



The current American educator workforce does not mirror the ethnic and cultural diversity of our nation's students. While students of color comprise the majority of our school system, teachers of color comprise a much smaller proportion of the educator workforce, particularly in the REL Southwest region.¹

Race/Ethnicity	Arkansas		Louisiana		New Mexico		Oklahoma		Texas	
	Percentage of the K-12 student population ¹	Percentage of the teacher workforce ²	Percentage of the K-12 student population ¹	Percentage of the teacher workforce ³	Percentage of the K-12 student population ¹	Percentage of the teacher workforce ³	Percentage of the K-12 student population ¹	Percentage of the teacher workforce ³	Percentage of the K-12 student population ¹	Percentage of the teacher workforce ⁴
White	61.3	88.8	45.1	74.4	24.1	56.7	49.4	82	28.1	59.9
Black	20.6	8.8	44	19.9	1.9	a	8.8	3.5	12.6	10.2
Hispanic	12.7	1.1	6.3	a	60.8	36.6	16.8	1.1	52.4	26.5
American Indian/ Alaska Native	0.6	0.5	0.7	a	10.2	3	13.9	8.6	0.4	0.4
Asian or Asian/ Pacific Islander	2.4	0.5	1.7	a	1.3	0.9	2.3	a	4.3	1.9
Two or more races	2.4	0.4	2.3	1.3	1.7	a	8.8	4.5	2.2	1.1

a The percentage of the teacher workforce in this category is less than 0.01 percent.

Having teachers with different racial or ethnic backgrounds may discourage students of color from joining the teaching profession.⁵ REL Southwest completed two Ask A REL reference desk responses on strategies that states and districts can use to recruit, retain, and support a diverse teacher workforce.

Below are some research-based recommendations for developing a teacher workforce that reflects diverse student populations.

Recommendations



- ▶ **Focus on “home-growing” educators by encouraging students to teach in the communities where they attended school.** “Grow Your Own” programs are joint partnerships between state education agencies, school districts, and teacher preparation programs to recruit young adults to teach in their home communities. Home-grown teachers may better represent the cultural diversity of their communities. In addition, they have a better understanding of the local context and what students are facing since they have lived in the community and attended the same schools.^{6,7,8}



- ▶ **Partner with university teacher preparation programs that primarily serve students of color.** School districts can build a diverse workforce by working closely with historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and other universities. For example, the Savannah-Chatham County Public School District partnered with Armstrong Atlantic State University (now the Armstrong campus of Georgia Southern University) to recruit students of color to join the teaching profession and gain valuable classroom experience. Ninety-seven percent of students who participated in this Pathways to Teaching partnership stayed in Georgia, and 95 percent were still practicing teachers 10 years after university graduation.⁹

Strategies for Recruiting a Diverse Teacher Workforce



- ▶ **Retain high-quality teachers by supporting their needs.** Keys to retaining highly capable teachers include, but are not limited to, the following¹⁰:
 - **Welcoming diverse perspectives and experiences** (for example, allowing teachers to use different instructional strategies that are rooted in cultural background).
 - **Facilitating relevant professional development** (for example, providing online professional development courses for teachers in remote locations).
 - **Providing competitive salaries.**
 - **Improving access to useful instructional resources** (for example, providing teachers with links to museums, library collections, and other cultural institutions that can inform lesson planning).

Ask A REL Responses

Want to learn more about strategies to improve educator diversity? Check out the full Ask A REL reference desk responses from REL Southwest:

- ▶ [Strategies for increasing educator diversity.](#)
- ▶ [Strategies for increasing high schoolers' interest in teaching.](#)

If you have questions about education research, [submit them](#) to the REL program's Ask A REL reference desk! You can also [browse archived REL Southwest responses](#) to see what the research says about previous education research questions.

Additional Resources

Districts can use their state education agencies' equity plans to inform equitable teacher supports and retention efforts. For more information about recruiting and retaining a diverse group of educators, please visit the following resources from the REL Network:

- ▶ [Understanding field experiences in traditional teacher preparation programs in Missouri](#) (REL Central report).
- ▶ [Grow your own: Fostering a diverse teacher workforce in Missouri](#) (REL Central infographic).
- ▶ [Teacher demographics and evaluation: A descriptive study in a large urban district](#) (REL Northeast & Islands report).
- ▶ [Indicators of successful teacher recruitment and retention in Oklahoma rural school district](#) (REL Southwest report).
 - Check out the related [infographic](#) and [archived webinar](#).
- ▶ [Opportunities for teacher professional development in Oklahoma rural and nonrural schools](#) (REL Southwest report).
- ▶ [A more diverse teaching force may improve educational outcomes for minority students](#) (REL Mid-Atlantic infographic).

References

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- ³ National Center on Education Statistics. (2013). *Schools and staffing survey*. Retrieved April 17, 2019, from https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass1112_2013314_t1s_001.asp.
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- ⁶ Zuber, T., & Berg-Jacobson, A. (2017). *Diversifying the teacher workforce through Grow Your Own: A snapshot of three programs*. Retrieved March 28, 2019, from <https://gtlcenter.org/blog/diversifying-teacher-workforce-through-grow-your-own-snapshot-three-programs>.
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- ¹⁰ Moyer-Packenham, P. S., Parker, J. L., Kitsantas, A., Bolyard, J. J., & Huie, F. (2009). Increasing the diversity of teachers in mathematics and science partnerships. *Journal of Educational Research & Policy Studies*, 9(2), 43–72. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ896283>