

Diversifying the Teacher Workforce: Promising Strategies from the Regional Educational Laboratories and Comprehensive Centers

Regional Educational Laboratory Program

Why Focus on Diversifying the Teacher Workforce?

Diversifying the teacher workforce—that is, increasing the share of teachers who have the same racial/ethnic and linguistic backgrounds as the students they teach—is a high priority for the states and districts that the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) partner with and for education systems nationwide. The policy priority to diversify the teacher workforce is motivated by evidence that students of color experience better academic and behavioral outcomes when they are taught by teachers of color.¹



Promising Strategies for Supporting Teacher Diversity

Research has identified a variety of promising strategies for enhancing teacher diversity, ranging from recruitment strategies (such as recruiting individuals to teach in the communities where they attended school) to retention strategies (such as culturally responsive mentoring).

This infographic provides a snapshot of resources available from the RELs and Comprehensive Centers that discuss examples of ways to implement these promising strategies. These examples are just some of the many implementation considerations that education leaders and researchers are actively exploring.



Recruiting teacher candidates into preparation programs

Actively recruit from diverse populations—including people who live in the same communities as the schools that seek teachers—to enter teacher preparation programs



Implementation considerations

- Identify venues, such as luncheons for high school students or presentations for college Black Studies courses, at which to recruit students of color or bilingual students.^{2,3,4,5}
- Identify paraprofessionals of color or bilingual staff already employed by districts who could enter teaching, such as by leveraging districts' personnel systems.^{5,6}
- Pair high school students who are interested in teaching with mentors of the same race/ethnicity who can help them develop skills for teaching.⁷



Preparing and certifying teacher candidates

Provide substantial academic, social, and skill development supports

Implementation considerations

- Provide supports that can help strengthen candidates' ability to complete certification requirements, such as tutoring and test preparation.^{2,5,6,7,8}
- Provide supports that can help candidates balance demands of work, academics, and family, such as mentors and peer networks.^{2,5,6,7,8,9}
- Help candidates continue to work while taking courses, such as by offering flexible classes held after work hours or on weekends.²
- Provide opportunities for candidates to work extensively with mentors to develop teaching skills before leading their own classrooms, such as teacher residencies.^{10,11}



Lower financial barriers to completing preparation programs

Implementation considerations

- Offer financial supports, such as fee waivers, tuition grants, and assistance in applying for scholarships.^{2,4,5,8,9,12,13}



Hiring teachers into districts and schools

Expand applicant pool to reach diverse candidates

Implementation considerations

- Publicize vacancies early to allow ample time for disseminating information about vacancies to teachers of color.⁷
- Develop relationships between school districts and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) so HBCU graduates are connected to the professional networks from which districts recruit.¹³

Implement inclusive hiring practices that prioritize attracting and selecting a diverse applicant pool for teaching vacancies

Implementation considerations

- Avoid bias in selecting applicants, such as by training staff involved in hiring on recognizing and addressing implicit bias.^{7,14}
- Avoid relying exclusively on traditional selection criteria (experience, certifications, etc.) that may disadvantage candidates of color, and include additional criteria such as performance tasks.⁷



Make accepting a position financially attractive for lower-income applicants

Implementation considerations

- Consider what financial incentives could make a position appealing to lower-income applicants, such as loan forgiveness and signing bonuses.¹⁴



Supporting teachers on the job



Provide high-quality induction and mentoring

Implementation considerations

- Offer a comprehensive system of supports for new teachers, such as orientation, mentoring, opportunities to learn in cohorts, common planning time, and supportive communication from school leaders.^{15,16,17}

Create affinity groups, or venues where teachers of color discuss their experiences and provide mutual support

Implementation considerations

- Bring together teachers of color from multiple schools or districts to reduce isolation of teachers of color whose colleagues are predominantly white.¹²
- Sustain leadership of affinity groups, such as by compensating affinity group leaders.¹²

Provide supportive school leadership that fosters a positive professional climate

Implementation considerations

- Implement school leadership approaches that enable teachers to feel well-supported, such as offering job-embedded professional development and providing time for teachers to interact with leaders and collaborate with colleagues.^{2,7,17}

Endnotes

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- ³ Motamedi, J. G., Petrokubi, J., Yoon, S. Y., & Leong, M. (2022). *Strategies for designing, implementing, and evaluating grow-your-own teacher programs for secondary students*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Region/northwest/Resource/100767>
- ⁴ REL Central (2019). *Diversifying and Widening the Teacher Pipeline with Grow Your Own Programs*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, Regional Educational Laboratory Central. Retrieved May 22, 2023, from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Region/central/Event/952>.
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- ⁹ Motamedi, J. G., Petrokubi, J., Yoon, S. Y., & Leong, M. (2022). *Strategies for designing, implementing, and evaluating grow-your-own teacher programs for secondary students*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/northwest/pdf/strategies-for-secondary-students.pdf>
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- ¹⁷ REL Midwest. (2021). Recruitment and retention materials to support district administrators in Michigan. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, Regional Educational Laboratory. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Region/midwest/Resource/100631>

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