TO ACHIEVE EQUITY, BUILD A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

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Increasing the racial diversity of the teaching workforce is an urgent priority. Policymakers and educators are advocating for more people of color in teaching and leadership positions.

We at the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center) agree racial diversity is paramount for building a more equitable education system. The GTL Center, operated by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), works with states and districts to examine and improve workforce diversity and equitable access to teachers using evidence-based talent management strategies.

We ask the tough questions: Do students who need effective and diverse teachers the most have access to them? Does the workforce reflect the diversity of the school or district's student population? Often, the answer is no.

Students from low-income backgrounds and students of color often attend schools with inexperienced or ineffective teachers. They also attend schools where the teacher demographics do not match the diversity of the student population.

WHY TEACHER DIVERSITY MATTERS

Research shows that establishing a diverse workforce is key to closing student achievement and opportunity gaps. Teachers who are of the same race as their students are especially suited to understand students' cultural experiences and, therefore, are likely to employ instructional practices responsive to cultural strengths (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). A diverse workforce is associated with improved academic outcomes on standardized tests, attendance, retention, advanced-level course enrollment, graduation rates, and college-entrance rates for students of color (Villegas & Davis, 2008; Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

The benefits of teacher workforce

Professional learning programs and systems play a critical role in making classrooms and schools more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. Education leaders can revise initiatives, policies, promotion criteria, and leadership selection protocols to better serve teachers and students and prioritize racial diversity, equity, and inclusion.

diversification are not limited to students of color. White students benefit from seeing teachers and leaders of color in their classrooms and schools. Students tend to give these teachers high ratings in surveys, noting that they feel both cared for and academically challenged by these teachers (Carver-Thomas, 2018).

Teachers of color more frequently use culturally relevant instructional practices and have a greater likelihood of addressing racism and bias in their classrooms, which better prepares all students for a diverse world (Grissom & Redding, 2016).

Yet across the U.S., the racial disparities between teachers and students are striking. More than half of the students in U.S. public schools are students of color (51%), while only 20% of teachers are people of color. Compared with a U.S. population of about 40% people of color, this is a disproportionately low percentage (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; Taie & Goldring, 2017). Similarly, the gap between the percentage of Latinx teachers and students is larger than for any other racial or ethnic group (Carver-Thomas, 2018).

While the population of teachers of color is growing overall, the population of Black and Native American teachers is a declining share of the teacher workforce. Although schools have started thinking more about diversity in their hiring practices in recent years (Bond et al., 2015), the lack of diversity is still troubling.

There is growing recognition that the ratio of teachers of color to students of color is linked to the proportion of leaders of color. For example, D'Amico and colleagues (2017) revealed that Black teachers were not likely to be hired in equal or greater proportions to white teachers in any context. Moreover, Black teachers were less likely to receive job offers from white principals or from schools with large white student populations.

Instead, they were more likely to be hired in schools with a larger number of Black students, students living in poverty, or a Black principal. Furthermore, promotion systems often overlook teachers of color for positions of leadership in professional learning, coaching, and curriculum design (Griffin & Tackie, 2016).

ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES

Hiring more teachers of color may seem like a simple, straightforward solution to addressing these racial disparities. However, simply resolving to hire more diverse candidates will not address systemic problems.

For example, college graduates of color have, on average, higher levels of student debt than white graduates (Scott-Clayton & Li, 2016), and the low pay of starting teacher salaries may be a significant deterrent to teaching.

Furthermore, hiring quotas will not

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS IN TEACHING

Teaching has not always been a white woman's field. Before Brown v. Board of Education, 82,000 African American educators were responsible for the education of some 2 million African American learners.

Tillman's (2004) review of Brown v. Board of Education clarified that the ruling inadvertently led to more than 38,000 African American educators in the 17 Southern and border states being terminated from their positions as a result of "integration." There were also significant declines in candidates entering the profession — a 66% drop from 1975 to 1985.

With new requirements around certification and preparation program admission standards put into place in the 1980s, an additional 21,000 Black teachers were displaced. By 2001, African American teachers represented 6% of the public school teaching force, despite African American students representing 17% of the student population.

address the disproportionate attrition of teachers of color in their first years, nor the isolation and invisible tax teachers of color face when they enter classrooms (King & Darling-Hammond, 2018). We have entrenched historical inequities in workforce policies, conditions, and trends, especially in underserved schools, that will not be quick or simple to reverse (see sidebar on p. 25).

As systems aim to advance diversity in the teacher workforce, they must also address systemic inequities across the career continuum — from attracting students of color into the profession, to preparing them for the classroom, and then developing, supporting, and retaining them in the profession. How can we change our systems not just to recruit more teachers of color, but also to dismantle the inequitable and exclusionary practices that push teachers of color out of classrooms in the first place?

The workforce is shaped by a collection of decisions, requirements, mandates, and practices, all of which serve to attract, prepare, and retain some teachers and deter others. The GTL Center's Talent Development Framework illustrates this complex continuum (see figure above), denoting intersecting elements of the teacher pipeline that influence who applies, enters, and remains in classrooms.

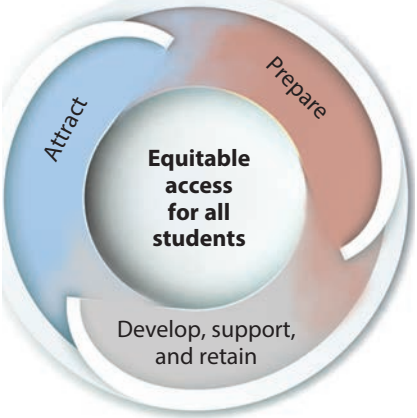
Professional learning programs and systems play a critical role in making classrooms and schools more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. Education leaders can revise initiatives, policies, promotion criteria, and leadership selection protocols to better serve teachers and students and prioritize racial diversity, equity, and inclusion.

What follows are several programs that address systemic inequities across the stages of the career continuum and build diversity within the educator workforce through more equitable and inclusionary practices.

ATTRACT:
Recruiting candidates of color

Teacher residencies have been

TALENT DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



cited as the "best way to recruit, prepare, and retain diverse, culturally responsive teachers who teach students of color and low-income students" (Bonner-Reed et al., 2020). According to the National Center for Teacher Residencies, 62% of residents identify as people of color, compared to 21% nationally (National Center for Teacher Residencies, 2018).

Furthermore, residencies have higher teacher retention rates. After three years, 86% of residents are still teaching in the same school, compared to 50% of new teachers in urban districts.

In 2020, the National Center for Teacher Residencies started an initiative to prepare 750 Black educators through 14 residency programs over a five-year period. The goal is to recruit, prepare, and retain Black educators in school districts with high concentrations of Black students.

This initiative includes a comprehensive set of responsive practices to mitigate common barriers facing Black educators. Supports include mentoring and induction, professional learning, mental health and social-emotional learning, and emergency funds.

PREPARE:
Addressing inequitable barriers to entering the profession

Teacher licensure exams disproportionately create barriers for teacher candidates of color despite little evidence that these exams predict teacher effectiveness (Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010; Petchauser, 2012). Multiple states recognize licensure exams as exclusionary practices and developed programs to offer a variety of pathways toward licensure.

For example, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the Mississippi Department of Education have enacted alternative or new performance-based licensure structures throughout their states that offer an equitable approach to expanding access to teachers.

New pathways enable educators to pursue licensure while receiving ongoing professional learning supports. These programs recognize the value of demonstrated success in helping students succeed on high-stakes tests and illustrate that value through alternative pathways.

DEVELOP, SUPPORT, AND RETAIN:
Hiring practices and mentoring

Promoting racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in hiring practices is essential, even though it is not sufficient. Some districts and states are examining data about their current workforce to recognize and redress gaps.

For example, the Connecticut Department of Education, in collaboration with the GTL Center, examined hiring practices statewide. After a four-session series on culturally responsive hiring practices facilitated by center content experts, the state developed a guidance document to support districts in responding to a new policy (Public Act No. 18-34) that prioritized the recruitment and retention of teachers of color. Connecticut's guidance resulted in a requirement that all districts have a teacher recruitment plan that prioritizes racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in hiring practices.

To address the disproportionate levels of attrition among new teachers of color, states and districts can also

prioritize building mentors' capacity to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in induction programs. Through the GTL Center's partnership with the Ohio Department of Education, the state recognizes the value of supporting mentors as they build their knowledge and skills toward equitable and inclusive mentoring practices.

Since working with the GTL Center, the Ohio Department of Education started working to revise its Resident Educator Program to more adequately address systemic inequities in education as well as the diversification of the teaching workforce.

The work started with using the GTL Center's Insights on Diversifying the Educator Workforce Data Tool to measure, analyze, and visualize existing educator workforce diversity gaps across the educator career continuum and at the state, district, school, and Educator Preparation Program levels.

Following this analysis, the Ohio Department of Education team worked with the GTL Center to use a modified version of the center's Root Cause Analysis Workbook to consult with educators and other stakeholders to identify the underlying root causes for identified gaps.

Next, the team linked identified root causes with evidence-based, high-impact strategies, like mentoring and induction. While the work is still underway, the state is in the process of developing guidance to mentors to support them in their work with beginning teachers from a variety of diverse backgrounds and identities.

The work aims to build on mentor standards that focus on deepening and maintaining equity principles and culturally responsive pedagogy, cultivating relational trust, caring, mutual respect and honesty, and advancing equitable, inclusive instruction through the application of equity and culturally responsive teaching.

These examples illustrate that diversifying the workforce is a complex endeavor that requires more than creating hiring quotas. These changes are only successful and sustainable when systemic barriers across all points of the career continuum are removed.

For more information and resources, visit **gtlcenter.org.**

IMPLEMENTATION

In our work with states, we first take stock of the local, immediate, and historic contexts. Based on what is revealed, we address racial disparities with our Insights on Diversifying the Educator Workforce Data Tool for Practitioners. Yet we know the work doesn't stop there. Often, it is the programs, cultures, and policies that need to be addressed and refined with the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

To that end, the center created a guide called the READI Framework that recognizes that the districts and schools that most need equitable programs, like those highlighted above, are often least likely to adopt and implement them successfully — a phenomenon we call the "needs paradox." The needs paradox is amplified when states or districts overlook underserved schools because of their perceived lack of readiness.

To address the needs paradox, we ask critical questions about resource deficiencies, educator supports, accountability requirements, disparities in working conditions, and the implementation capacity of staff. These questions surface and assess how well programs are designed to target the specific needs of underserved schools and help states and districts rethink their programs with the lens of equity.

At the GTL Center, we help state education agencies think about how the programs they set up for all schools or all students may unintentionally be exclusionary, especially for the most underserved.

For example, a tuition aid program may be intended to help everyone enroll in higher education, but, in reality, often only the wealthy, white students take advantage of the program due to the foundational requirements and access to program information because of their social networks. In this case, the program designed for all is perpetrating a continuous cycle of inequity. The READI Framework drives us to infuse equity at the center of program design.

Diversity is an essential step that requires a broad look at policies and practices across the educator career continuum. While we embrace the movement toward diversification of the teaching workforce and the benefits of doing so, we also acknowledge how limited our focus is if we look at racial parity without recognizing the built-in barriers to success that inequitable systems create.

The sustainable efforts of diversifying our teaching workforce require a model that also prioritizes equity and inclusion. The challenges at hand will not be remedied by changing statistics alone.

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