

Designing 21st Century Teacher Certification Pathways for Paraprofessionals

Lillian G. Reeves

University of South Carolina Upstate

Abstract: This article looks at the opportunities and barriers paraprofessionals face on their journey to becoming teachers and makes some recommendations for ways that colleges and universities, districts, and accrediting bodies may better serve, retain, and promote this unique population of educators. The article identifies shifts in higher education like those made to financial aid during Covid and the rise of experience for prior learning programs as launch points for transforming an outdated system and recognizing the wealth of knowledge and experience paraprofessionals bring to classrooms in Georgia and beyond.

Keywords: paraprofessional, teacher preparation, financial aid

Introduction

In the fall semester of 2020, we were still at the height of the Covid crisis and colleges of education like mine were facing daily uncertainty about whether the return to the classroom would last long. Despite the continued, accelerated spread of Covid in and among K-12 schools, Georgia was determined to keep the doors open. For teaching faculty, observing teaching candidates in the school context meant zooming into classrooms and hoping the technology worked.

On one such occasion, I zoomed into a classroom to see a paraprofessional turned teacher candidate conduct a general education lesson in a kindergarten classroom. She wore a clear face shield and the students eagerly gathered around her as the lesson began. The reason for their enthusiasm was immediately clear. The interdisciplinary lesson began with a jaunty read-aloud about Lady Liberty and then moved on to a virtual field trip to the Statue of Liberty. But my gifted and experienced paraprofessional turned teacher candidate did not stop there. As the students began to move toward their places near the Smart Board, the teacher candidate gave each student a homemade plane ticket to New York City with their name on it. And once they were seated during that chilly fall day, my teacher candidate unzipped a big bag and handed a hat and gloves to each student because it was going to be a crisp morning on the New York boat ride to meet Lady Liberty. The students beamed with excitement, and so did the teacher candidate. After the students completed their virtual tour of Lady Liberty, the teacher candidate led them in a quick, interactive, and

SRATE Journal

A peer-reviewed publication of the
Southeastern Regional Association of Teacher Educators (SRATE)
2024, Volume 33, Issue 1
SRATE.org



awe-inspiring chemistry experiment on oxidation. Every child in the class was learning English as an additional language, and every child in the class was as eager to be part of the life of the classroom as any student I've ever seen. This was my crash course on what it means to be a paraprofessional turned teacher candidate in Georgia.

I was generally unfamiliar with paraprofessionals and had not worked with many paraprofessionals before joining the faculty at my institution, but I quickly discovered my classes in the College of Education were full of them – and many demonstrated incredible giftedness in the classroom. Some had 5, 10, 15 years of experience, and for whatever reason, they were now pursuing teacher certification. Most of the reasons I heard were related to family, some exciting and others life-shattering. “I want to send my child to college,” “I don't think I want to work in a prison anymore,” “One of my friends who was also a paraprofessional did this program and it changed her life, so here I am,” and “I want my parents to see me walk across the stage before they're gone” were just a few of the reasons paraprofessionals were returning to the college classroom. Collectively, the paraprofessionals I worked with were incredibly motivated, determined, and prepared for the program and easily rose to meet the challenges of the coursework and requirements of the internships. As record numbers of educators were leaving the classroom, the cohorts of paraprofessionals were unusual in that after all their years in the classroom and after seeing all the things that fleeing teachers saw, they ran toward the classroom faster than anyone else.

The more I learned about this unique group of people keeping classrooms in GA energized, organized, and humanized, the more interested I became in creating leaner pathways to graduation and certification. As a new department chair, I inherited an outdated program in elementary education, and so I set to work under the collaborative direction of my dean, updating course requirements. Then, I moved on to updating our articulation agreements with technical colleges throughout the state. I proposed awarding more credit for completed coursework and spent countless hours reviewing transcripts to ensure candidates got all the transfer credit possible before designing their individual pathways to graduation. Even though those efforts felt significant, much more can and should be done. This article is a reflection on what I discovered throughout this three-year process. It is also a call for change and action to bring institutions of higher education, accrediting bodies, and state education leadership into more meaningful alignment with the needs of the 21st century and to recognize the irreplaceable contributions made by the paraprofessional workforce.

The Context, Briefly

Though paraprofessionals are an incredibly valuable part of the school infrastructure, there is no consistent explanation of what a paraprofessional job in Georgia actually entails. The importance of their work, however, does not go unnoticed. Many districts around the state are encouraging and hand-picking paraprofessionals to finish their four-year degrees and become full-time certified teachers as one avenue to address the staggering teacher shortage in the state. And with good reason. An Ed Working Paper identified teaching shortages by 4 regions in the country, Northeast, Midwest, West, and South. Of the 36,504 discovered vacancies, 22,550 or 62% were in the South region and

Georgia alone had more vacancies (3,112) than the entire Northeast (1,515) (Nguyen et al., 2022). By February 2023, 82% of Georgia counties didn't have enough teachers to cover all positions and 20% of educators indicated they planned to leave the profession in the next 5 years (Kousouris, 2023). Things did not improve in 2024, with Clayton County having 178 teaching positions to fill and DeKalb County having 120 positions to fill before students return in August (Cummings, 2024).

Job Description

The job descriptions for paraprofessionals vary widely depending on where you look. None of the paraprofessional job descriptions for elementary/early childhood on the Teach Georgia job portal are the same. Some of the postings have no description at all. For example, Greene County just lists the minimum qualifications (must have 2 years of college and hold or be eligible for a Georgia paraprofessional certificate) and nothing else. Other postings, like one for Main Street Academy, give detailed certification requirements, responsibilities, and key behavior competencies (Teachgeorgia.org, n.d.).

Table 1. Main Street Academy responsibilities and dispositions for paraprofessionals..

Main Responsibilities	Key Behavior Competencies
Meet Paraprofessional requirements as established by state and local mandates.	Demonstrates the ability to work effectively under the direction of others.
Implement school and district policies and procedures.	Demonstrates a willingness to assume all responsibilities assigned which are appropriate for the position.
Establish and maintain solid working relations with colleagues.	Demonstrates initiative, always keeping in mind the best interest of the students and the program.
Participate in planning sessions with the learning team.	Willingly cooperates and works collaboratively towards solutions that generally benefit all involved parties; works cooperatively with others to accomplish company objectives; promotes collaboration and partnerships.
Provide support and assistance to students.	Gives credit and recognition to others who have contributed towards the team or group goals; respects different opinions, seeking them out to challenge thinking and enhance collaborative efforts.
Demonstrate creativity, flexibility, and perseverance in dealing with challenging learning, behavioral, family, and classroom situations.	Works collaboratively to creatively problem-solve with staff to meet students' unique needs in a technology-based instructional learning environment.

Provide strategic instruction within the classroom for students who are in need of support learning core curriculum.	
Provide support and supervision of students as assigned (during transitions, in special classes, during lunch, etc.).	
Assist in the administration and scoring of assessments used to monitor individual progress.	
Assist with paperwork and clerical duties as needed.	

(Teachgeorgia.org, n.d.)

Gwinnett County’s website call for paraprofessionals indicates that paraprofessional qualifications are to hold an associate’s degree in any area; to have completed 2 years of college above the remedial level; or to have a passing GACE paraprofessional exam and a high school GED (GCPS, n.d.). Gwinnett further hopes to lure paraprofessionals to the district with promises of state benefits, “enjoy weekends, weeknights, student holidays, and summers off,” and “see 5% more of the money” in your paycheck because they don’t participate in social security (GCPS, n.d.).

Pay

Despite the state’s hope to use paraprofessionals as one option to fill vacant teaching positions, Georgia is consistently ranked among states with the least competitive wages and benefits for starting teachers (National Education Association, 2024) and even with the years-long wait for Governor Kemp to fulfill his campaign promise to raise teacher salaries, Georgia has the 6th largest teacher pay gap in the country (McKillip & Farrie, 2024). With starting teachers earning abysmal salaries, paraprofessionals fair even worse. Of the 82 paraprofessional positions listed through Teach Georgia’s jobs portal on the day of writing this, none listed salaries. However, ZipRecruiter, Salary.com, and Glassdoor listed paraprofessional pay in Georgia at or below 30,000 a year. Like many caring professions, paraprofessional salaries have not been adjusted with soaring inflation or the decades-long cost of living increases, making that salary worth even less.

Post-Pandemic Teacher Certification Programs

In the United States, Higher Education saw an 8% drop in enrollment between 2019 and 2022, which the US Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates is the steepest on record (Binkley, 2023). Enrollment trends have been further impacted by inflation and a difficult rollout of the new FAFSA (Roeloffs, 2024). Researchers have identified factors influencing high school students’ reasons for skipping college, including the rising tuition cost, stressful learning environments, needing to work, and feeling uncertain about their professional

path (Meyer, 2023; Weissman, 2022). Others note that the federal government's attempts to forgive student loans drew their attention to the astronomical cost of higher education, making them second-guess the economic viability of a college degree. Interestingly, the Brookings Institute (Meyer, 2023) identified Georgia as one of a few states where college enrollment actually increased between 2017 and 2019, but these small trends have not made up for the droves of teachers exiting the classroom.

Teacher Education Entrance Requirements

For many years, the GACE PAA, similar to the Praxis Core, excluded groups of potential educators from transitioning into professional teacher education programs ending in certification. In 2022, amid the growing teacher shortage, Georgia stopped requiring the GACE PAA as a program entrance exam, leaving entry requirements to the discretion of colleges of education. This created a unique opportunity for hopeful future educators, who had stopped their professional studies at or just before the PAA requirement, to return to school. We saw numbers of students coming back to complete degrees or start new ones, confident their dream of becoming an educator would no longer be dashed by the GACE PAA requirement.

Other requirements for entrance to Georgia teacher education programs may include some combination of a particular GPA, the Ethics Exit Exam 360, a writing assessment, and sometimes additional evaluations of students' preparedness for professional coursework. For transfer students, there are typically a few pathways to graduation. For example, at some colleges, if students transfer in a full Associate of Science or Associate of Arts degree, their general education requirements are waived, but to complete the BA, they typically need to take 15 hours of coursework per semester for the next 4 semesters. Students coming in under articulation agreements with Associate of Applied Science degrees in Early Childhood Care may have remaining coursework to complete in general education, but they also bring in a number of education-specific transfer courses that full associate degree-holders don't have. However, transfer students with an associate of applied science still typically have anywhere from 4-5 semesters of taking 15 hours of coursework per semester to graduate regardless of the number of hours they transfer from previous coursework at other institutions and their years of experience in classrooms.

Available Aid for Completing Certification

In addition to meeting the entrance requirements, teacher candidates then also must decide how they will pay for their degree and certification. Even with the discontinuation of the GACE PAA fueling prospective teachers' return to college, the financial aid requirements remain rigid and still exclude learners from educational attainment. For nontraditional BA seekers, financial aid requires a 12-hour course load, which is usually 4 courses, to be considered full-time and receive the full benefit of the aid. Many nontraditional students do not live on campus, which can save some college costs, but they have other obligations, including full-time employment, active military service, and family responsibilities.

On the surface, the Teach Grant looks like a valuable aid option for future teachers. However, it remains an unreliable funding source for paraprofessionals seeking elementary education certification. Often, the Teach Grant does not identify elementary as a high-needs area on the Teacher Shortage Area Nationwide Listing, and therefore, educators pursuing elementary certification are excluded from the grant even though the nation is seeing teacher shortages across all of K-12. The Teach Grant also comes with stipulations that might make educators second guess the value of the grant, especially if they are paraprofessionals already established in a school district or school. According to the Teach Grant Eligibility page, the service obligation includes:

By signing the Agreement, you agree to (1) serve as a full-time, highly-qualified teacher for four elementary or secondary school years at a school or educational service agency that serves low-income students; (2) teach in a high-need field; and (3) complete the required four years of teaching within eight years after you graduate from or otherwise cease to be enrolled at the institution of higher education where you received your TEACH Grants. If you do not complete your teaching service obligation, the TEACH Grants you received will be converted to loans that you must repay in full, with interest (Federal Student Aid, n.d.-b).

The penalties alone for the service obligation going unfulfilled are troubling. Nontraditional students who are also paraprofessionals have different life circumstances than most traditional college students. Some are caretakers for young children or aging parents, for example. If a family emergency or life circumstances prevent them from finishing the degree or the four years of service, their paraprofessional salaries may easily become maxed out repaying the grant-turned-loan.

Recommendations

Institutions of higher education, accrediting bodies, and state education leadership must be courageous enough to address teacher attrition issues with determination, transparency, collaboration, and bold experimentation.

Federal Financial Aid

We know from some of the experimentation during Covid, for example, that changes in financial aid are possible. As students fled from colleges during the first wave of Covid, Federal Student Aid put a number of measures in place that could become a permanent part of Financial Aid. The Covid-19 Emergency Grant Program allocated 18 billion dollars to students to pay for “food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and child care” and expressly could not be taken by institutions to pay overdue tuition bills (Federal Student Aid, n.d.-a).

Federal Financial Aid also allowed students to adjust their FAFSA forms if during the time they experienced job loss, incarceration, reduced work hours, serious illness or

disability, death in the family, or income loss associated with rental properties, court settlements, or alimony no longer available (Federal Student Aid, n.d.-a). Other provisions included expanded access to SNAP benefits, monthly payment for an internet provider, and \$100 dollars toward a computer or tablet. Students could also get an approved leave of absence, and incredibly, the interest rate on student loans was reduced to zero. Formalizing the Covid benefits as a permanent part of the financial aid package could provide the type of relief that changes an “I can’t pay for college” to “I think college is possible” for paraprofessionals seeking teacher certification.

Course Credit for Experience

For paraprofessionals who have been in the classroom for 5, 10, 15 years, or more, consideration should be given to valuable professional experiences. Programs like UMass Amherst’s University Without Walls, which awards students up to 12 hours of course credit for experience, should be a national model for portfolio assessment for working adults pursuing higher education. Twelve hours is essentially an entire semester of course work and earning that experiential credit at a significantly reduced cost may bring higher education within reach for reluctant degree seekers.

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), American Council on Education (ACE), and American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) all offer guidance and criteria for establishing programs that recognize prior learning and work experience as equivalent to aspects of the four-year degree. With 39 million Americans with unfinished degrees (Bauman, 2022), there is no better time than now to broaden our beliefs about what constitutes, counts for, and adds value to a college education.

Internship Credit for Experience

Many paraprofessionals pursuing degree completion earn limited recognition for time spent in the classroom. While paraprofessional jobs are not equivalent to teaching jobs, job experience and training aligned with teacher candidate internship standards seem feasible. Offering classroom experience that can be evaluated through college and district collaborations should become a standard part of district operations and professional development opportunities; it is not enough to provide this type of opportunity just to alternative certification seekers. Identifying and compensating teacher leaders in the schools who can oversee standards-based and rigorous teaching and planning evaluations of career-transitioning paraprofessionals could remove the need for additional and costly internship requirements dictated by outdated Georgia PSC policies and mandates.

Broaden Transfer Credit Evaluation

Many students who complete an Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Care in the technical colleges in GA become qualified to work as paraprofessionals but do not see the full load of AAS coursework recognized by colleges as transfer credit that meets major requirements. Many of the paraprofessionals I worked with sometimes brought in between 60-87 hours of coursework from previous institutions, yet generally would have to

complete an additional 4-5 semesters of full-time coursework at the four-year college before completing the undergraduate degree. On a number of occasions, I had students finish the BA with enough credit hours to earn a BA and MA, and sometimes more. So even though the Associate of Applied Science prepares students to be paraprofessionals and the general associate's degree does not, the applied science degree ultimately penalizes paraprofessionals if they wish to pursue teacher education at a four-year college.

Some areas worth exploring at the institutional level include updating and revising systems that automatically recognize (or ignore) transfer credit. This should be done yearly or every two years because course prefixes and numbers change. If institutions have large numbers of transfer students, it may be valuable to have individual staff in the registrar's office assigned to review student transcripts for any and all transferrable credit carefully. Transfer courses that are not an exact course match in the major may end up in long lists of electives at the bottom of the student's live program of study, which may result in students repeating and paying for courses they have already completed. Unsurprisingly, Davidson (2017) suggests that transfer students lose up to 20% of their credits as they move into four-year degree programs, which is an astronomical time and financial loss (p. 271).

Additionally, the colleges of Arts and Sciences and the colleges of education do not always communicate effectively about program changes or collaborate to make the transition to the four-year degree as seamless as possible for students and advisors. This results in many problems, the most concerning of which is extending a student's time at the institution. It also negatively impacts the institution's graduation rates and discourages students from believing they will ever finish the degree. A provost-appointed liaison who can facilitate unbiased, student-focused meetings and collaborations between colleges of arts and science and colleges of education may ultimately benefit the entire institution and will especially benefit the students.

Full-Time Status

Federal Financial Aid, SACSCOC, colleges, and other accrediting bodies need to offer a more competitive financial aid packet, considering that nontraditional and traditional students cannot perform academically when balancing full-time jobs, giant course loads, military service, and family obligations. A number one concern I hear from degree completion students is an overwhelming fear that they cannot maintain the required GPA while also performing their jobs and caring for their families to the best of their ability. Backing students into a corner by demanding 12 hours of enrollment per semester cheapens their degree experience and diminishes their capabilities to reach their full potential in the classroom.

Some colleges and universities have successfully transitioned from a 3-hour per course model to a 4-hour per course model, allowing students to meet the federal aid requirements of 12 hours with three courses instead of four (Felten & Lambert, 2020). In Elon's widely acknowledged and successful model, students typically use the 4th hour of each class for discussion and experiential learning, which is a strong option for teaching observation and practice offered through professional development school (PDS) models where teacher training can happen in the school setting rather than only in the college classroom or online (Elon.edu, n.d.). There are other reasons to consider how we classify full-time and part-time students, as well. Davidson (2017) argues that for institutions to

serve 21st-century students effectively, scholarships and awards should not be given only to students pursuing full-time enrollment. Many students who excel in the classroom with a part-time load, particularly paraprofessionals seeking teacher certification, are working full-time, managing families, and other complex personal and social demands that make full-time school impossible. These same students are just as deserving as their full-time counterparts and should be recognized for the significant academic contributions they make to the institution and the communities in which they work and live.

Years of Service

While not all paraprofessionals are a strong match to transition into the classroom as full-time teachers, many are. Efforts to encourage that transition could include retroactively awarding years of service for the Teach Grant for candidates who have worked full-time for four or more years in Title I schools. Additionally, when paraprofessionals transition to teachers, the state should recognize their years of service on the pay scale, as well. Currently, even if paraprofessionals have been in the classroom for 5, 10, or 15 years when they transition to teaching, they are pushed back to year 1 for years of service on the pay scale. Paraprofessionals with many years of work, for example, could have some percentage of those years count toward their pay steps as teachers. For example, if a paraprofessional has worked for 10 years, incentives might include allowing them to qualify or transfer 5 of those years of experience to the teacher pay scale with their T4 certificate.

Allow Paraprofessionals to Qualify for Provisional Certificates

In Georgia, many school systems only grant provisional teacher certificates to prospective teachers who have already earned a BA, even though many do not have any experience working with kids or teaching. This practice, however, frequently overlooks gifted and accomplished paraprofessionals with many years of experience in the classroom who don't yet have a BA. Offering greater recognition and individual evaluation for paraprofessionals to step into provisional teaching positions may bring more gifted and experienced educators into K-12 classrooms while also incentivizing BA degree completion. Other incentives may include district tuition grants, grow-your-own programs, and partnerships between districts, colleges, and technical colleges. The goal, however, must include benefits for the individual teachers and not just the institutions and districts.

Increase Diversity

Despite the changing demographics of school-aged children, the teaching profession remains overwhelmingly homogenous. According to the statistics, 77% of teachers identified as female and 23% identified as male in the 2020-2021 school year. In that same period, 80% of educators identified as white (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Due to the ongoing restricted access to the teacher development pipeline for minoritized groups (Overstreet, 2024; Rucinski, 2023), colleges of education and the federal Department of Education have an opportunity to increase the number of educators from diverse backgrounds by funding the expansion of programs like Clemson University's

Call Me Mister and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education's (AACTE) Holmes Scholar Program. Both programs aim to support either undergraduate or graduate students from diverse backgrounds in successful teacher preparation degree completion by providing funding, mentoring, peer engagement, and testing preparation, among other things.

Beyond expanding funding and support, however, colleges and universities have the ability and resources to design programming that recruits and retains faculty and staff who more accurately reflect the 21st-century learner. To draw diverse students to education as a desirable career and life path, degree seekers need to hear from and learn with thought leaders who center diverse experience as a highly desirable asset for creating and leading educational transformation in a rapidly changing local and global context.

Conclusion

The value paraprofessionals bring to the classroom is undisputed; many become instructional leaders through their host teachers' collaboration and autonomy. Many host teachers who see paraprofessionals' gifts use their leadership abilities to nurture, train, and guide paraprofessionals' growth. While not all paraprofessionals are a strong match for moving into the role of teacher and not all host teachers see and nurture the talents of paraprofessionals, the quality and depth paraprofessional candidates bring to teacher preparation programs and to classrooms across GA cannot be ignored. Yet the journey from paraprofessional to teacher is an uncertain one, fraught with unnecessary and debilitating obstacles that sometimes prevent our most promising educators from taking on the role of classroom teacher. Now is the time to take transformative action and to give paraprofessionals the recognition they deserve.

References

- Bauman, D. (2022). 39 Million Americans Went to College but Didn't Earn a Degree. Here's What We Know About Who Returned. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved 12 June, 2024 from <https://www.chronicle.com/article/39-million-americans-went-to-college-but-didnt-earn-a-degree-heres-what-we-know-about-who-returned>
- Binkley, C. (2023). The labor shortage is pushing American colleges into crisis, with the plunge in enrollment the worst ever recorded. *Fortune*. Retrieved 18 June, 2024 from <https://fortune.com/2023/03/09/american-skipping-college-huge-numbers-pandemic-turned-them-off-education/>
- Cummings, C. (2024). Metro Atlanta schools facing teacher shortages in triple digits. *Atlanta News First*. Retrieved 20 June, 2024 from <https://www.atlantaneWSfirst.com/2024/04/04/metro-atlanta-schools-facing-teacher-shortages-triple-digits/>
- Davidson, C. N. (2017). *The new education: How to revolutionize the university to prepare students for a world in flux*. Basic Books.

- Elon.edu. (n.d.). First-Year Writing. Retrieved 18 June, 2024 from <https://www.elon.edu/u/academics/first-year-writing/>
- Federal Student Aid. (n.d.-a). COVID-19 Emergency Relief and Federal Student Aid. Retrieved 18 June, 2024 from <https://studentaid.gov/announcements-events/covid-19>
- Federal Student Aid. (n.d.-b). Receive a TEACH Grant to Pay for College.
- Felten, P., & Lambert, L. M. (2020). Relationship-rich education: How human connections drive success in college. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- GCPS. (n.d.). Paraprofessionals. Retrieved 18 June, 2024 from <https://www.gcpsk12.org/about-us/careers/support-positions/paraprofessionals>
- Kousouris, A. (2023). Bills aimed at attracting and retaining educators in Georgia. *Atlantanewsfirst.com*. Retrieved 12 June, 2024 from <https://www.atlantanewsfirst.com/2023/02/18/bills-aimed-attracting-retaining-educators-georgia/>
- McKillip, M., & Farrie, D. (2024). Invest in Georgia Teachers: The Need to Attract and Retain a High-Quality Workforce. Education Law Center. Retrieved 2 June, 2024 from <https://edlawcenter.org/research/invest-in-georgia-teachers.html>
- Meyer, K. (2023). The case for college: Promising solutions to reverse college enrollment declines. The Brookings Institution. Retrieved 14 June, 2024 from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2023/06/05/the-case-for-college-promising-solutions-to-reverse-college-enrollment->
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). Characteristics of Public School Teachers. Retrieved 17 June, 2024 from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/clr>
- National Education Association. (2024). Educator Pay Data 2024. Retrieved 12 June, 2024 from <https://www.nea.org/resource-library/educator-pay-and-student-spending-how-does-your-state-rank>
- Nguyen, T., Lam, C., & Bruno, P. (2022). Is there a national teacher shortage? A systematic examination of reports of teacher shortages in the United States. <https://doi.org/10.26300/76eq-hj32>
- Overstreet, M. (2024). Literacy lens: The enduring challenge of diversifying the teacher pipeline. Education Northwest. Retrieved 20 June, 2024 from <https://educationnorthwest.org/insights/literacy-lens-enduring-challenge-diversifying-teacher-pipeline>
- Roeloffs, M. (2024). Low-Income and minority students aren't filling out FAFSA - which could mean fewer go to college. *Forbes*. Retrieved 20 June, 2024 from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/maryroeloffs/2024/04/29/low-income-and-minority-students-arent-filling-out-fafsa-which-could-mean-fewer-go-to-college/>
- Rucinski, M. (2023). Who becomes a teacher? Racial diversity in the K-12 to teacher pipeline. Rapport Institute for Greater Boston. <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/Taubman/RIGB/Policy%20Brief%20-%20Racial%20Diversity%20in%20Teacher%20Pipeline%20-%20Feb%202023.pdf>
- Teachgeorgia.org. (n.d.). Main Street Academy Paraprofessional Job Listing. Retrieved 15 June, 2024 from <https://www.teachgeorgia.org/AdvSearch.aspx>

Weissman, S. (2022). Why Would-Be Students Aren't Choosing College A new study explores why students drop out of college or choose not to enroll. Inside Higher Ed. Retrieved 12 June, 2024 from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/09/29/new-study-explores-why-people-drop-out-or-dont-enroll>

About the Author

Lillian G. Reeves, PhD., is the Director of Transformative and Inclusive Pedagogy at the University of South Carolina Upstate. Before her work at USC Upstate, Dr. Reeves was an Associate Professor/Department Chair of elementary education at Piedmont University, where she cultivated her admiration for the tireless work of paraprofessionals.