

## Equity Task Force

### **Rationale**

The Missouri Content Assessment (MCA) is one in a series of assessments required for teacher licensure in the state of Missouri. As such, the MCA represents a critical determinant that ensures that K-12 students are receiving quality instruction. However, since the transition between the PRAXIS II and the MCA, there has been persistent and significant disparity in the scores between Missouri's Black and White teacher candidates on a majority of the MCA area tests.

Given the gatekeeping function that the MCA plays in teacher licensure in the state of Missouri, this disparity is troubling because it systematically reduces the number of Black teachers in the workforce. Currently, the Missouri teacher workforce is 91% White and only 7% Black, while Missouri's student profile is 75% White and 17% Black. With education research that consistently indicates that the achievement of Black students is higher with Black teachers, and the number of suspensions for Black students decrease with Black teachers, the root causes for the MCA disparities demand closer attention. Moreover, closing the achievement and discipline gaps that exist between White and Black students have been identified as priorities for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in the Educator Equity Plan submitted to the U.S. Department of Education in July, 2015.

### **Recommendation**

Consequently, the Missouri Advisory Board for Educator Preparation advises the Missouri State Board of Education and the Missouri Coordinating Board of Higher Education to establish a joint task force to investigate the disparities that persist between White and Black teacher candidate performance on the Missouri Content Assessments.

### **Composition**

The task force ought to be co-chaired by an appointee of the commissioners of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Department of Higher Education, respectively and consist of four to six mutually agreed upon appointments by the co-chairs of the committee of assessment, evaluation and/or teacher education experts from Missouri's institutions of higher education.

### **Charge**

The task force, with the cooperation of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Higher Education, Pearson Evaluation Systems, and the institutions of higher education that prepare educators in the state of Missouri is to determine potential root causes for the score disparities that currently exist between White and Black teacher candidates on the Missouri Content Assessments. This determination should be made through an examination of quantitative and qualitative data of the assessment performance, assessment construction, and the preparation of candidates for the assessments. The task force must produce a report of findings for the Missouri State Board of Education and Coordinating Board of Higher Education within six months of their first meeting.