Recruiting Diverse Candidates Into Teaching

Introduction

The teacher workforce in the United States has historically been less racially and ethnically diverse than its students, and than the nation more broadly.[1] As the number of minority students enrolled in U.S. public schools in historically White regions increases, districts are struggling to employ and retain teachers whose racial and ethnic backgrounds (as well as gender) reflect those of their students.[2]

This research brief provides an overview of the current state of diversity in teacher training and the workforce and shares best practices for recruiting diverse candidates and teachers.

Source: ViGlobal[3]

Key Findings

🔍 **Scholarships and fellowships for teacher preparation programs are effective are effective strategies diversifying the teacher pipeline.** For example, Purdue University offers a "STEM Goes Rural" fellowship for its education students, linking candidates with STEM backgrounds with teaching opportunities in rural high schools in Indiana. Additionally, there are several federal, state, university, and district programs that incentivize candidates through loan forgiveness to teach in rural communities, where most educators are White.

🔍 **University and school district partnerships, as well as alternative teacher development pathways, can be key strategies to recruit local candidates from diverse backgrounds.** Local teacher development programs typically aim to recruit teachers from existing district staff (e.g., paraprofessionals), the local community, and/or districts' current students. These programs often involve collaborations between higher education institutions and local school districts and train local teachers of color who are more likely to stay in the district compared to similar teachers from more traditional pathways. Grow Your Own programs are particularly effective at recruiting minority teachers.

🔍 **Minority teachers experience higher turnover rates than their non-minority peers.** In 2012-13, there was a 19 percent annual turnover rate for minority teachers, compared to 15 percent for non-minority teachers. Retention strategies should focus largely on fostering program and school climates that support and value diverse staff and student populations. Colleges can help school districts in increasing teacher autonomy and involving teachers in organizational decision-making, as lack of autonomy and voice are two common reasons that minority teachers leave the profession.

🔍 **Minority teachers respond well to induction programs that continuously link them with peers and mentors of color.** A comprehensive induction program is vital for all teachers and can have a positive effect in particular on diverse teacher retention. Being matched with a veteran teacher mentor, providing dedicated time to collaborate with peers, and coaching from other teachers of color are all important components of impactful induction.

Candidate Diversity in Teacher Education Programs

Nationally, teacher education programs are not representative of the make-up of public schools. Based on the U.S. Department of Education's projections in 2016, experts expect the share of White students to fall to 46 percent by 2024 while the proportion of Hispanic students enrolled in public K-12 schools is expected to reach a 20-year high and comprise 29 percent of the student population.

Percentage Distribution of Public School Students by Race/Ethnicity, 2002-2024 (Projected)
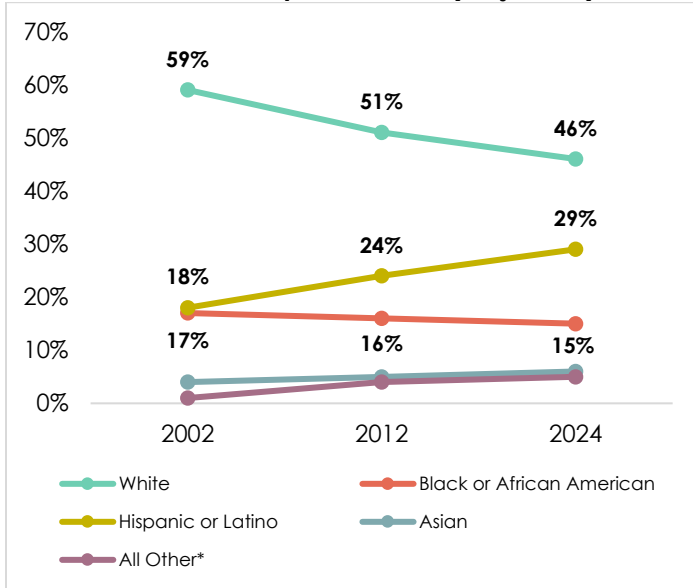
Note: "All Other" includes individuals reporting two or more races, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders.
Source: U.S. Department of Education[4]

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) also analyzes trends in the number of diverse candidates in teacher preparation programs. **NCTQ finds that racially and ethnically underrepresented candidates do not pass professional licensing tests at the same rate as their White peers.**[5] In fact, only 38 percent of Black candidates and 57 percent of Hispanic candidates pass their licensure exams after multiple attempts, compared to 75 percent of White candidates. The author concludes that "if the pass rate for Black and Hispanic candidates were comparable to White candidates, *the diversity of the new teaching pool would increase by half*."[6]

Teacher Diversity in K-12 Schools

Over the past 30 years, racial and ethnic diversity in teaching has grown, although it has not kept pace with growth in student diversity. Indeed, in 2015, a quarter of first-year teachers were non-White, up from only 10 percent in 1980. Importantly, the number of Black and

Native American teachers is declining while the number of Hispanic and Asian teachers is growing. However, despite these areas of growth, "the teacher workforce still does not reflect the growing diversity of the nation, where people of color represent about 40 percent of the population and 50 percent of students."[7]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, most teachers of color are concentrated in city schools and in schools with higher populations of children who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL). For instance, 15 percent of teachers in city schools are Black or Hispanic, compared to only 5 percent in rural areas. Likewise, in schools with 75 percent or more students qualifying for FRPL, teachers of color comprise 16 percent of the workforce compared to only 5 percent at more affluent schools.[8]

Recruiting a Diverse Teacher Workforce

Best practices in diverse teacher recruitment call for a comprehensive approach that spans the entire career continuum. Below, Hanover outlines key strategies that can facilitate recruitment at each state of this pipeline. Broadly, the "career continuum" as envisioned by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) encompasses four primary stages:

Source: CCSSO[9]

As we go on to discuss, "real systems change requires collaboration between education leaders from across the system."[10] Education organizations seeking to promote diversity should aim to work across stakeholder groups and identify both traditional and non-traditional pathways to teacher education.

University-District Partnerships
The Center for American Progress notes that to ensure that teacher candidates align with district needs, "there is a need for greater collaboration between teacher-preparation programs and the school districts likely to hire program graduates."[11] Similarly, the Albert Shanker Institute recommends that urban school districts and schools in particular "should develop close partnerships with colleges of education to ensure that an increased supply of well-qualified Black and Hispanic teachers are prepared to teach in city schools."[12]

Stages of a University-District Recruitment Partnership

Initiation Stage

- Partners should set the initial vision and goals together, with a focus on relationship-building and trust
- Parnters should align rubrics' key expectations for program graduates
- Partners should commit to sharing data

Implementation

- Partners should jointly select and train mentor teachers and strategically place candidates
- Partners should ensure coursework matches clinical experiences
- Partners should communicate and meet frequently

Continuous Improvement

- Partners should be open to change, and regularly step back to discuss progress and challenges
- Partners should ensure that district needs drive shifts in teacher preparation programs' pipeline, structures, and systems

Source: Reproduced verbatim from Education First[13]

School districts have had success partnering with local universities that have a large number of minority students.[14] For example, the Center for American Progress highlights the Call Me MISTER (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) program in South Carolina, which connects Black male college graduates with high-minority, low-income schools across the state. The United Negro College Fund (UNCF) supports a similar program between Norfolk State University and Richmond Public Schools in Virginia.

The spotlight at the top of the page provides an overview of the partnership between Portland Public Schools and the University of Southern Maine, which started as a single teacher-preparation course offered over the summer of 2017.

University of Southern Maine – Portland Public Schools

Portland Public Schools in Maine recently partnered with the University of Southern Maine (USM) to encourage current minority high school and college students to consider teaching in the district. The district hopes to attract more minority applicants for teaching positions, as 95 percent of current teachers are White (in comparison to the student body, of which more than 40 percent are minority students speaking over 60 total languages).

In collaboration with district leaders, USM created a five-week course in the summer of 2017 in which students spend four days a week in Portland Public Schools' summer school programs and one day a week at USM discussing their time in the district. The inaugural class attracted local immigrants who were teachers in their home countries, university students exploring teaching for the first time, and juniors and seniors in high school considering teaching.

Source: Portland Press Herald[15]

Recruiting Teachers to Rural Areas

Research indicates a persistent gap between the qualifications of teachers in rural and urban schools, as well as a stark racial and ethnic divide in the teachers who end up in each setting.[16] In fact, the National Teacher and Principal Survey of 2015-16 revealed that 89 percent of teachers in rural schools are White.[17] Rural teacher recruitment happens at the district level, school level, and in partnerships with teacher preparation programs. **Some public programs give financial incentives, such as loan forgiveness or stipends, to encourage teachers to work in hard-to-staff areas.** The following table provides examples of programs that have worked to recruit teachers in rural areas in their counties and/or states.

	The U.S. Department of Education's **Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) Grant Program** provides grants to promote partnerships between teacher preparation programs and high-needs districts and schools.[18]
	Purdue University offers a **"STEM Goes Rural" fellowship** for its education students, helping candidates with STEM backgrounds transition into teaching in rural high schools in Indiana. Fellows are awarded a stipend.[19]
	Colorado and **Minnesota** both passed state laws creating multiple programs to incentivize teachers to work in rural districts, such as providing financial stipends for rural teachers and creating teacher cadet programs in rural schools.[20]

Alternative Teacher Development Pathways

The U.S. Department of Education finds that "the proportion of teacher candidates of color decreases at multiple points along the [teacher training]

pipeline."[21] For example, in 2008, 82 percent of those with a four-year degree in education that went on to obtain teacher certification were White, and only 4 and 9 percent were Black and Hispanic, respectively.[22] As such, universities, school districts, and states have begun to use other types of education programs to attract candidates not typically found in traditional teacher education.

One such program, called the **"Grow Your Own" program**, prepares members of the community who have not gone through a traditional degree program to teach. In a "Grow Your Own" program, "a school district partners with an institution of higher education to prepare paraprofessionals, other school staff, or other members of the community who are not certified as teachers to teach in the district."[23] An example of a "Grow Your Own" program, the JET initiative, is profiled below.

South Coast Partnership for the Journey into Education and Teaching (JET)

JET is a collaboration between the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, Bristol Community College, Lesley University, and the Fall River and New Bedford school districts. It was developed with the goal of training paraprofessionals as teachers. The program is a "pathway to teaching for paraprofessionals without bachelor's degrees, who hope to become licensed classroom teachers in their urban communities' high-needs schools."[24]

The collaboration believes that JET is a solution to diversify the teacher workforce. JET:
- Connects paraprofessionals with a network of other paraprofessionals on their multi-year journey to becoming a teacher
- Provides guidance on the college admission and enrollment process
- Provides seminars the teacher licensure process

To be eligible, individuals must be currently employed as a paraprofessional in a Massachusetts public school and be seeking a bachelor's degree and licensure.

Source: Center for American Progress[25] and verbatim from JET[26]

Although the literature is still nascent regarding the link between Grow Your Own programs and their impact on recruiting teachers of color, researchers highlight their impact, particularly when combined with a "philosophical and structural merging of teacher preparation with ethnic studies frameworks."[27] For more resources on Grow Your Own programs and teachers of color, see:

| Author	Date	Organization
Valenzuela	2017	Intercultural Development Research Association
Zuber and Berg-Jacobson	2017	Center on Great Teachers & Leaders

Gist, Bianco, and Lynn	2018	American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
Muniz	2018	New America

Minority Teacher Retention

A report from the Learning Policy Institute states how "minority teachers' careers have been less stable than those of non-minority teachers, and included more job transitioning."[28] **In 2012-13, the rate of annual public school teacher turnover for minority teachers was 4 percentage points higher than non-minority teachers.** The figure below shows trends in minority teacher turnover between 1988 and 2012, with the retention gap between minority and non-minority teachers growing more pronounced since 2000.

In order to improve the minority teacher turnover rate, schools must address the factors that cause employees to leave. Of the 56,000 minority teachers who left teaching in 2004-05, "16,000 retired, **30,000 pursued another job due to job dissatisfaction**, and 10,000 left for other reasons."[29] If job dissatisfaction is a main driver of attrition among minority teachers, school organizations and leadership must be re-assessed to ensure that all teachers' needs are being met. In fact, changing some conditions, such as "teachers' classroom autonomy and schoolwide influence, should be less costly financially, and an important consideration in low-income settings."[30]

National Public School Teacher Turnover by Race/Ethnicity, 1988-2012
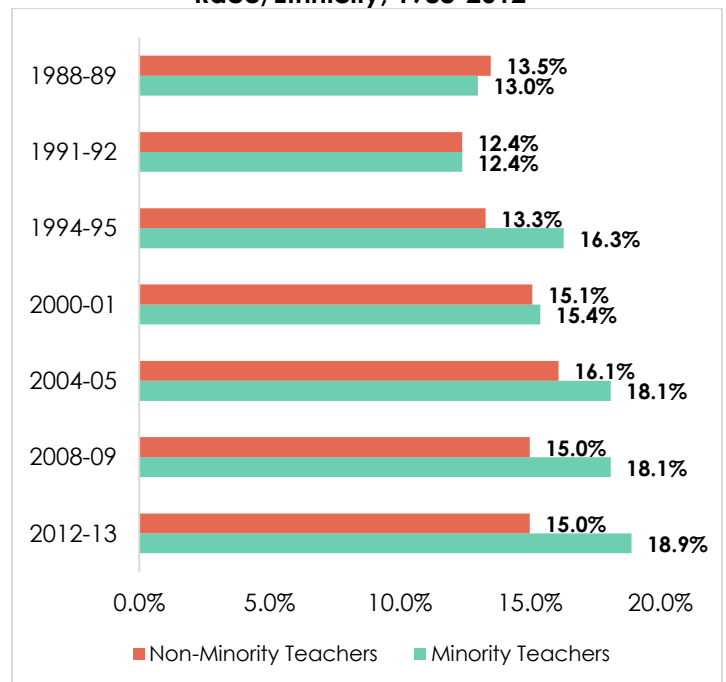
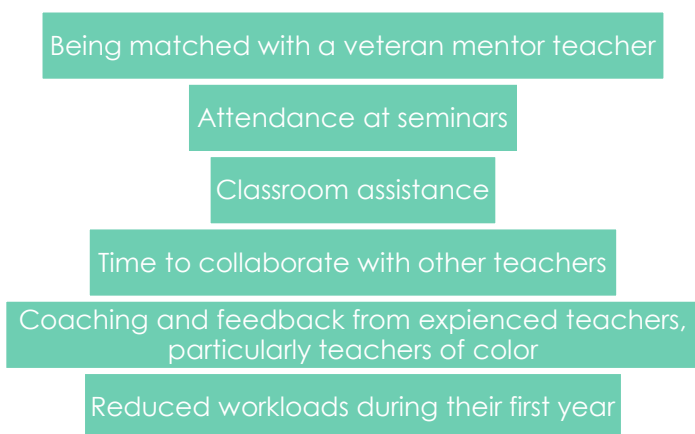Source: Learning Policy Institute[31]

Support from Administrators

In addition to the strategies used to recruit diverse teachers—such as loan forgiveness or Grow Your Own programs—it is important for the workforce to adopt practices that encourage teachers of color to stay in schools for longer periods of time. This manifests in a number of ways but relies on school and district leaders who promote and value diversity. **Principal preparation that places principals in schools with diverse students and staff** and **connecting school leaders with diverse administrators from nearby universities or peer districts** are two important ways that institutions of higher education can improve teaching conditions by improving principal education as well as teacher education.[32]

Effective Hiring and Induction

Interestingly, data show that more teachers of color are available for hire earlier in the year. The Learning Policy Institute, for example, recommends that "districts offer incentives for teachers to announce their resignation, retirement, and transfer intentions in early spring so that they can recruit new hires earlier in the season."[33] **It is also important to include teachers of color in the hiring process in meaningful ways.** This may comprise a dedicated diverse hire committee or compensating racially and ethnically diverse teachers for attending recruitment fairs.[34]

Finally, the new teacher induction period is critical for establishing teachers of color within the school climate and starting them off on the right foot. Comprehensive induction for diverse teachers during their first year can have lasting ramifications in their decision to persist at a school or in the profession overall. Effective induction for teachers of color should include:

Being matched with a veteran mentor teacher

Attendance at seminars

Classroom assistance

Time to collaborate with other teachers

Coaching and feedback from expienced teachers, particularly teachers of color

Reduced workloads during their first year

Source: Learning Policy Institute[35]

As evidenced by the Learning Policy Institute, **many of the best practices in minority teacher induction rely on connections with mentors and colleagues.** This type of peer-to-peer interaction can help new teachers overcome the challenges of first-year teaching and instill strategies that facilitate long-term retention. As

summarized by the Association for Middle Level Education, "teachers learn about exemplary teaching by seeing what it looks like, talking about it, and experimenting in their own classroom."[36] Professional collaboration, mentorship, and a supportive environment thus form the cornerstones of a successful induction program that promotes longevity for minority teachers.

Other Case Studies

The table below profiles additional examples of federal, state, and district initiatives whose mission is to diversify the teacher workforce.

Case Study	Description
Teach For America	- One of the county's largest and most selective alternative certification programs - Recruits college graduates to teach in an underserved area for two years - TFA corps members do not necessarily have an undergraduate background in education
The New Teacher Project- Fellowship Program	- Fellowship program in districts, facilitates alternative certification programs for high-achieving postgraduates and mid-career professionals who lack an education background - Tailors program to meet the needs of districts, targeting recruiting campaigns for minority candidates
Urban Teacher Enhancement Program	- Established in 2004, partnership between the University of Alabama at Birmingham and three high-needs school districts in the Birmingham metropolitan area - Recruits mid-career professionals and recent college graduates who did not major in education, and prepares paraprofessionals to teach
North Carolina Teaching Fellows Scholarship Program	- Enacted by the NC General Assembly in 1986 to recruit talented high school graduates into teaching - Provides a $6,500 yearly scholarship to 500 participants for four years, at one of the 17 public universities in the state - After graduation, must teach in a NC public school for four years
Teach Tomorrow- Oakland	- Goal is to recruit and retain teachers who "reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity" of Oakland - Partnership between the Oakland mayor's office and the Oakland Unified School District

Source: Center for American Progress[37]

Endnotes

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