Diversifying The Teacher Workforce:
RESEARCH AND STRATEGIES

IES **Institute of Education Sciences**

Why is racial diversity in the teacher workforce important?

Research has shown that having a racially diverse teacher workforce has social and emotional and academic benefits for **all students.**[i] In particular, students of color taught by teachers of color have:

Improved attendance and behavioral outcomes[ii]

"Improved reading and mathematics achievement"[iii]

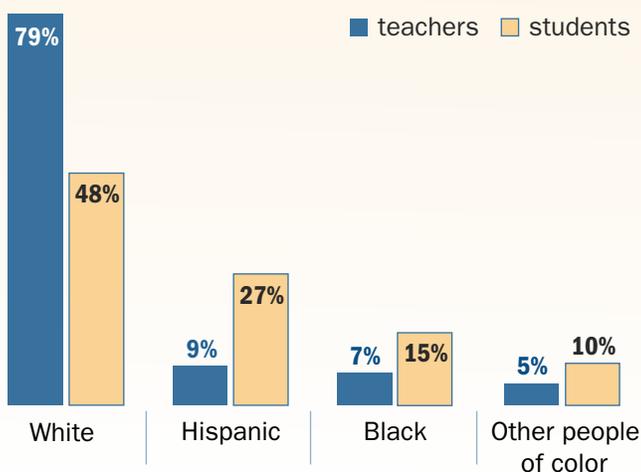**Improved high school graduation and college enrollment**[iv]

> " Many teachers of color report feeling called to teach in low-income communities of color, positions that are often difficult to fill. **Indeed, three in four teachers of color work in the quarter of schools serving the most students of color nationally.** Teachers of color play an important role in filling gaps in these schools, and whether they decide to remain in teaching has significant impacts on students of color.[v] "
>
> — **Desiree Carver-Thomas,** *Learning Policy Institute* —

Teacher diversity: What are the key issues?

Despite the known benefits of a diverse workforce, the public school teacher workforce doesn't reflect the diversity in the student body.[vi]

Percentage distribution of teachers and students in public schools by race/ethnicity in the U.S. • 2017/18

■ teachers ■ students

Race/ethnicity	teachers	students
White	79%	48%
Hispanic	9%	27%
Black	7%	15%
Other people of color	5%	10%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Growing and sustaining a diverse workforce can be difficult because teachers of color often face barriers to both entering and staying in the profession. Research has indicated some concerns about barriers to teachers of color entering the profession, including that teacher licensure requirements may limit the diversity of the teacher workforce.[vii] In schools, teachers of color may have to navigate unfavorable working conditions in which they may feel undervalued and isolated.[viii]

What does this mean for state policy?

As states strive to meet their own teacher workforce diversification goals, states may want to consider analyzing their teacher workforce pipeline data to identify needs and challenge areas. States may also consider implementing promising strategies, such as the ones highlighted on page 2, to address the barriers teachers of color face as they enter and navigate the teacher workforce.

Promising strategies for diversifying the teacher workforce

☑ Consider the role of teacher licensure exams

Passing a standardized teacher licensure test is a requirement for teacher certification in almost every state.[ix] "Basic skills" exams aim to assess a teacher candidate's knowledge in general math, reading, and writing. Subject matter exams aim to assess a candidate's specific knowledge. **Some research has indicated no association between performance on teacher basic skills tests and student outcomes,**[x] **whereas other research has reported consistent but marginal relationships between teacher test scores and student outcomes mostly in math.**[xi] However, studies of teacher licensure exams have indicated that for various reasons, teachers of color are less likely to pass the exams than White teachers and are less likely to retake the exams after the first exam.[xii] This finding suggests the need to carefully consider the role of teacher licensure exams as a potential barrier to diversifying the teacher workforce.

> **Black and other minority students appear to benefit from being matched with a Black teacher regardless of how well or poorly that teacher performed on the [licensure exam], and these positive effects due to matching with Black teachers are comparable in magnitude to having the highest performing White teachers in the classroom. Removing the lowest of performers on the exam would necessarily remove some of the teachers that appear to be most effective for this segment of the student population.**[xiii]
>
> **Dan Goldhaber**
> *American Institutes for Research*

☑ Provide new teachers with culturally responsive supports

Culturally responsive mentoring and induction supports can help lessen the isolation often experienced by beginning teachers of color and can help schools create environments to better support and retain a diverse teacher workforce.[xiv] Mentoring support from school administrators also is related to a reduction in teacher attrition—especially the attrition of teachers of color.[xv]

> Some strategies to help districts build culturally responsive supports for new teachers include creating mentorships between experienced and early career teachers of color and hiring teachers of color in cohorts to reduce their social and professional isolation.[xvi]

☑ Improve working conditions for teachers of color

Teachers of color leave schools at higher rates than White teachers; this higher attrition is strongly associated with poor working conditions in their schools.[xvii] Teachers of color may have to navigate school cultures and climates where they feel excluded and unsupported.[xviii] Fostering supportive and inclusive working conditions in schools may improve the retention of teachers of color.[xix]

> Strategies to help districts improve working conditions for teachers of color include creating an affinity space for race and culture, connecting teachers of color with support through high-quality and culturally proficient mentorship programs, and providing school leaders cultural proficiency training to help them create inclusive environments.[xx]

Watch our video: Creating inclusive workplaces for Black teachers
https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/videos/inclusive-workplaces-for-black-teachers.aspx

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