

POLICY ISSUE BRIEF: EDUCATOR DIVERSITY

Issue at a Glance

In the 2020–21 school year, only 20% of public school teachers identified as individuals of color, which is a 2% increase from a similar survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education in 2011. That same year, 23% of public school principals were individuals of color, including 10% who identified as Black and 9% who identified as Hispanic. Recent reports also indicate that 40% of America's schools do not employ even one teacher of color, meaning that many students are taught and led by educators who do not share similar backgrounds or experiences.

Students of color made up 55% of public school students nationwide in 2022, and the National Center for Education Statistics predicts this population will increase to 57% by 2031. Research finds that students of color benefit in many ways from having diverse teachers, including serving as role models. Educators of color are also more likely to challenge racial and ethnic stereotypes, build trusting relationships with family members, encourage student engagement, and have higher expectations for students of color—all of which results in higher test scores, participation in advanced courses, graduation rates, and college persistence and retention for students of color. Research also shows that teachers from diverse backgrounds and experiences can benefit all students, regardless of race, to succeed in an increasingly global society.

National Principals Association Position

- There is a lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the educator workforce in many schools across the country, and policymakers need to act and invest in educator recruitment and retention, and preparation programs which encourage individuals from diverse populations to enter the teaching and school leadership professions.
- National Principals Association supports the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) which state that effective leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
- School leaders are in the best position to create a culture that values teachers of color and provides the ongoing mentorship and support that will help them have long and successful careers as educators.

Recommendations for Federal Policymakers

- Congress should fully fund Title II, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which provides resources for states and districts to strengthen teacher and principal preparation programs; reform educator certification and licensure requirements; develop career advancement initiatives for teachers; and offer professional learning opportunities for teachers and school leaders.
- Through the Civil Rights Data Collection, collect and report annual data on the race, ethnicity, gender or gender identity, and sexual orientation of teachers and school leaders in all public schools and the enrollment and completion rates for candidates of underrepresented populations in teacher and leader preparation programs to identify gaps in retention strategies.
- Increase funding and support for Historically Black Colleges and Universities; Hispanic-Serving Institutions; Tribal Colleges and Universities; Alaska Native and Hawaiian-Serving Institutions; Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions; and Native American-Serving, Nontribal Institutions, including teacher and leader preparation programs provided through these institutions.
- Increase award amounts and technical support for the TEACH grant program, maintain the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program, and explore other financial incentives to address college affordability challenges for teacher and leader candidates of color.
- Reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA) and ensure that teacher preparation programs include strong clinical training, rigorous requirements and training for mentors, and ongoing mentoring and support for new educators, which research shows increase educator retention and effectiveness; and incentivize the development of teacher and leader residency programs to provide a full year of clinical training in a partner district.
- Require teacher preparation programs that receive funding under ESSA or HEA to demonstrate that graduates have developed the skills to create inclusive and culturally and linguistically responsive classrooms and school environments that address the social, emotional, and academic needs of their students.
- Develop a federal campaign to promote the education profession and encourage more individuals of color to become teachers and principals.

Recommendations for State Policymakers

- Adopt or adapt the PSEL to ensure that principal certification and licensure requirements include a focus on equity and cultural responsiveness.
- Use the allowable 3% reservation of Title II funds under ESSA to strengthen the content of school leader preparation programs and professional development opportunities for principals, including through partnerships with nonprofit organizations, to develop cultural competencies and learn how to effectively lead schools in diverse contexts.
- Increase funding and support for high-quality education programs at state colleges and universities that serve large numbers of students of color.
- Encourage teacher preparation programs to create degree articulation agreements with community colleges and minority serving institutions that offer two-year degrees.

- Assist minority-serving institutions in creating, expanding, and sustaining their education programs to offer four-year degrees and graduate-level courses.
- Offer scholarships, loan forgiveness, and other financial incentives to attract diverse, high-achieving candidates to teacher and school leader preparation programs.
- Enact incentive programs and increase funding for recruitment and retention of school leaders of color.

Recommendations for District Leaders

- Publicly share data about the percentage of school leaders and teachers of color compared to the district's population to identify gaps in recruitment and retention strategies.
- Establish interview quotas and hiring goals and offer professional development opportunities for district staff to ensure that district hiring practices eliminate racial bias and discrimination through transparent and explicit hiring criteria, advertisements of job openings to diverse communities, and an interview and selection process that begins in the spring.
- Establish partnerships with minority-serving institutions, other institutions of higher education that serve a large number of minority students, local civil rights organizations, and other community institutions to recruit diverse teacher candidates.
- Design career ladders and financial assistance opportunities to encourage and support paraprofessionals, educational aides, after-school staff, and other district staff to become teachers.
- Offer incentives for high school graduates to return as teachers after receiving the appropriate credentials and preparation.
- Ensure that early-stage teachers of color have comprehensive induction and support in their first years of teaching.
- Establish interview quotas and hiring goals and offer professional development opportunities for district staff to ensure that district hiring practices eliminate racial bias and discrimination through transparent and explicit hiring criteria, advertisements of job openings to diverse communities, and an interview and selection process that begins in the spring.
- Provide all teachers and school leaders with mentoring, support, and ongoing professional development in culturally responsive practices.
- Offer school leaders training on establishing a school climate and culture that will help support and retain teachers of color and encourage them to take on leadership roles in their schools.
- Increase incentive programs for school leaders of colors and networks which bring them together.

Recommendations for School Leaders

- Encourage and compensate current teachers of color to contribute to the hiring process in meaningful ways, such as participating in interviews with prospective teachers and participating in hiring discussions.
- Ensure that new teachers of color have mentors or other experienced teachers of color in the school or district who can answer questions and provide additional support.

- Empower teachers of color by creating opportunities to have their voices heard and providing flexible scheduling and additional compensation to take on increased responsibility for professional learning, curriculum, or school improvement activities. Leadership opportunities could include serving as mentors, instructional coaches, or master teachers.
- Encourage teachers of color to participate in professional learning and networking opportunities offered by professional organizations for teachers of color.
- Provide stipends for teachers to offer clubs and other opportunities for students who are aspiring teachers to learn about the education profession and work directly with students and encourage students of color to participate in these activities.
- Offer ongoing, job-embedded professional development for all staff on race, class, and privilege, and the impact on students of color.