direct challenges and unforeseen obstacles. What are you trying to achieve? Why are you committed to this vision? How does it support successful outcomes for all students?

Research can be a valuable tool for informing these goals and positions. How will you measure the success of your initiatives? Is the goal to: (1) have every student in the district taught by a teacher of color by the third grade; and (2) have the demographics of teachers match the demographics of students, or both? Identify why are you committed to this—research conclusively shows that teachers of color improve outcomes for **all** students, but especially for students of color.

Addressing Systemic Issues

District and school leaders must confront the systemic issues most likely to influence the ability to attract and retain educators of color. These systemic factors include large disparities between the cost of living in the local community and the starting salary for new teachers, or disparities in starting salaries between adjacent districts. High costs of living in affluent neighborhoods, which tend to be predominantly white, will especially impact the hiring of educators of color in the most segregated districts.

Efforts to rectify these issues may include local initiatives like offering signing bonuses or housing subsidies to new teachers. [State legislatures and courts](#) have also addressed the issue of teacher pay equity. In Connecticut, 2021 [legislation](#) established the Alliance District Teacher Loan Subsidy Program which will provide an interest rate subsidy on CHESLA loans to teachers who commit to teaching in one of Connecticut’s 33 highest-need school districts. This will be for those seeking employment from other states and those within the state. It will be used as an incentive for out-of-state educators. Similarly, the Center for American Progress advocates for a nationwide \$10,000 [federal tax credit](#) for teachers in high-needs schools.

Culturally Responsive and Sustaining School Cultures

The work of diversifying the teacher workforce does not end once new teachers of color are hired. In addition to hiring and recruitment strategies, there must be a discreet focus on retention. Teachers of color may come, but do they stay?. Collecting and analyzing exit survey data, and if possible, disaggregated by teachers' racial/cultural background, can help you and your district glean important details about why teachers of color decide to leave. Retention is impacted by several factors most notably, district and school culture, and administrative support and compensation. Often times, collectively held values and beliefs can be exclusionary and polarizing, and make districts and schools unwelcoming and uncomfortable spaces for teachers of color. Engage in a thorough examination of district and school facilities and images (e.g., mascots, logos), and the district and school's mission, values, beliefs, and policies with an equity and culturally responsive lens. Identifying how those values and beliefs shape the assumptions, relationships, language, practices, power dynamics, and collective energy can help surface areas for change and improvement. Look for opportunities to update policies and practices that contain exclusionary language and practices that may negatively impact teachers of color particularly since they typically have the same impact on students and families of color.

Teachers of color report feeling isolated or a general lack of community in spaces where they are a part of staff with little to no cultural diversity. How might your district support school efforts to intentionally build inclusive cultures that honor and affirm culturally diverse backgrounds? Consider ongoing professional development opportunities to build a knowledgebase of culturally responsive and sustaining education (CRSE) habits that can enhance awareness and reflection to cultivate and strengthen relationships with and between staff and students. Design mentoring and support strategies to include teachers' social identities and how their cultural experiences shape their perceptions, practice, and content. How are teachers of color shown that their presence, experience, and voice is valued and not tokenized? Connect with current teachers of color and inquire about their experience with existing school and district culture. What might they need to feel more connected and successful, and how might that be leveraged to attract new staff and facilitate their sense of belonging? While salary and compensation packages may not be within an individual's locus of control, consider other incentive avenues such as partnerships with local banks to create special offers for home prices, and graduate education stipends, or both.



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