

Your Question:

You asked for information about diversifying the teacher workforce.

Our Response:

This response is broken up into six sections: (1) why diversifying the teacher workforce is important, (2) barriers to diversifying the teacher workforce, (3) recruitment strategies, (4) retention strategies and (5) state policies and programs for teachers of color.

Why Diversifying the Teacher Workforce Is Important

Generally, a diverse teacher workforce that is more reflective of student demographics provides important benefits. [Research shows](#) that teachers of color have positive effects on all students' academic performance but especially for students of color. Students also experience nonacademic benefits from having teachers of color. [Recent studies provide evidence to support](#) theories that students with teachers of similar demographics face higher expectations, have relatable role models and may receive instruction in a more culturally relevant way. [Research also suggests](#) that early exposure to same-race teachers can raise long-run educational attainment and thus is not limited to short-term impacts.

Data from the National Center for Education Statistics show that the [percentages of teachers of color](#) have slightly increased from approximately 17% in 1999-2000 to 19% in 2015-16. Yet the [percentages of students of color](#) have grown to account for just over half of the students in elementary and secondary schools.

Even though research points to beneficial impacts of having teachers of similar demographics to the students in their classrooms, data show a [persistent gap](#) between percentages of teachers of color and percentages of students of color.

Barriers to Diversifying the Teacher Workforce

Recruitment and retention trends

In [this September 2016 brief](#), researchers Richard Ingersoll and Henry May use data from the National Center for Education Statistics' Schools and Staffing Survey to examine the extent and sources of the teachers of color shortage — the low proportion of teachers of color in comparison to the increasing number of students of color in the school system. They found:

- **On recruitment:** Efforts over recent decades to recruit more teachers of color and place them in “disadvantaged schools” have been successful. The number of teachers of color has more than doubled since the late 1980s. Growth in the number of teachers of color outpaced growth in the number of students of color and was over twice the growth rate of white teachers. Even as the size of the teaching force has grown, the proportion of the teaching force that is people of color has increased steadily — from 12% to over 17%.
- **On retention:** Teachers of color are often recruited to schools where turnover is highest — those that serve large percentages of students of color and students from low-income households. Teachers of color are two to three times more likely to work in these schools than white teachers. Recruitment efforts have been undermined by the high turnover rates of teachers of color. Teachers of color leave their schools at higher rates than white teachers largely because of poor working conditions in their schools.

- **On working conditions:** The conditions most strongly related to turnover among teachers of color were the degree of teachers' classroom autonomy and input in school decisions.

The authors conclude that retention initiatives should be developed alongside recruitment initiatives.

Preparation and licensure barriers

Teachers of color [face barriers](#) entering into educator preparation programs and may [further be exposed to inadequate preparation](#) and support during their educator training. Additionally, licensing exams may hinder the licensure of teachers of color. A [national analysis](#) of more than 300,000 Praxis test-takers, who completed the assessment between 2005 and 2009, found a 41.4% pass rate gap between black and white test-takers in math and a 40.8% pass rate gap between black and white test-takers in reading. [Some early evidence](#) suggests [smaller pass rate gaps](#) on teacher performance-based assessments (such as the edTPA). There is no national cut score for licensure exams, resulting in [variation](#) in cut scores across states. While higher cut scores can pose barriers for teacher candidates of color, [one study](#) found that raising cut scores in one state would eliminate more effective teachers than ineffective teachers and would not improve teacher quality.

Despite these obstacles, [many argue](#) that increasing the selectivity and diversity in the teaching workforce can be done in parallel.

Recruitment Strategies

There are various strategies underway for improving the recruitment of teachers of color. This includes leveraging reporting and data, providing financial investments and expanding preparation pathways.

Reporting and data

- Require teacher preparation programs to publicly report information on teacher candidate outcomes, disaggregated by race.
- Ensure schools and districts publicly report on the race and ethnicity of their teachers.

Financial investments

- Reduce the cost of attaining certification, both through traditional pathways and alternative pathways).
- Invest in and support high-quality teacher education programs at historically black colleges and universities, tribal colleges, and public colleges and universities serving large numbers of students of color.
- Provide grant funding for evidence-based recruitment plans and implementation.
- Provide loan forgiveness and/or scholarship programs to support future teachers of color.
- Improve compensation packages to attract talented people of color into the teaching profession.
- Use spending flexibilities under the Every Student Succeeds Act to support differentiated learning opportunities for teachers of color.

Preparation pathways

- Increase the pipeline of teachers of color by increasing the college readiness and high school graduation rates of these students.
- Develop a comprehensive system of incentives and supports for recruiting and supporting prospective teacher candidates of color from high school through college.
- Create career ladders for educational aides and paraprofessionals seeking to become teachers.
- Organize teacher preparation programs to support the unique needs of teachers of color.

- Expand high-quality alternative certification programs, particularly those focused on increasing teacher diversity.

Retention Strategies

Retaining teachers of color is an important concern for policymakers, given the potential for positive effects for students who have teachers of color and the research demonstrating that teachers of color are more likely to move schools or exit the profession. Research supports several retention strategies for teachers of color including creating innovative preparation programs, supporting improvements to working conditions, offering differentiated professional development and improving school leadership diversity.

Innovative preparation programs

- [Research](#) from 2010 indicates that a handful of innovative preparation programs that explicitly prepare and support teachers of color to work in urban schools have contributed to retention rates that are significantly higher than those for the overall teacher workforce. However, more research is needed to verify the impact of these programs and to specify the program characteristics that contribute to the retention of teachers of color.

Improved working conditions

- [Research](#) has identified the benefits of early and ongoing supports for all teachers. Induction, mentoring and professional development can be targeted to the specific needs of teachers of color.
- In their [2016 study](#) on teacher of color shortages, Ingersoll and May find that poor working conditions are a key contributor to turnover. [Working conditions](#), especially “the level of collective faculty decision-making influence in the school and the degree of individual instructional autonomy held by teachers in their classrooms,” may be strong factors influencing teachers’ choice to remain at a school.

Differentiated professional development

- According to [one researcher](#), candidates of color could benefit from differentiated professional development that responds to the experiences teachers of color face. Some models of continuous improvement initiatives for teachers of color have been developed in [Boston](#) and [California](#).

School leadership diversity

- Studies suggest that same-race school leadership can [improve job satisfaction, reduce turnover and increase the hiring of teachers of color](#).

State Policies and Programs for Teachers of Color

Programs

The Council of Chief State School Officers recently released a report, [A Vision and Guidance for a Diverse and Learner-Ready Teacher Workforce](#), which includes recommendations to better support teachers, particularly teachers of color (pp. 17-18). One recommendation suggests state education agencies can leverage federal funding to support education preparatory providers and local education agencies. States like **North Carolina** and **Tennessee** have received federal grants funded through [Title II Part A](#) of the Higher Education Act. Tennessee received \$100,000 to fund Diversity Innovation Implementation Grants in districts looking to increase the number of teachers of color (CCSSO, p. 27). In North Carolina, the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University created a teacher residency program using [Teacher Quality Program](#) grants, also funded through Title II Part A, to build a diverse cohort of high-quality teachers to work in rural areas (see below report from Learning Policy Institute, p. 20).

A report by the Learning Policy Institute, [Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color](#), notes there is a strong correlation between financial incentives and teacher diversity. The report highlights grant programs in **Minnesota** and **North Carolina** that have had success in recruiting more teachers of color (p. 18).

[California’s School Paraprofessional Teacher Training Program](#) (funded from 1995 through 2011) provides an example of the effectiveness of grow-your-own programs in growing and retaining a more diverse teaching force: 65 percent of the program’s participants were people of color and bilingual. By its 13th year of operation, sponsors reported that of the 1,708 program graduates, 92 percent had remained California public school employees. In 2016 and 2017, California invested \$45 million in a revived version of the program, the [California Classified School Employee Teacher Credentialing Program](#), which is training 2,250 classified staff members — typically paraprofessionals — to become teachers. More than half of new program participants are Latinx or black.

State Policies

In recent years, states have passed a variety of policies aimed at improving the recruitment and retention of teachers of color. A [50-State Comparison on Teacher Recruitment and Retention](#) by Education Commission of the States found that at least 11 states (**Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Oregon, Tennessee, Virginia and Wisconsin**) have at least one financial incentive program (typically in the form of a scholarship) for recruiting teachers of color. Some states — such as **Alaska, Nevada and West Virginia** — have financial incentive programs for recruiting teachers more generally and prioritize applicants who are teachers of color.

The following are other examples of state policies related to this issue:

- **Colorado** enacted [legislation](#) in 2014 to conduct a [study](#) and to develop strategies to improve the recruitment, preparation, development and retention of high-quality teachers of color.
- **Connecticut** passed [legislation](#) in 2015 to study and develop strategies to increase recruitment and retention of teachers of color. [Legislation](#) in 2016 created a teacher pathways pilot program with state universities, targeting high school students of color. Other [legislation](#) in 2016 required an annual survey of the efficacy of recruitment programs for teachers of color and made some changes to competency exams and alternative certification programs. In 2018, the state passed more [legislation](#) to take steps to increase recruitment and retention by establishing partnerships, monitoring innovative methods and supporting educator preparation programs that commit to enrolling more teachers of color.
- **Florida** passed [legislation](#) in 2017 that allows individuals seeking a master’s degree with a major in education leading to initial certification to participate in the Minority Teacher Education Scholars Program.
- **Illinois** [expanded](#) the Minority Teachers of Illinois Scholarship Program in 2017 to allow current teachers seeking an additional endorsement or master’s degree to participate in the program.
- **Minnesota** passed [legislation](#) in 2017 that, among other things, amended the alternative teacher professional pay system to provide (1) hiring bonuses or added compensation for effective teachers and for teachers who work in high-need positions or hard-to-staff schools, (2) incentives for teachers to obtain credits required for teaching concurrent enrollment or college, or (3) funding for a grow-your-own new teacher initiative. It also added economic development regions where there is a shortage of teachers of color to the definition of “teacher shortage area” and expanded teacher shortage loan forgiveness program eligibility to include teachers of color.
- **New Mexico** [changed](#) the Teacher Loan Repayment Act to more specifically target the types of high-need teachers who qualify for the program. High priority is required to be given to specified applicants, including those who are Native American.
- **Oregon** has enacted [legislation](#) requiring a report on the Educators Equity Act and for it to include recommendations for meeting the state’s recruitment goals for teachers of color, in addition to best practices. The state also eliminated the requirement of a Basic Skills Test for teacher licensure and released the [Educator Equity Report](#) with policy recommendations addressing the recruitment and retention of teachers of color. Previous [legislation](#) included requirements on data and reporting for this issue. In 2017, the

state [established](#) the Educator Advancement Council to provide resources related to educator professional learning and other educator supports. It specifically required the Chief Education Office to (1) conduct research to monitor teaching and learning conditions and workforce supply and demand, (2) support a plan for increasing the supply of culturally diverse candidates, and (3) recruit effective teachers to work in high-need schools and subject areas.

- **Rhode island** passed [legislation](#) in 2016 that requires the Rhode Island Board of Education to direct the Council on Postsecondary Education — in conjunction with the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College and the University of Rhode Island — to develop strategies to increase the recruitment of teacher preparation students of color in an effort to increase diversity in the teaching profession.
- **Washington** passed [legislation](#) in 2017 to allow for the funding and administration of the Bilingual Educator Initiative to recruit, prepare and mentor bilingual high school students to become future bilingual teachers and counselors. The state also [adopted](#) policies and procedures in 2016 to implement the recommendations of the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee, including investing in the recruitment, hiring and retention of educators of color.
- **Wisconsin** passed [legislation](#) in 2015 making changes to the Minority Teacher Loan Program. Among other things, it increased the student loan amount so that students may be awarded loans of up to \$10,000 a year for up to three years and sets a maximum loan amount of \$30,000 per student. (Previously students could receive loans of up to \$2,500 per year with a maximum cumulative loan amount of \$5,000.) It also specified that a loan recipient may have the principal and interest forgiven if the recipient satisfies a set of prescribed conditions.