WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE "SAFE TO PRACTICE"?

AND WHAT IS ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL CAPABILITY?

Deborah Loewenberg Ball

NEA Foundation's 9th Annual Cross-Site Convening

October 8, 2015 • Washington, DC

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RAISING UP TEACHING AS THE #1 POLICY IMPERATIVE OF OUR TIME

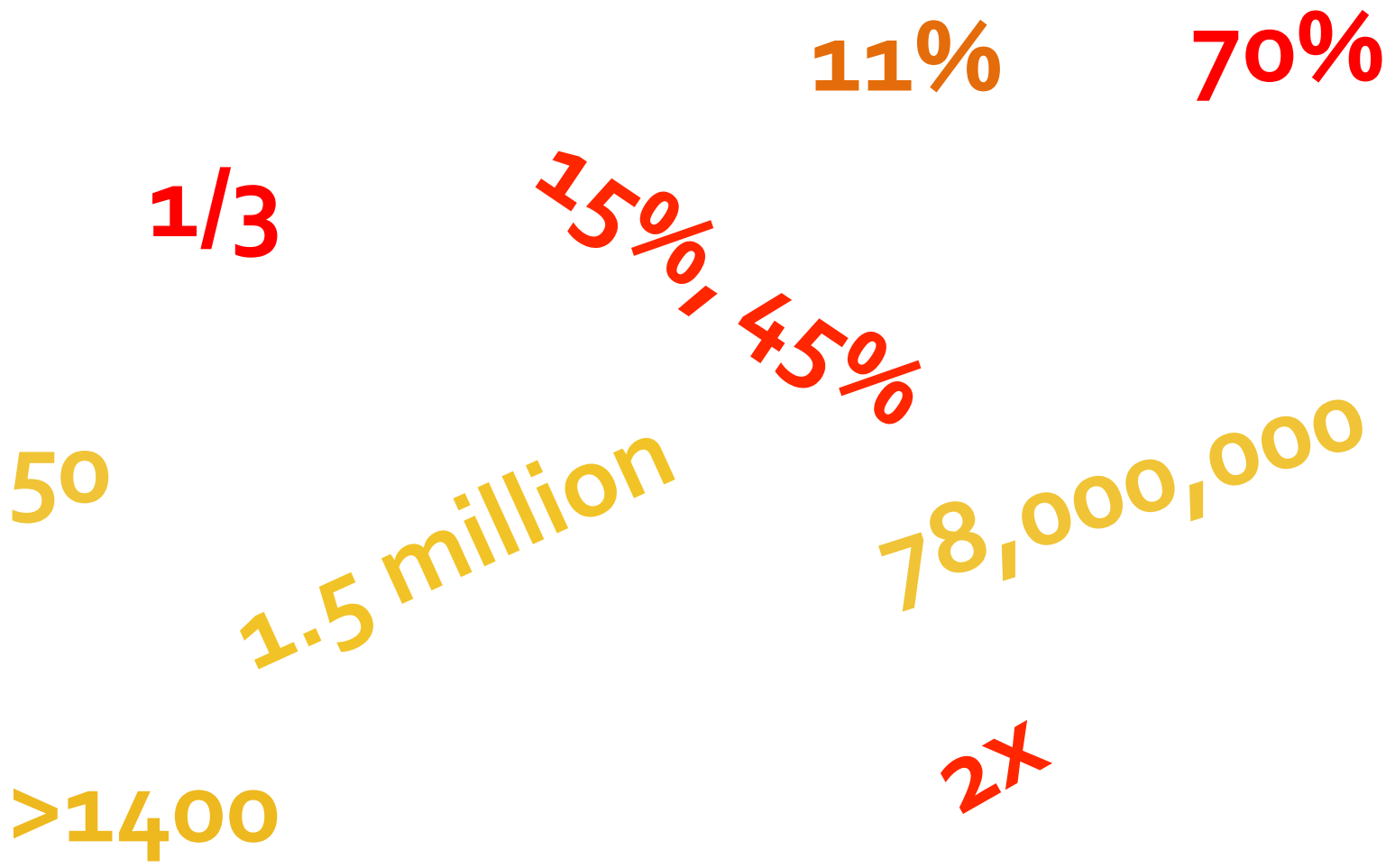
1. 50,000,000 children and youth in our nation's schools
2. Schooling: Our society's commitment to individuals' lives and to the future of our country
3. Evidence of the power of skillful teaching
4. Overwhelming lack of public respect for the work of teaching

→ **This is a public policy problem of vital moral, practical, and political urgency.**

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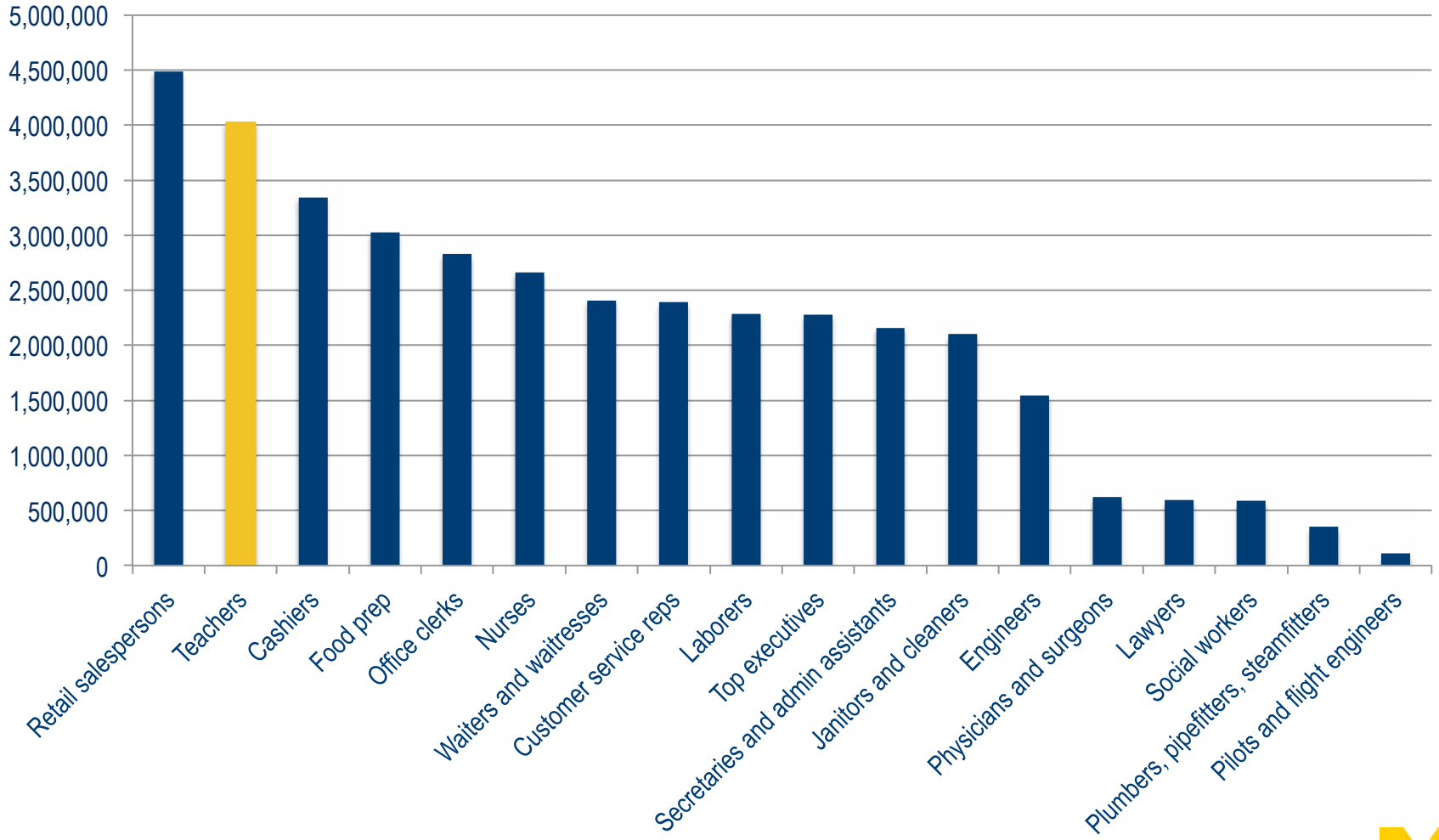
THE MORAL URGENCY, BY THE NUMBERS



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THE SCALE OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION



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. . . AND ITS CRUCIAL ROLE FOR OUR NATION'S MOST IMPORTANT RESOURCE

- Differences in teachers account for 12%-14% of total variability in children's mathematical achievement in each of grades 1, 2, and 3.
- Children assigned to three effective teachers in a row score at the 83rd percentile in math at the end of 5th grade; children assigned to three ineffective teachers in a row score only at the 29th percentile.
- The cumulative effects of being taught by a highly effective teacher can substantially reduce differences in student achievement that are due to family background.

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WHAT HOLDS PROMISE?

- Research shows the power of skillful teaching, as well as the damage done by ineffective teaching, especially across more than one year
- Advances in knowledge about skillful teaching
- Widespread consensus about the importance of "teacher quality"

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WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS?

- We don't prepare teachers nearly well enough.
- The U.S. has no system for ensuring that teaching is skillful.
- We treat skillful teaching as something remarkable, rather than the right of every child.
- There is widespread skepticism that teaching can be taught.
- The teacher workforce is massive, with high turnover.

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WHAT WOULD WE HAVE TO DO?

1. Stand up for the power of teaching, and the moral imperative.
2. Understand the context and history of the teaching profession and preparation for teaching in the U.S.
3. Articulate a specific common curriculum for initial preparation and make entry to independent practice selective and based on skill.

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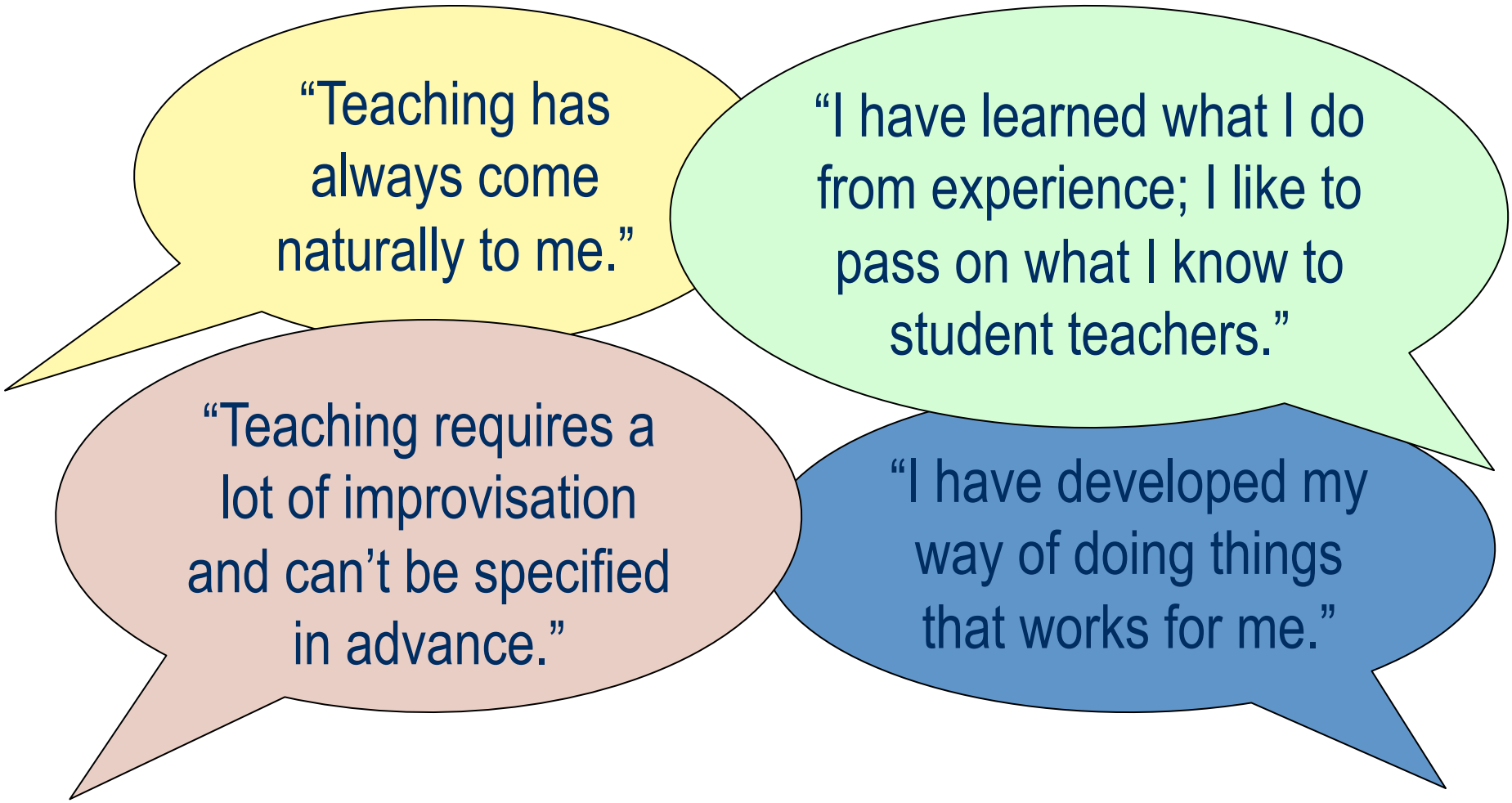
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① STAND UP FOR THE POWER OF SKILLFUL TEACHING, AND FOR THE MORAL IMPERATIVE

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WHAT GREAT TEACHERS OFTEN SAY



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② UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT AND HISTORY OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION AND PREPARATION FOR TEACHING IN THE U.S.

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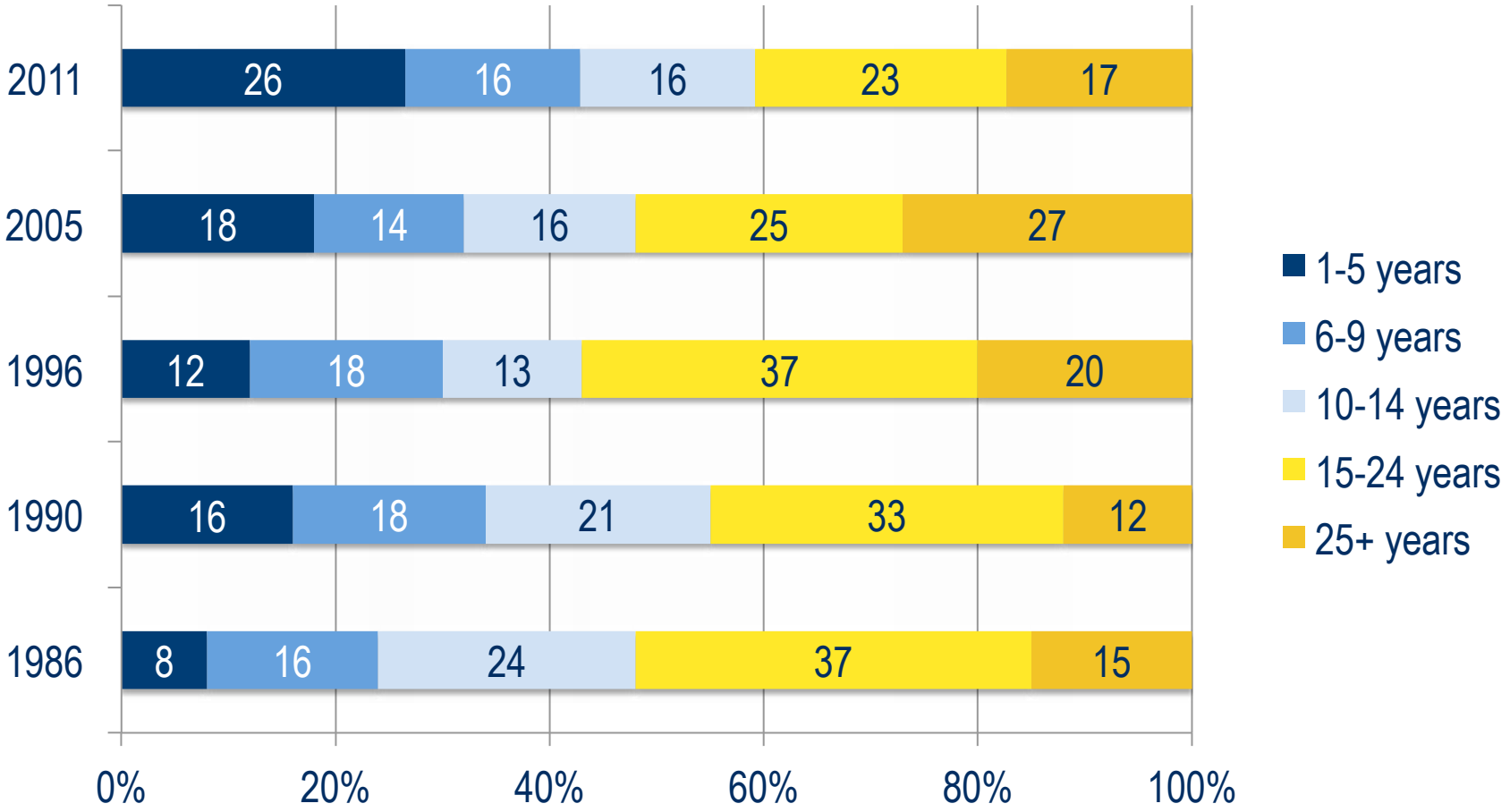
KEY FEATURES OF THE CONTEXT

1. The concentration and impact of beginning teaching
2. The underrepresentation of diversity in the teaching workforce
3. The sprawl and roots of the U.S. approach to teacher preparation

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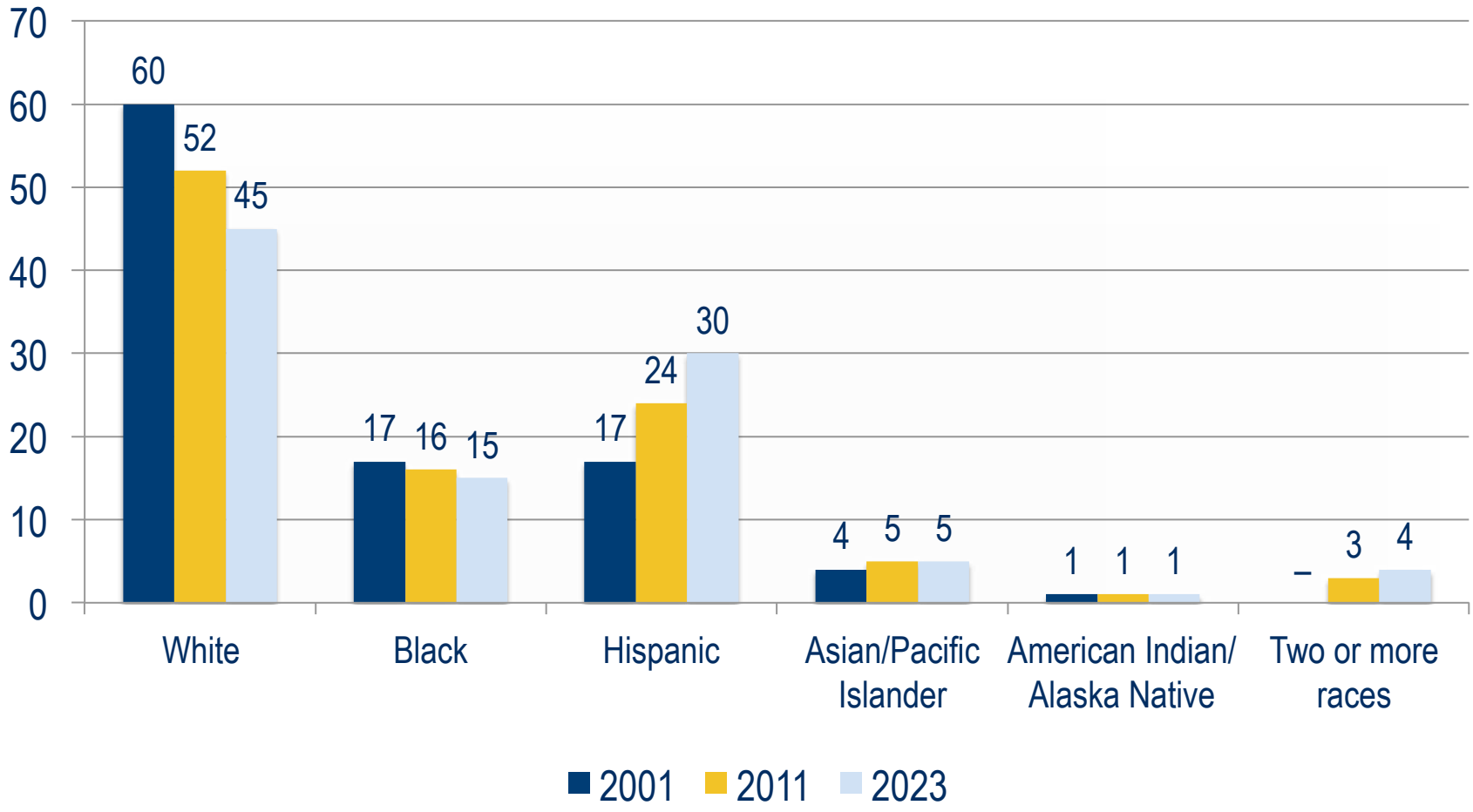
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE: CHANGING TRENDS



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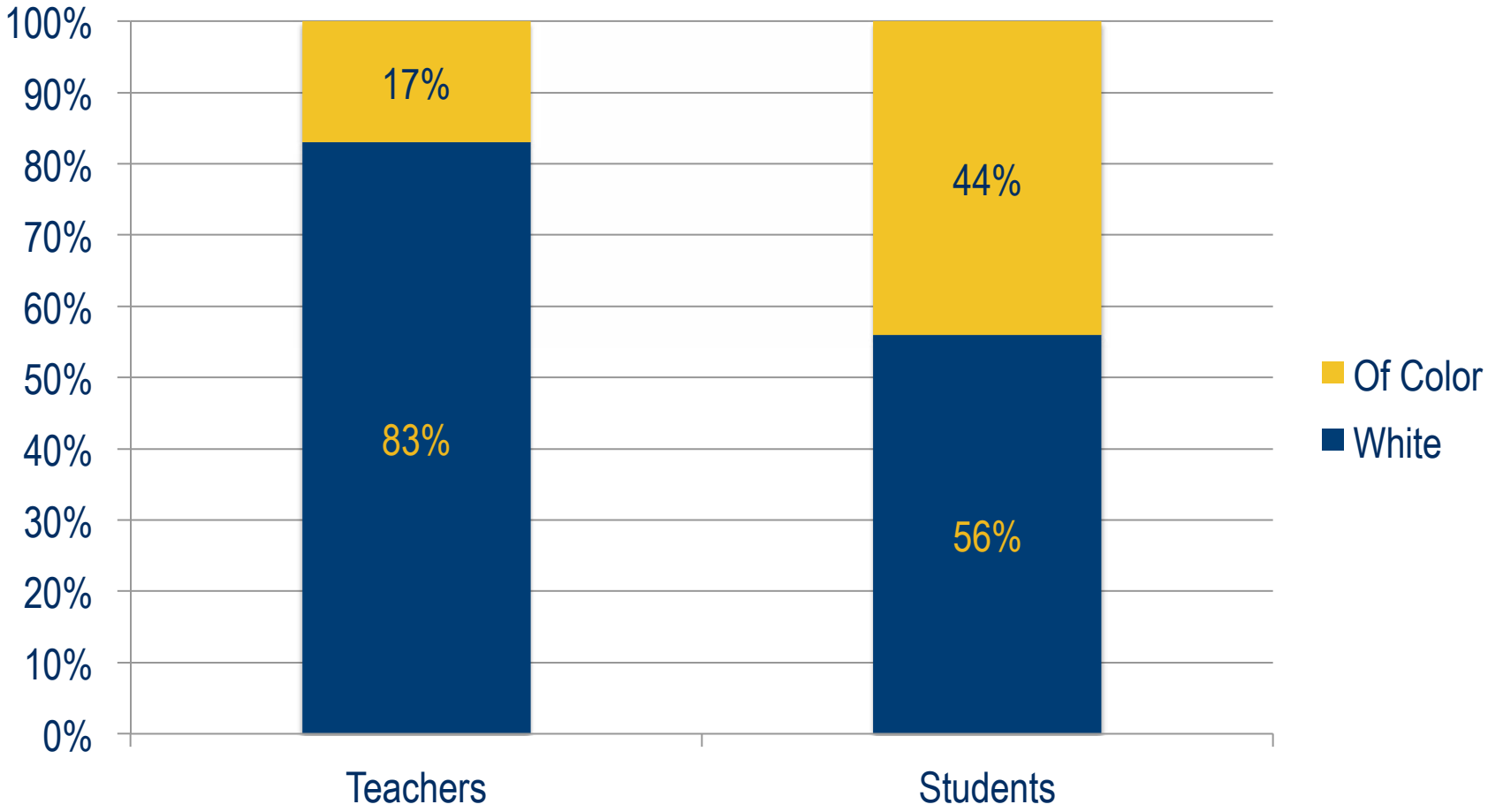
CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDE IN THE U.S.: K-12 TEACHERS AND STUDENTS



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WHY IS THIS GAP SUCH A CRITICAL PROBLEM?

- The profession responsible for developing the primary human capital of our society should reflect our population
- Importance of children interacting with adults in school with whom they can identify, and expanding the diversity of adults with whom children interact with in school
- The knowledge base of the profession requires the expertise and experience of people who are diverse with respect to race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, language, gender
- Other reasons?

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ENTRY-LEVEL TEACHING AS A CRITICAL FOCUS

- More U.S. schoolchildren have a teacher with fewer than five years of experience than a teacher with any other number of years of experience.
- Most beginning teachers say they are underprepared for teaching.
- Distribution of beginning teaching is concentrated disproportionately in low-income and high-minority schools.

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NO PROFESSIONAL SYSTEM FOR TEACHER PREPARATION OR CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT

- More than 3,000 independent providers of initial teacher training
- No common specific curriculum for preparation for initial teaching
- A reliance on conventional academic credentials as the standard content knowledge
- No common standard of performance for entry to independent practice with (on) young people

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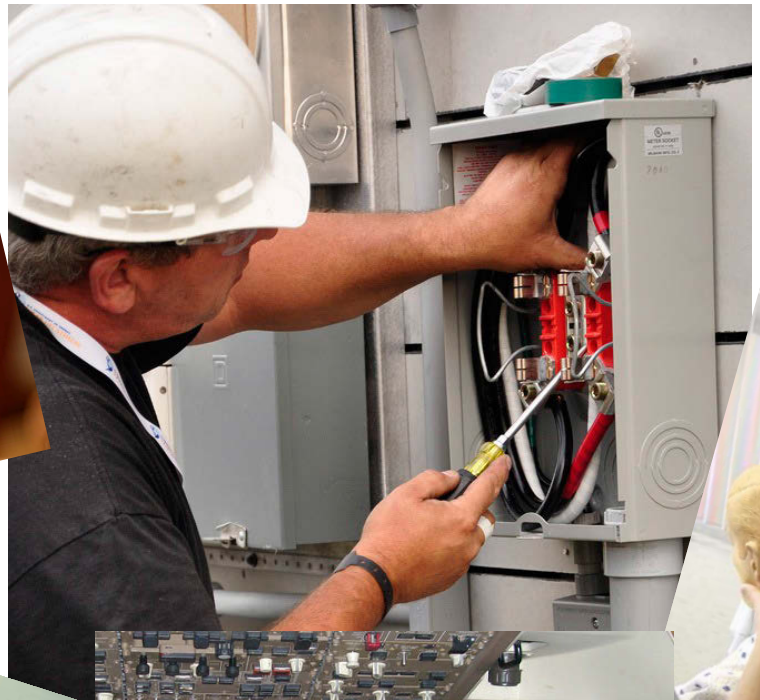
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③ ARTICULATE A SPECIFIC COMMON PROFESSIONAL STANDARD FOR INITIAL TEACHING AND TEACHER PREPARATION, AND MAKE ENTRY TO TEACHING SELECTIVE AND BASED ON SKILL

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MOVING FORWARD TO A PROFESSIONAL SYSTEM OF TEACHER PREPARATION

1. *Build on basic agreements about domains of teaching and evidence about content knowledge for teaching:* Identify **key practices of teaching** and **high-leverage content** essential for responsible beginning practice
2. *Build on commitment to clinical preparation:* Develop **specific approaches to training** beginners to carry out those practices, along a **continuum of contexts** for learning and practicing practice
3. *Build on commitment to performance assessment:* Develop **performance assessments of specific practices and content** and make them required for entry

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REPRESENTING TEACHING AS SKILLFUL WORK THAT DEMANDS AND DESERVES TRAINING

- Share examples that display the complexity of the work (and that "regular" people can't do)
- Stand up for the importance of rigorous licensure for beginning to teach
- Help to develop shared knowledge useful for initial and continuing professional training

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