

# Building a more ethnoracially diverse teaching force

New directions in research, policy, and practice

A KAPPAN SPECIAL REPORT





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# BUILDING A MORE ETHNORACIALLY DIVERSE TEACHING FORCE: NEW DIRECTIONS IN RESEARCH, POLICY, AND PRACTICE

## 6 Editors' note

Learning from the voices of Black, Indigenous and People of Color Educators: Charting new directions for research, policy, and practice

BY CONRA D. GIST AND TRAVIS J. BRISTOL

## 10 Recruitment

Finding strategies to bring Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers into the profession

BY CONRA D. GIST, TRAVIS J. BRISTOL, MARGARITA BIANCO, & RAMON B. GOINGS

From Student of Color to Teacher of Color

BY SHIVANI GOYAL

## 16 Program design

Committing to racial justice and equity for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers

BY CONRA D. GIST, TRAVIS J. BRISTOL, FELICIA MOORE MENSAH, & THOMAS M. PHILIP

Teacher preparation must attend to equity

BY VERA WONG

## 22 Minority-serving institutions

What roles do MSIs play in preparing Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers?

BY CONRA D. GIST, TRAVIS J. BRISTOL, LESLIE T. FENWICK, & CHIKE AKUA

Teaching a world of color

BY DEIDRE ALEXANDER

## 29 Human resource development and induction

Recruitment, hiring, and early-career induction support for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers

BY CONRA D. GIST, TRAVIS J. BRISTOL, FRANCISCO RIOS, & DESIREE CUETO

Developing Indigenous Teachers: Look to those who speak the language — and start young

BY ANDREA THOMAS

## 34 Mentorship

Effective mentoring practices for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers

BY CONRA D. GIST, TRAVIS J. BRISTOL, BELINDA BUSTOS FLORES, SOCORRO HERRERA, & LORENA CLAEYS

We need more diversity in mentoring

BY FERNANDA PIERRE

## 40 Professional development

Effective supports for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers

BY CONRA D. GIST, TRAVIS J. BRISTOL, & RITA KOHLI

Teachers need to learn about students' lived experiences

BY CHANTEI ALVES

## 46 Intersectionality

The power of intersectional interventions for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers

BY CONRA D. GIST, TRAVIS J. BRISTOL, BONI WOZOLEK, JASON IRIZARRY, & ED BROCKENBROUGH

One race, multiple identities

BY TAKERU NAGAYOSHI

## 52 Educational impact

The positive effect of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers

BY CONRA D. GIST, TRAVIS J. BRISTOL, & DONALD EASTON-BROOKS

Believing in Students of Color

BY JULIA BURROLA-ORTIZ



## 58 Pedagogy and leadership

Valuing the practices of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers

BY CONRA D. GIST, TRAVIS J. BRISTOL, & DORINDA J. CARTER ANDREWS

Standing up for diversity — and for bilingual education

BY MARIBEL VILCHEZ

## 63 Retention

Motivating Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers to stay in the field

BY CONRA D. GIST, TRAVIS J. BRISTOL, DESIREE CARVER-THOMAS, MARIA HYLER, & LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND

To retain Teachers of Color, nurture them

BY KIAH DUNCAN

## 70 Policy

Centering race and racism in educator diversity policies

BY CONRA D. GIST, TRAVIS J. BRISTOL, ANTHONY L. BROWN, & KEFFRELYN D. BROWN

Policy matters

BY JUANITA PRICE

## 76 Commentary

Teacher diversity and the state of our democracy

BY CAROL LEE

What will it take to change teacher demographics?

BY PAM GROSSMAN

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# Learning from the voices of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color educators

## Charting new directions for research, policy, and practice

BY CONRA D. GIST &  
TRAVIS J. BRISTOL

According to recent federal data, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) make up roughly 37% of the adult population (age 18 and older) and 50% of children (birth to age 18) in the United States. However, BIPOC teachers make up just 19% of the nation's public school teaching force (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). And while their representation has increased somewhat over the past two decades (up from 16% in 2000), researchers estimate that if current trends in teacher recruitment, preparation, licensure, hiring, and attrition hold steady, then Black and Brown educators will remain underrepresented in the nation's teaching force until at least the year 2060 (Putnam et al., 2016).

However, there is no simple way to diversify the teaching profession more quickly. We will have to make progress in a number of areas all at once, rather than pinning our hopes on any single policy or reform strategy. For example, it will do no good to *recruit* more aspiring Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers unless we simultaneously take steps to fix our leaky teacher

development pipeline (Bristol, 2020; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Gist, Bianco, & Lynn, 2019), enabling greater numbers of those aspiring teachers to go on to complete the preparation process, become fully certified and licensed, and find appropriate teaching positions. Likewise, it will do no good to *place* a more diverse cadre of newly certified and employed Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers unless we also take steps to provide them with better early-career support and improve the conditions in which they work. Otherwise, given the sky-high attrition rates among new Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, any gains in new-teacher diversity will likely evaporate within a few years.

When considering these issues, it's important to understand the ties that bind and distinguish BIPOC teachers. For one, BIPOC teachers tend to share sociopolitical histories of transformative and community-based practices for developing and sharing knowledge that are also problematically coupled with their past and present marginalization within K-12 educational settings. At the same time, BIPOC teachers embody a range of complex and differing experiences that are not uniform, so what is

true for many teachers within one ethnoracial group will not be true for all of them. Still, describing teachers from a group standpoint allows us to better understand how educational systems and policies frequently shape their group experiences. Given this, we use the terms Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) teachers, and Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers interchangeably, and we do so to advance research and policy efforts that can support the academic and professional development of this complex and critical mass of educators.

To gain a better understanding of the challenges involved in increasing teacher diversity, and how to overcome them, we've spent the last two years leading the production of the *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* (Gist & Bristol, forthcoming, 2022), a major effort to synthesize the knowledge base in this area and identify promising trends in research, policy, and practice. More specifically, the *Handbook* describes what has been learned, to date, from 11 strands of research — we call them domains of inquiry — that can help inform efforts to build and sustain ethnoracial teacher diversity, including

In this special issue, we've chosen to capitalize the terms Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers to position group standpoints from a perspective of solidarity that can create equitable and engaging educational opportunities. There is also an intentional naming of Teachers of Color *and* Indigenous Teachers, in contrast to the term Teachers of Color. The history of Indigenous People's sovereignty and solidarity makes their association with the social construction of race and racism fraught and distinct, and the intentional naming of Indigenous Teachers in solidarity with the term Teachers of Color reflects a commitment to honor the legacy and sovereignty of Indigenous People. Guided by the same rationale that prompted the use and capitalization of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, throughout the research briefs and teacher testimonies, terms such as Students of Color and Indigenous Students, Mentors of Color and Indigenous Mentors, Scholars of Color and Indigenous Scholars, and People of Color and Indigenous People are also capitalized.

studies of the educational effects of teacher diversity, teacher mentorship, professional development, the design of preparation programs, teacher recruitment, teacher retention, policy influences on teachers, pedagogical and leadership practices, the influence of minority-serving institutions, human resource development, and teachers' experiences of intersectionality.

Research handbooks provide a valuable means by which to take stock of a given field, helping the research community to map out the knowledge base, learn about emerging areas of study, and identify priorities for new lines of research. However, we aim not just to inform other researchers, but also to share what we've learned with policy makers and practitioners across the country. To that end, we've partnered with PDK International to develop and distribute this special *Kappan* report, which provides brief overviews of the 11 domains of inquiry that we (along with a wide range of contributors) explore at greater length in the *Handbook*. Further, because we aim also to bring Teachers of Color, Indigenous Teachers, and other educators into the conversation about how best to diversify the teaching profession, we've paired these research briefs with teacher-written testimonies that highlight the ways

in which the research speaks to their own professional lives.

### **Broad priorities for the field**

We've found that researchers have made greater headway in some of these 11 domains of inquiry than others. For example, a number of rigorous, large-scale studies have shown that teacher diversity tends to have significant educational benefits for all students, with particularly strong benefits for Students of Color. However, we know of only a few small studies that focus on the effectiveness of recruitment programs and strategies designed to increase teacher diversity. In short, much of this research is still relatively new and yet to fully emerge. Thus, we've chosen to conclude each brief not only by describing the implications of the existing research for educational policy and practice, but also by noting what we have yet to learn in that area, as well as suggesting topics that researchers have yet to explore and studies that might help illuminate those topics.

At the same time, though, our work on the *Handbook* has also allowed us to identify some broad research priorities that cut across the entire field. As you turn to the specific recommendations that we and our colleagues make in the research briefs, please keep in mind that across all 11 domains of inquiry, we see an ongoing need for

research into:

**The structural implications of race and racism**, which continue to present challenges for the academic and professional development of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. In particular, we see an urgent need for more research — perhaps grounded in critical and decolonial theoretical frameworks — into the cultural narratives, institutional practices, disciplinary policies, and interpersonal dynamics that bear upon teachers' professional lives, from recruitment and preparation all the way through retirement.

**The psychological, social, and emotional experiences of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers**, including studies that take a holistic perspective on topics such as teacher induction, mentorship, and professional development, addressing not just the practical challenges to be faced, but also the effects of historical inequity on the everyday lives of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. While a small number of scholars have pursued such research, little is



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known, as yet, about the psycho-socio-emotional burdens that these teachers bear, what can be done to mitigate those effects, and what kinds of structural, institutional, and policy reforms can make K-12 education a healthier work environment for them.

### **Teacher diversity in context.**

To date, researchers have found strong evidence that, in the aggregate, the presence of Teachers of Color has a positive impact on student achievement, engagement, and other outcomes, especially for Students of Color, and advocates often cite that evidence when arguing that diversifying the teaching force will lead to greater educational equity in U.S. schools. However, we see no reason to assume that simply *hiring* more Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers will have a positive impact, in and of itself (regardless of how those teachers are prepared, where they work, what kinds of professional development they receive, and other factors). Much more needs to be learned about the contexts and conditions under which teacher diversity benefits particular kinds of students, as well as the sorts of school environments, teaching assignments, and support systems that will need to be put in place to enable larger numbers of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers not just to enter the profession but to thrive in various kinds of schools and classrooms.

**Teachers' local problems of practice.** Most of the studies cited in the *Handbook* were conducted by university-based researchers, using data obtained through school and district records or gathered through

surveys, observations, and interviews of teachers. However, like a growing number of scholars and practitioners in K-12 education (e.g., see *Kappan's* April 2021 issue), we embrace the recent emergence of research-practice partnerships (RPPs), in which educators are fully involved in identifying the problems that should be studied, the research questions that ought to be asked, and the ways in which local context needs to be taken into account. Forming intentional, strategic, and genuine RPPs is no longer an ancillary recommendation but an urgent priority for the study of teacher diversity. The analysis of federal, state, and local data provides important information about demographic trends among teachers and students and associations among teachers' characteristics and students' outcomes. But if we hope to understand and overcome the complex challenges involved in recruiting, preparing, mentoring, supporting, and retaining Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, then we need to pay attention to the local problems they face, and we need to devise solutions that meet their specific needs — and this will require researchers to work hand in hand with *local* teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders.

Finally, in addition to calling attention to these broad research recommendations, our work on the *Handbook* has led us to identify two ways in which the *infrastructure* of educational research will need to be improved as well. If we hope to make greater progress in learning about Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, understanding the personal and professional challenges they face, and increasing their representation in the nation's public school classrooms,

then we should make it a priority to:

### **Invest in a National Center for Research on Educator Diversity.**

In recent years, the research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers has progressed by leaps and bounds. Still, though, the field could progress much more quickly if it had support from a coordinating body, one that sponsors and facilitates efforts to identify key research questions, define a systematic research agenda, and share findings and resources. More specifically, such a center could (1) maintain national and state databases for the collection of data on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers; (2) further establish the knowledge domains regarding this population of teachers using evidence-based outcomes; (3) disseminate the knowledge base to a wide range of researchers, scholars, and practitioners, and (4) apply evidence from the knowledge domains through the formation of various research-practice partnerships committed to educator diversity. At present, a number of the contributors to the *Handbook* are working to develop such a research center (see <https://uh.edu/education/research-convening-ed-diversity>).

### **Secure long-term funding for this research.**

To be sustainable over time, the study of teacher diversity will require steady sources of support from both public and private donors, including a combination of (1) grant initiatives for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, (2) funding streams that support research-practice partnerships at the state and district levels, and (3) grassroots efforts to fund a research agenda driven by the



voices of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers in solidarity with communities of Color and Indigenous communities. The research that we summarize in this special report offers a promising foundation. But if we aim to build a truly robust knowledge base, one that reliably informs efforts to diversify the nation's teaching force, then we will need to provide researchers and their partners with the resources they need to do that work. ■

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# Finding strategies to bring Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers into the profession

By Conra D. Gist, Travis J. Bristol,  
Margarita Bianco, & Ramon B. Goings

**A**cross the United States, traditional university-based teacher preparation programs tend to enroll disproportionately large numbers of white students. In recent years, many of those programs have ramped up their efforts to diversify their enrollments. Further, a number of other pathways into the profession have become prominent, and advocates hope that some of them will bring more diverse populations into the teacher workforce. These include the many grow-your-own programs established by states and districts, which aim to recruit new teachers from the ranks of paraeducators and teacher aides (Abbate-Vaughn & Paugh, 2009); community activists (Skinner, Garretton, & Schultz, 2011), and high school students (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Further, they include various federally funded initiatives such as the Mini-Corps Teacher Assistant Program (which aims to recruit bilingual educators; Ginsberg, Gasman, & Samayoa, 2018); teacher residency programs (LiBetti & Trinidad, 2018); alternative certification programs (Gist, 2017), and programs that focus on increasing the number of men in the educator workforce (Jones, Holton, & Joseph, 2019; Waite, Mentor, & Bristol, 2018).

However, as it pertains to Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, the research into these kinds of programs has aimed mostly to keep track of who participates in them to see which of them tend to enroll a particularly diverse population of teaching candidates. To date, relatively few studies have examined how those programs are *designed* and *implemented* to see how responsive they are to the needs, interests, and motivations of potential Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.

Two important strands of research on the recruitment of Teachers of Color have recently emerged, one focusing on the recruitment of high school students and the other on

efforts by schools and districts to recruit college and university students enrolled in preservice teacher education programs. Six recent studies on recruitment, described at greater length in the *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* (Gist & Bristol, forthcoming, 2022), expand the research base in this area.

## What the recent research shows

The first study focuses on a youth participatory action research (YPAR) project in which a group of high school Students of Color examines the best practices of highly effective educators nearby, while also studying racial injustices and inequities in both a local school district and across the United States. Researcher Van Lac finds that the students learned about concepts such as institutionalized racism, white privilege, and racialized tracking in public education, which both informed them about specific challenges they will face as teachers and also strengthened their resolve to enter the profession.

In another study, Brian Lightfoot and Terrenda White examine how a high school grow-your-own program engages Students of Color in reflecting on their own difficult educational experiences and researching inequities in their own schools using critical race theory (a conceptual framework that guides scholars in analyzing the ways in which the historical legacy of racism continues to affect various aspects of American life, including education). Further, participants learn about teaching strategies that aim to challenge unjust policies and practices, and they work with younger children as tutors and mentors. The researchers find that the program has led students to become significantly more motivated to pursue teaching careers and to view teaching as a means of

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promoting societal change. Much like Lac, Lightfoot and White conclude that a promising way to interest high school Students of Color in teaching as a career is to give them opportunities to study their own schools and communities and identify specific inequities that ought to be challenged.

A number of recent studies of preservice teacher education also suggest that when faculty show genuine commitment to diversity and inclusion and when they explicitly define teaching as a means of pursuing social justice, they tend to be more successful in recruiting aspiring Educators of Color and motivating them to complete the certification process and apply for teaching positions.

Research by Jennifer Robinson and Carolina Gonzalez focuses on the recruitment of aspiring Teachers of Color into a traditional teacher education program. They explore what contributes to (and hinders) the success of these teaching candidates from an institutional and organizational perspective, and they analyze the factors that support or impede their recruitment into the program. It is not sufficient, they conclude, for colleges of education simply to state a commitment to social justice in their mission statements. Rather, that commitment must be evident in the ways faculty leverage and validate students' personal histories, advocate for Students of Color, and provide opportunities for the voices of marginalized populations to be heard. In addition, regardless of their own ethnoracial identity, faculty and staff must be culturally competent. Further, the researchers find that 3rd- and 4th-year teacher candidates of color who have a deep interest in teaching; who value inclusion, equity, and social justice, and who demonstrate leadership qualities are often effective peer mentors, serving as role models for 1st- and 2nd-year students and assisting with recruitment activities to attract more Students of Color to the teaching profession.

Kimberly Williams Brown and colleagues examine the recruitment of international Teachers of Color and document how their experiences gaining access to the profession offer a counternarrative to common portrayals of immigrant teachers. They report that U.S. public schools currently employ roughly 20,000 international teachers on temporary J-1 visas, recruited largely from Latin American, African, and Caribbean countries. These international Teachers of Color disprove common (and negative) assumptions about specific

immigrant groups, such as those describing women from the global south as money-seeking and easily replaceable. In fact, the researchers find, these teachers tend to have an enormously positive influence in U.S. schools, and as they navigate their immigration status while teaching, they often provide their local communities with powerful examples of effective advocacy and activism.

Focusing specifically on the recruitment of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) Teachers of Color, a research study by Vincent Basile and Ricki Ginsberg examines the obstacles these aspiring teachers often face during their undergraduate studies, such as introductory courses that are designed to "weed out" students rather than provide them with support that would help them succeed. Such courses disproportionately harm Students of Color, derailing their plans to become STEM educators. Drawing from the larger evidence base on college student success, the researchers recommend that recruitment programs ensure aspiring STEM Teachers of Color will be provided with close-age peer mentors who can guide them through the transition from high school to college, from STEM college student to being hired as a STEM educator, and from novice to experienced STEM teacher.

Similarly, Jamaal Young and colleagues examine the recruitment and retention of STEM Teachers of Color, focusing specifically on the Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program (NTSP), a federal initiative sponsored by the National Science Foundation. They find that individual NSTP program directors tend to express a strong desire to recruit Students of Color to become STEM teachers who will serve their local communities; show a commitment to cultivating those students' pedagogical and leadership knowledge, and have a successful track record. Young and colleagues add that federal programs can serve as effective mechanisms to recruit Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers when university and program leadership commit to supporting their pedagogical, leadership, and social-emotional needs during the preservice years.

Overall, the recent research has begun to clarify not just *how many* Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers have been recruited through various programs but, more importantly, what a high-quality recruitment program entails. Specifically, recent evidence suggests that high school pathways designed to recruit Teachers of Color should create opportunities for students to engage in curricular and pedagogical approaches that are community centered and provide avenues to challenge educational inequities. And preservice teacher education recruitment should provide a variety of support structures as teaching candidates progress through the program. These may include encouraging students to connect with students from school communities, providing mentors, and extending opportunities for teacher candidates to make sense of the historical legacy of racism in the United States by engaging in action research and social justice projects that investigate ways to address educational inequities.



## Research topics to explore

- Consider theoretical frameworks that inform the design of effective recruitment programs focusing on Indigenous Teachers and Teachers of Color. This could include exploring the roles and impact of each of the important stakeholders (e.g., program directors, human resource officers, family members, and community members) on the hiring of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers as well as the relationships that exist between and among recruitment strategies, selection models, and program structures.
- Explore the demographic profiles of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers within and across geographic contexts and regions.
- Examine the various narratives, images, and messages used in recruitment materials that seek to attract aspiring Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers into preparation and certification programs.
- Study the variance in recruitment strategies related to program type (such as alternative certification, grow-your-own programs, residency programs, and traditional educator preparation) and disciplinary background (such as English language arts, science, mathematics, or art).
- Identify differences in selection and hiring practices that are designed to value the cultural assets and strengths of Indigenous Teachers and Teachers of Color.

## What we don't know yet

While researchers have built a strong foundation of evidence in this area, the knowledge base still has a number of gaps. We need to learn more about the incentives that can bring more young people of color into the teaching profession and about the narratives and messages (for example, appealing to their desire to be heroes and saviors, to revitalize their communities, to pursue social justice, or to close achievement gaps) that those young people find most compelling and persuasive. Further, we know little, as yet, about the kinds of personal experiences, attributes, dispositions, and knowledge that programs highlight during their recruitment efforts, and which they emphasize when deciding whether to admit or reject applicants.

Nor do we know much, to date, about the ways in which teacher preparation programs can affirm and tap into the cultural assets that candidates of color bring with them from their communities, or whether recognizing those assets

might improve access for nontraditional students who've experienced barriers to entering the profession.

## Implications for policy and practice

- Federal policy makers should create a national loan forgiveness policy for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.
- State policy makers should invest in culturally responsive teacher licensure assessments, allocate resources to recruit Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, and put in place accountability mechanisms to measure how well their state is living up to its commitments.
- District-level policy makers should invest in racial diversity hiring training for school district human resource officers and school principals, and they should ensure the transparency of all data at each juncture of the hiring process — for example, who applied for a given position, who was interviewed, and who was hired.
- District-level human resource or talent recruitment offices should enter into formal agreements with their local grow-your-own programs to offer priority hiring agreements for qualified candidates. ■

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## Research studies to conduct

- **Interpretive studies:** Field-based observations, focus groups, and other methodologies — such as photovoice essays by Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, testimonies and narratives, social dreaming sketches, and critical documentaries — can be used to explore a number of avenues into teaching. They might look at the stakeholders involved in the recruitment process; analyze the images, language, and placement of recruitment messaging in local, state, and national programs, and explore how teachers have experienced various recruitment and selection protocols. Further, we need to have a better understanding of the messages individuals of color receive about the teaching profession, from whom they receive these messages, and how those messages influence their desire or reluctance to enter the field.
- **Intervention studies:** Researchers and their partners can develop recruitment interventions for groups of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers that are aligned to district, school, or community needs. These interventions can then be linked with a selection process and a teacher development instrument that assesses teachers' strengths, assets, and areas of growth before they enter the program and that tracks their progress as they matriculate through graduation.
- **Effect studies:** Researchers and their partners can examine the number of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers recruited annually from different recruitment pathways. They can explore program completion rates; the time it takes to complete the program; the program teachers' placement in schools, and the impact of program teachers on student learning, parent engagement, and school culture. Large data sets collected at the district, state, and national organizational levels are recommended for these studies.

**Example:** If the problem of practice is the limited number of Indigenous Teachers entering the educator workforce in certain districts, then partners could design a series of interpretive studies to understand teacher education programs that produce significant numbers of Indigenous Teachers and the types of structures within those programs that could increase these teachers' representation and retention in the districts. Additional research partners for this type of project could include tribal colleges and universities, Indigenous cultural institutions grounded in the local community, and Indigenous parent and student organizations.

# From Student of Color to Teacher of Color

By Shivani Goyal



It was the first of many campus involvement fairs for me. I had just started college, and as I walked by rows of tables, older students tried to engage me in conversation about their clubs and programs. I was eager to embrace all that college was about, and I collected brochure after brochure. A table with a banner reading “*Teach*” caught my attention. I had no plans to go into education, but the person behind the table caught my eye and took advantage of the opportunity to try to recruit me. I smiled and politely declined.

Teaching had once been my goal, but now I was decidedly on the path to either a Ph.D. or medical school.

Throughout my childhood, I had loved the idea of working with kids. I remember creating pretend homework for my younger brother and making him do it, just so I could use my red pen to grade it. But somewhere along the way, the desire to pursue teaching was quieted by the nudges to do *more*. I was always told, “But Shivani, you’re so smart! You could do anything, so why teaching?” My family members and guidance counselors alike pushed me to think about business school, medical school, anything but a career in education. If I really wanted to be in the classroom, they said, I should get a Ph.D. and teach at a university, something that offered higher pay and more prestige.

These people had my best interests at heart, and I knew they wouldn’t steer me wrong, so I decided they were right. Plus, why would someone who takes honors and AP classes, and who has a 4.0 grade point average and a competitive ACT score, pursue teaching? I could be so much more than *just a teacher*.

From that point forward, whenever anybody brought up the possibility of a teaching career, tempting me to reignite my childhood dream, I refused to consider it. I recycled the teaching college brochures and deleted the emails inviting me to meetings to talk about my interest in education. For half of my college career, I remained firm in my plans. I knew the path I was on, and it didn’t involve working in a classroom.

Then, during my junior year, I took a service-learning course. I would be an after-school tutor at a local Title I elementary school. I was excited by the prospect of working with kids, but I had no way of anticipating how it would change my professional trajectory.

I stepped into Pond Gap Elementary School and saw a classroom full of children who looked like me — something I had never seen before. Every 2nd grader in the after-school program was significantly behind academically. Over the next two years of tutoring, I was confronted with many realities that I had never encountered before. I’m an Indian immigrant whose family traveled across the oceans and settled down in Knoxville, Tennessee, when I was eight years old. I attended elementary school just a few miles away from Pond Gap, but my school was predominantly white, and I was the only Indian girl. My peers didn’t look like me, and my teachers didn’t look like me, and that was that. I thought it was normal that I never had a teacher who could communicate with my parents due to the language barrier. I thought it was *normal* that I was never assigned a book written by an Indian author or featuring Indian characters. It all seemed normal because, in my school, white was the majority.

At Pond Gap, as at many schools across the United States, the majority of students are not white, but the teachers are. Nationwide, the percentage of Teachers of Color increased from 12.5% in 1987 to 19.9% in 2015. However, the enrollment of Students of Color increased even faster — reaching 51% in 2015 (Garza, 2018).

A growing body of research suggests that in schools with more teacher diversity, Students of Color tend to perform better academically and have higher graduation rates, and *all* students “report having positive perceptions of their Teachers of Color, including feeling cared for and academically challenged” (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Further, Teachers of Color tend to implement more culturally competent practices and to build a more inclusive school culture. And yet, despite the benefits of teacher

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diversity, several factors — such as relatively low teacher pay and perceived low status — make it difficult to recruit high-quality Teachers of Color.

My time at Pond Gap showed me that the norm must change. I decided it was time I developed a new conviction. Brown and Black children need to see themselves in the educators they learn from. They need to see themselves as *normal*. Just as important, they need to see the teaching profession as something to strive for — and they need to see it early on.

Because I came to this realization so late in my college career, it was no longer an option to pursue an undergraduate degree in education, so I decided to take an alternative pathway to licensure. I wish that my passion for teaching had never been extinguished at all, though. The Shivani who saw the joy of teaching at age 10 should have known all along, and especially when she walked by the table urging first-year college students to enter the teaching program, that this was the right profession for her.

As a nation, we must recruit much greater numbers of Teachers of Color, bringing student and teacher demographics into better alignment, and that begins, first of all, with boosting the numbers of Students of Color in universities — in 2013, for instance, 42% of white students ages 18-24 were

enrolled in college, compared to 34% of Black and Latinx students (Marcus, 2018).

Second, we need to become much more intentional about recruiting future teachers throughout the K-12 years. Rather than being talked out of teaching, Students of Color who have a passion for the work and the skills to excel in it should have opportunities to harness those skills through guided internships and mentoring by Teachers of Color. We need a transformative shift in what is possible for the students who fill our schools, and Teachers of Color must be part of that shift. After all, how can we move Students of Color forward if we leave Teachers of Color behind? ■

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# Committing to racial justice and equity in teacher preparation

By Conra D. Gist, Travis J. Bristol,  
Felicia Moore Mensah, & Thomas M. Philip

Over the last two decades, researchers have identified a number of best practices in the design of teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005); mapped out the various areas of inquiry that have shaped the field of teacher education (Cochran-Smith et al., 2008), and identified specific gaps in the knowledge base (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). Much less attention, however, has focused on the particulars of program design for Teachers of Color (Dillard, 2019; Gist, 2014; Sleeter & Milner, 2011; Whitinui, de France, & McIvor, 2017). Teacher education has only tangentially addressed these issues through the study of culturally responsive pedagogy in teacher education (Irvine, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) and the importance of preparing critically conscious educators (Brown, 2014; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

More recently, studies have emerged that focus more specifically on the preparation of Teachers of Color (Bristol et al., 2020; Valenzuela, 2017) and Indigenous teachers (Lees et al., 2016). Moreover, growing demands for efforts to diversify the educator workforce have prompted the creation of a range of new program models that are explicitly committed to this goal (Waite, Mentor, & Bristol, 2018). These include alternative certification programs (Rogers-Ard et al., 2013); grow-your-own and community-engaged programs (Gist, 2019; Skinner, Garretton, & Schultz, 2011); teacher residencies (Guha, Hyler, & Darling-Hammond, 2016); Indigenous teacher education (Brayboy & Maughan, 2009), and investments in teacher education programs at a range of minority-serving institutions (Petchauer & Mawhinney, 2017) that have a long and successful track record of preparing Teachers of Color. However, even as these models have begun to proliferate, it remains a priority to identify the specific barriers to racial equity in the traditional educator preparation programs that dominate the field. Four recent studies highlighted in the *Handbook of Research on Teachers*

of *Color and Indigenous Teachers* (Gist & Bristol, forthcoming, 2022) expand the research base in this area.

## What the recent research shows

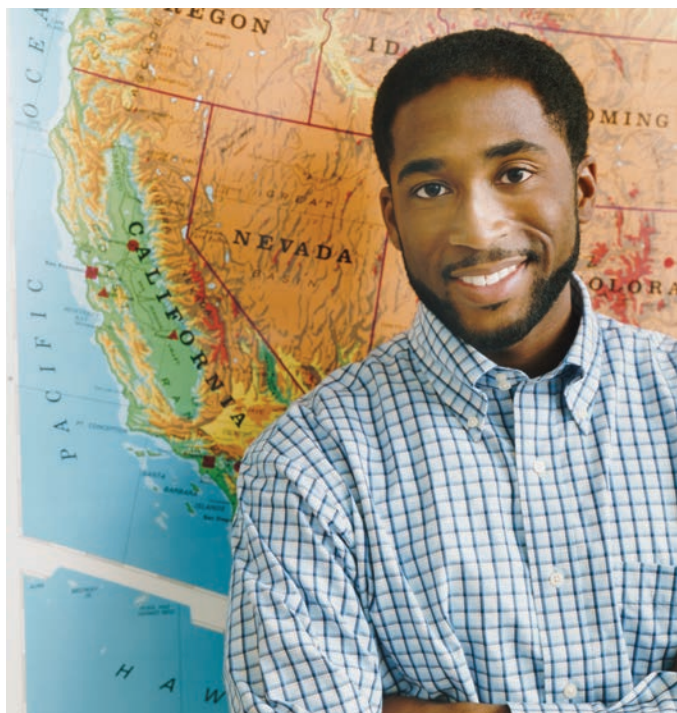
In one study, Laura C. Chávez-Moreno and colleagues review the literature on the preparation and experiences of Teacher Candidates of Color and offer strategies for both program redesign and teacher preparation that respond to their needs. One recommended strategy from this chapter is that teacher educators and programs practice a pedagogy that is culturally responsive to their candidates' needs. However, most programs, they conclude, have yet to take significant steps to acknowledge that teacher education is an overwhelmingly white field, or to recognize the ways in which racism and racial exclusion affect Teacher Candidates of Color.

In another study, featuring interview-based research into teachers' lived experiences, researchers Marcelle Haddix and Kim Williams Brown identify specific factors that have impeded the learning of Teacher Candidates of Color. They find that these aspiring educators are clamoring for critical learning experiences, such as classes that address pressing social and political controversies in public schooling, as well as opportunities to study and decenter the role of whiteness in the K-12 curriculum and to provide input on the design of the teacher education program itself.

Offering a way to begin addressing the challenges described by Haddix and Brown, Darlene Lee and Josephine Pham describe research that provides a picture of what reform can look like in partnership with an ethnic studies program. When an urban school district instituted a high school ethnic studies requirement, the increased need for qualified teachers prompted one teacher education program to create a pathway for English and social studies teacher candidates that was grounded in ethnic studies. Coursework and field placements built on the unique experiences and

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expertise of the Teacher Candidates of Color and prepared them to do the same for their Students of Color. This study provides insight into the tensions inherent in such a process and the strategies needed for reimagining mechanisms, systems, and practices that center and elevate the experiences of Teachers of Color.

And in another study, Felicia Moore Mensah describes research on educating Women of Color in doctoral programs as teacher educators and preparing them to discuss race and racism. The women in the study repeatedly expressed the need for educational spaces and multiple opportunities to write about, discuss, and reflect on race, racism, and inequity in teacher education because neither their schools nor their teacher education programs offered such opportunities. Findings suggest that teacher education programs need to consider the experiences of Women of Color in doctoral programs who eventually become teacher educators and to develop curricular and pedagogical support for the development of the teachers' racial literacy and racial consciousness in their current and future K-12 and university classrooms.

### What we don't know yet

We see a need for research that shows how teacher education programs can integrate theories of racial justice and educational equity into their program design, address the mechanisms and impediments that stymie institutional and systemic change, and develop interventions and practices to fix them.

We need to know how Teachers of Color experience

various program models — for example, grow-your-own programs, alternative certification, residency, and traditional educator preparation — in terms of program responsiveness and effectiveness. For example, what program features, policies, structures, and practices account for different teachers' observations about and reactions to their experiences? Most crucial would be to learn how these differences among teachers' experiences relate to differences in graduation rates, retention rates, and effectiveness outcomes for the teachers involved.

We also need more research into how we might reform traditional teacher education by using preparation models that are committed to racial justice and educational equity in K-12 education. We need to understand the challenges of this approach and the institutional and contextual requirements needed to meet these challenges.

Finally, we need to prepare critically conscious teacher education faculty, directors, and researchers who advance commitments to racial justice and educational equity as part and parcel of their roles, and we need to understand how to go about doing this most effectively. We also need to get a handle on the kinds of program structures and levels of representation required to effectively initiate reform.

## Research topics to explore

- The differences in how program types (Guha, Hyler, & Darling-Hammond, 2016) are tailored for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers (Milner, 2020), including interdisciplinary and intersectional understandings of program design.
- How to promote community-centered teacher development, articulate theories of racial justice that undergird program design, and implement and actualize theories of change.
- The impact of venture philanthropy and market-driven school reform on teacher education programs and teacher diversification.
- Race, language, and class disparities related to recruits' student debt (Scott-Clayton, 2018) and licensure exam scores (Goldhaber, Cowan, & Theobald, 2017; Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010) in teacher education programs.
- The impact of teacher diversity program intervention strategies — for example, course articulation agreements and scholarships (Carver-Thomas, 2018) — on candidates' enrollment and graduation from teacher education programs.



## Implications for policy and practice

- The U.S. Congress should pass and President Joe Biden should sign the American Families Plan, which proposes \$2.8 billion in grow-your-own programs and yearlong teacher residency programs. Both of these alternative certification programs enroll a larger percentage of preservice Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers when compared to traditional preparation programs.
- Design and implement courses that prepare Teachers of Color for the teaching profession, from preK-12 to higher education. These courses should focus on identity development, ethnic studies, racial literacy, and teacher activism to support Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.
- Provide opportunities for teaching candidates to form affinity groups where Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers can talk about their experiences, offer mutual support, and affirm the assets and values they bring to the profession. ■

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## Research studies to conduct

- *Interpretive studies:* Researchers and their partners can use critical teacher development frameworks (for example, Gist, 2017) to investigate the experiences of preservice Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers at different stages of the program: semester by semester, at critical developmental junctures, or annually. They can explore the role of race and racism in the teachers' experiences and how teacher educators, program directors, and peers mediate or complicate the teachers' learning and growth.
- *Design-based studies:* Researchers can develop a variety of program design interventions. Some interventions may be informed by theories of racial justice that are embedded in program structures, systems, and pedagogy. Some may investigate the influence of specific program interventions, such as scholarships, mentorships, affinity groups, and curriculum, on the academic and professional development of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. Others can examine differences within and across groups of Teachers of Color related to persistence, learning and engagement, certification exam scores, graduation, and school placement.
- *Effect studies:* Researchers can look at the number of preservice Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers in different pathways and explore how these numbers correlate with certification exam scores, student debt, curriculum and pedagogy supports, and attrition rates. They can also examine the number of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers graduating from different pathways and explore correlations with school placement and working conditions, retention, and the impact on academic and nonacademic factors for learning. Large data sets collected at the district, state, and national organizational levels are recommended for these studies.

**Example:** If the goal of research-practice partnership is to identify ways to decenter whiteness in the educator preparation program design, then researchers may conduct a series of interpretive and design-based studies to center equity and antiracist practices in teacher education. Research partners for this type of project may include university ethnic studies program leaders; local cultural institutions (such as the Mexican Alliance for Culture); scholars of racial climate and equity; local Teachers of Color affinity groups (such as the Black Educators Association); scholars at minority-serving teacher education institutions, and local and state affiliates of the National Association of Multicultural Education.

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# Teacher preparation must attend to equity

By Verna Wong



I was naive to think that adding my Brown face to a predominantly white profession would be the answer to our broken education system. I was charismatic, young, intelligent, knew how to navigate whiteness, and was determined to confront inequities. Yet, after four years in an accredited teacher preparation program, I still didn't know how to practice the types of community-oriented, liberatory pedagogies that I hoped to enact. My program had prepared us to work in schools that celebrated individualism, meritocracy, and hierarchy.

It hadn't embraced the more collective ways of knowing that are valued in many Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian communities, and as a result, it had done little to affirm the practices and pedagogies that had drawn me to work in education.

My earliest memories of learning are of my father teaching me Cantonese poems as a young girl, long before I developed my strong English tongue. These poems were passed down to him from his mother and her parents. It wasn't until I entered school in a white, upper-class community in Minnesota that I lost those verses, stories of wisdom passed down through oral traditions. I tucked away those memories of myself as a young girl learning from my father. And throughout my K-12 years, nobody recognized my bilingual, lyrical, communal, and familial experiences as assets.

As an undergraduate, I was hyperaware of the extent to which every class, assignment, and reading list was grounded in whiteness, leaving me racially and ideologically isolated. The curriculum seemed to be designed for the comfort and development of my peers, not for me. Whenever I heard a student or professor make a generalizing

assumption about a specific community or assert their own values to be normal and superior, I spoke back, challenging their ignorance. But the coursework provided little room for my own reflection and growth.

At the end of my program, the department held a banquet to celebrate the accomplishments of graduating teacher candidates. I was asked to deliver one of the two speeches on behalf of the class. The banquet's theme was "Along the Trail," so I drafted a speech about the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, which enabled my parents to come to the U.S. as refugees. My department chair was pleased with the draft, noting that my remarks would nicely complement the second speech, which was written by an elementary teacher candidate, a white female who had also excelled in the program. It didn't seem to bother the department chair that the second speech celebrated Westward Expansion.

It was not my job to speak to this peer, nor was it my job to enlighten my department chair about the atrocities of colonial settlement. I was graduating and leaving the program; their racism would no longer affect me directly. But I was embarrassed and enraged by their sense of entitlement, their unthinking assumption that all history centers on their existence, even if that means erasing the land theft, genocide, and forced labor that "expansion" entailed, all to continue notions of white superiority, freedom, and opportunity.

On my campus, I sought out Faculty of Color. I was a teaching assistant for a Black professor and worked closely with East Asian and Southeast Asian faculty. I also had a small community of Students of Color, who became my closest companions on campus. It was in these small organic spaces where I grew the most, orienting my collective ways of knowing and my relationships to others. This community validated my cultural and racial identity that was so often ignored in my program.

Nevertheless, we were all tired of the isolation and of our lack of agency and power to craft an anti-racist vision for our institution of learning. I felt painfully disappointed at the end of my program, knowing that the teachers to whom I had addressed my speech that night — perhaps unknowingly even myself — were likely to perpetuate harmful teaching practices.

Since that time, in my 12 years as a teacher, I have had the privilege of mentoring a number of Teacher Candidates of Color, and each one has said that their program has given them no preparation in

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the sort of critical pedagogy they want to practice. Like me, they have had to seek out teachers who can model courageous leadership and practices of care in and outside the classroom. And like me, they have had to pursue professional development on their own (and using their own money) to learn how to manage the day-to-day challenges of working in an educational system that clings to white supremacy.

Minnesota's teaching force hasn't changed much since I entered the profession. Students of Color and Indigenous Students now make up 33.5% of our public school enrollment, but the number of Black, Asian, Latinx, and Indigenous teachers has remained stagnant, at 4.3% (Wilder Research, 2019). And while Minnesota has a reputation for strong schools, the truth is that students are thriving only in our white, affluent communities; our achievement gap is still one of the largest in the United States.

Retaining teachers, especially Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, is a crucial means of

shifting to more equitable outcomes for our students. Teacher preparation programs must better prepare all teachers to engage in equity practices that can result in long-term changes in our education systems and the racial climates in our schools, without relying on the few Teacher Candidates and Faculty of Color to do the work for them. For us Teachers of Color, it means a dynamic and differentiated program that centers, affirms, and sustains our lived experiences, communities, and identities.

Community matters. Building support systems in which Teachers of Color can thrive is crucial for preparing *all* teachers fully for their careers in education. ■

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# What roles do MSIs play in preparing Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers?

By Conra D. Gist, Travis J. Bristol,  
Leslie T. Fenwick, & Chike Akua

Minority-serving institutions (MSIs) refer to historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs); Latinx-serving institutions; tribal colleges and universities; and Asian American, Native American, and Pacific Islander (AAPI)-serving institutions. Though they are commonly grouped together — largely due to the shared federal designation they were given under the Higher Education Act of 1965 — they differ from one another in a number of ways. For instance, HBCUs tend to be much older than the other three kinds of institutions, most of them dating their origins to the 19th century. Also, whereas HBCUs and tribal colleges and universities were created to serve specific populations (Black Americans and Native Nations, respectively), that is not true of Latinx- or AAPI-serving institutions (traditional colleges and universities at which Latinx or AAPI students make up significant percentages of the enrollment).

These differences notwithstanding, each institution shares an important feature: Every year, they produce a large (often the largest) share of the nation's college graduates from each of these four communities (National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, 2008; Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2019), even though many of them have far smaller endowments, and far fewer resources, than their predominantly white counterparts (Merisotis & McCarthy, 2005). In short, many of these institutions have long played an outsized role in the preparation of Professionals of Color — including K-12 teachers. Though they accounted for just 16% of all degrees conferred in 2014, they accounted for 27.9% of degrees conferred to Asian American students, 44% of degrees conferred to Latinx students, and 33% of degrees conferred to Black students (Gasman, Castro Samayoa, & Ginsberg, 2016).

MSIs' historical traditions and contemporary practices

could have much to teach us about effective ways to recruit and prepare Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and AAPI educators. Unfortunately, there are very few systematic studies on this topic, and even fewer studies that have been conducted by researchers who appear to have a deep knowledge about and nuanced understanding of minority-serving institutions (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019; Petchauer & Mawhinney, 2017). Eight recent studies highlighted in the *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* (Gist & Bristol, forthcoming, 2022) expand the research base in this area.

## What the recent research shows

Emery Petchauer and Lynette Mawhinney Gachoki investigate the overall role that MSIs play in teacher education and the value they bring to the work. Drawing on an analytical framework that has been termed *the new institutionalism* (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), their study focuses on what goes on “under the hood” of these teacher education programs, reviewing not just their explicit curricula and resources but also their origins, the ways in which their missions have evolved, the sorts of informal professional networks they've created, their commitment to advising and supporting their students, their academic standards and expectations, and so on. Teacher education programs at MSIs, they conclude, are a valuable if overlooked reservoir of knowledge about how best to meet the needs and cultivate the strengths of prospective Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.

Kimberley Edelin Freeman and colleagues interviewed Black science and mathematics teachers who had graduated from HBCUs to gauge how their pathways into teaching might have been influenced by attending this sort of institution. The HBCU graduates reported that they had a

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particularly strong sense of self-efficacy as undergraduates, that they were regularly provided with culturally responsive pedagogy, and that they had a strong sense of identity as science or math majors (which then led them to become interested in teaching, in part because of the intense demand for science and mathematics teachers in many school districts). Notably, they also described their HBCUs as playing a major role in their science and mathematics education and a much smaller role in their teacher education — most of them (16 of the 20 teachers interviewed) majored in a science- or math-related subject in college and then went on to obtain a teaching license through a master's degree or alternative certification program. If resources were invested in expanding enrollments in HBCUs' undergraduate math and science programs, the researchers conclude, this would likely result, over the long term, in a greater number of Black math and science teachers working in U.S. schools.

Diane Nevárez explores how frameworks that value Latinx teacher candidates' cultural and linguistic resources position the candidates to better support the educational success of their Latinx students. Her findings indicate that Latinx-serving institutions can serve Latinx candidates by

recognizing and developing their cultural wealth within their communities and by considering the intersections between their personal and professional identities. This work must be consciously and intentionally integrated into the structure of teacher education programs through course offerings, curricula, and fieldwork experiences that are informed by critical, asset-based theories and pedagogies.

Govinda Budrow examines how inclusive teacher education at a tribal college and university uses a curriculum shaped by Ojibwe knowledge and ways of being (such as living in service of community and teaching spiritual lessons via storytelling) to honor and support Indigenous students from prekindergarten through college. A complicated and painful history with education, as well as issues of invisibility, has produced a difficult relationship between U.S. public schools and Indigenous communities. Intentional design and responsible partnerships are necessary to create new connections in which education acts as a system of support rather than a system of assimilation and an act of war. Reclaiming education as Indigenous is essential.

The role and importance of these types of frameworks are further described in two additional studies, both of





## Research topics to explore

- The efficacy of minority-serving institution educator preparation program engagement in school-based interventions.
- Within-group ethnoracial examination of how Teacher Candidates of Color and Indigenous Candidates are prepared at individual MSIs, as well as across-group examination of candidates' experiences at MSIs of various sizes, geographic locations, and demographic makeups.
- The pedagogical practices of MSI teacher educators.
- The types, nature, and efficacy of MSI partnerships with educational agencies (i.e., schools, districts, and state education agencies).
- The impact of MSIs on teacher retention, placement, persistence, and advancement and student academic and nonacademic outcomes in K-12 schools.
- How the teacher education outcomes of MSIs nestled in large public university systems compare with those of other universities within the system.
- The leadership role of MSIs in various educational research and funding agencies.
- The advocacy and leadership roles played by Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers who graduate from MSIs.

which originate in the United States' largest producer of Latinx teachers — the state of California. Maria Oropeza Fujimoto and colleagues explore the interrelated systems of support among the various Latinx-serving institutions of higher education and identify issues and policy recommendations that work toward diversifying the educator workforce. Secondary outcome data from K-12 school districts and the California State University System, a large Latinx-serving public university system, can be used to understand the distinct role that such institutions play in graduating Teachers of Color to serve California schools. Frameworks that address critical policy (Rodriguez, 2013) and community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) can help the education community reconceptualize the production of and investment in Latinx teachers and the role of policy in growing the limited pipeline of future Latinx teachers. This research expands our knowledge of the impact of Latinx-serving institutions on the larger issues of teacher shortages and graduate student diversity.

Luz Y. Herrera and colleagues feature a comparative case study of Latinx-serving institutions within the university system and explore the role of funding in program designers' ability to foster reflective, critical, and community-committed teachers. This study traces a grow-your-own model of teacher preparation in two Latinx-serving institutions and highlights the importance of the confluence between macro ecosystems (e.g., diversity policies that support and articulate the value of reflective, critical, and community-committed teachers) and micro ecosystems (e.g., local teacher programs designed to prepare such teachers at universities) to sustain such models.

In contrast to the focus on Latinx teachers, a study by Xue Lan Rong and colleagues considers the persistent trend of shortages of minority teachers in general, and of Asian teachers in particular, over the last four decades. When examining the patterns within and severity of the shortages, the researchers find that the shortage has been consistent across U.S. states and regions, as well as more or less consistent across disciplines and types and grade levels of schools. The researchers suggest innovations and reforms to increase the number and percentage of Asian teachers in K-12 schools, such as purposefully transforming white-oriented teacher education curriculum to address the struggles and strengths of Asian American teachers. However, they also assert that recent data offer little reason for optimism about improvement in the near future. The steady decline of prestige and wealth associated with the teaching profession will continue to discourage Asian professionals from going into teaching, regardless of the institutional context in which teachers are prepared and the policies formulated to attract them.

Finally, a study by Deena Khalil and colleagues, describes how an established partnership between an HBCU and several middle schools played a crucial role in designing pre-college science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs. The study also highlights the role of Teachers of Color in preparing the next generation of STEM Professionals of Color. A unique feature of this research-practice partnership is its use of the same race-conscious institutional, curricular, and instructional strategies that HBCUs use when fostering student engagement in STEM disciplines. The study highlights how, by using these race-conscious approaches that focus on community cultural wealth, HBCU teacher educators and STEM Professionals of Color successfully increased the self-efficacy of Teachers and Students of Color while also cultivating among them an interest in teaching and learning STEM disciplines. The authors emphasize the need to extend the boundaries of formal K-12 learning spaces to the broader HBCU community. Further, they suggest that virtual collaborations show promise for facilitating partnerships among HBCUs, community members, and school stakeholders to empower minoritized communities' participation in STEM education and professions.

## What we don't know yet

The recent research in this area has begun to broaden the body of knowledge about how MSIs can support the recruitment, preparation, and retention of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers while, at the same time, highlighting the challenges facing such institutions. Many questions remain to be explored, though, about the ways in which MSIs have or have not addressed other challenges teachers face along the teacher development continuum.

For instance, we still know little about the ways in which these institutions have partnered with school districts, recently or over the long term, to strategize about the professional development, retention, mentorship, human resource development, and induction challenges teachers may face on entering schools (Waite, Mentor, & Bristol, 2018). And despite their potential to address the teacher diversity challenge, minority-serving institutions typically operate with limited resources. Finally, although many of these institutions are distinguished in their commitments to Students of Color and Indigenous Students, there remains a concern about these programs becoming siloed from other types of institutions, in particular Research I universities, further complicating their visibility and capacity as leaders in diversifying the educator workforce.

## Implications for policy and practice

- Take lessons from minority-serving institutions to tailor program design, faculty practices, and preparation curriculum to serve the academic, psycho-socio-emotional, community, and professional strengths and needs of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers and support their commitments to justice in K-12 education.
- Minority-serving institutions should support Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers after graduation through school placement, induction, mentorship, and professional development to enhance student academic outcomes; student nonacademic outcomes (such as a reduction in disciplinary recommendations), and teacher professional outcomes (such as retention).
- Embed minority-serving institutions in networks with Research I and top-10 public and private universities in ways that strengthen the institutions' ability to provide timely resources and knowledge capital to support Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. ■

## Research studies to conduct

- *Interpretive studies:* Researchers can develop ethnographies, case studies, focus groups, and other methodological tools to investigate the pedagogical and leadership practices of effective MSI faculty and MSI Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. They can examine partnerships between MSI educator preparation program partnerships and schools and districts with a majority of students who share a racial or ethnic match with the MSI, and they can look at the formation, function, and structure of MSI educator preparation and teacher development networks.
- *Design-based studies:* Working with researchers, MSI faculty can develop culturally responsive, critical, decolonial, and justice-oriented interventions for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers in induction, mentorship, pedagogy, leadership, and professional development to support growth in the engagement and learning of both students and teachers.
- *Effect studies:* Researchers can examine the number of preservice Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers in various MSIs, differentiating by program type (alternative certification, grow your own, traditional) and content area, exploring correlations with certification exam scores, student debt, curriculum and pedagogy supports, and attrition rates. They can examine the number of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers who graduate from different MSI pathways and content areas, exploring correlations with type of school placement and working conditions, retention and persistence, and the impact on academic and nonacademic factors and outcomes. Large data sets collected at the district, state, and federal levels are recommended for these studies.

**Example:** If the problem of practice is the limited number of teacher graduates from Latinx-serving institutions being hired and supported in high-performing schools, then the partners may come together to develop interpretive studies to understand the barriers, and based on the findings, advance theories of change and intervention studies to expand teaching opportunities for graduates of these types of schools. Given the infrastructure challenges that MSIs often face, developing networked improvement communities of Latinx-serving institution partners would support the implementation of this type of research project.

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# Teaching a World of Color

By Deidre Alexander



When you hear the word *minority*, what comes to mind? Disadvantaged? Poverty? How about the words *minority-serving institution*? Perhaps that brings to mind peeling paint, old textbooks, and low achievement scores? Many of us unconsciously associate these terms with something that is “less than” or “not good enough.” I challenge you, though, to let go of those impressions. Think instead of *Institutions of Color*, *People of Color*, *Teachers of Color*, *Students of Color*. Colors provide beauty, enriching our world. Institutions of color provide

opportunities, expanding what we can see and do. Teacher preparation programs at Institutions of Color empower aspiring educators with the self-awareness needed to advocate for all students.

I am a proud graduate of “Thee” Jackson State University (JSU), a historically Black university that, in many ways, is a poster child for what Institutions of Color can offer. At Jackson State, I was fortunate to receive my education through an African American lens, studying a curriculum and learning in ways that perfectly fit my needs. In predominantly white institutions, students tend to be exposed to multicultural practices through a onetime course, often taught by the only Person of Color on the teaching staff. This inadvertently reduces the significance of diversity in education to just that — a single course. But my university taught me that diversity is ever breathing and evolving, just as colors are. Most of my professors were Educators of Color, and my peers and I could talk openly about race and racism. We could be honest about what we needed to do to bring about changes in underserved minority communities. It was safe.

Jackson State is located in the heart of Jackson, Mississippi, a city with one of the state’s largest minority school districts. The predominantly

Black school district has faced many struggles, like most underserved communities experience. JSU’s education faculty know the local schools well, and they understand how valuable it is to prepare well-skilled Teachers of Color to work there. Like many of my classmates, I felt compelled to teach in such a district, and I welcomed my professors’ encouragement to become deeply engaged in the community. In fact, all students at Jackson State, no matter their degree track, were obligated to do volunteer work in the area, helping out in “minority” spaces.

Rather than associating those spaces with disadvantage, our professors had a way of showing them to us in the most complimentary light, one that revealed Jackson and the people who lived there in their full color. That was certainly true of the school where I was placed. My teaching internship site mirrored many other underserved schools across the United States in that its needs were dire and its resources were stretched too thin. But it also had great leadership and staff who came to their work with a great sense of urgency. I was placed with a kindergarten teacher who masterfully wove together whole-class lessons and differentiated learning stations to serve her 27 students. There, in that classroom on Bailey Avenue, I fell in love with the art of teaching and developed a passion for working in underserved communities. After graduating, I was hired as a kindergarten teacher by that same school district, and my teaching journey began.

As a young, impressionable Black woman, I was taught at Jackson State in ways that would serve me not just as a college student, but for years to come. In every educational program, there is a hidden curriculum, made up of values and beliefs that every student learns just by being there. At my college, that unspoken curriculum emphasized self-awareness and advocacy. They were constant themes, strengthened by every class we took. Just being on the campus gave us a great sense of pride.

The faculty continually impressed upon us just how urgent the work of teaching is for society. They made sure we knew the statistics about racial achievement gaps, that we understood the historical and socioeconomic pressures that bear on Students of Color, and that we recognized that all People of Color bear some level of trauma just from having to navigate the challenges of our day-to-day lives. They also helped us unpack our own internalized biases, which I didn’t even recognize at first, and they taught us how to advocate for quality

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education for all students. Inside and outside of our classes, we discussed what an equitable system looks like for all students, and how we can dismantle the current systems that fail and marginalize many children. Finally, they encouraged us to talk about our own school experiences — most of us went through the very same systems we were working to unravel. Sometimes our college classes felt like a therapy session and a Sunday morning church service wrapped into one.

I carry these experiences with me everywhere I go. When I'm in spaces where I see clear injustices, microaggressions, and oppressive and predatory curriculum practices, I'm compelled to act, thanks to the sense of agency and the advocacy skills I developed at Jackson State.

Some believe that minority-serving institutions are too isolating. They worry that students who attend those schools will not be prepared to work in predominantly white communities and that if we do decide to work in such communities, we will

struggle to see the world in a new way or to teach effectively in that new environment.

But let's look at reality. Educators of Color often report feeling overwhelmed by how underserved their Students of Color are. They also report microaggressions and macroaggressions from administrators, teachers, and even students. Teachers of Color want to shine a light on systematic inequality within their schools, but many do not do so out of fear of retaliation. Eventually, many of these teachers leave their schools or the teaching profession altogether.

That's why it's so important for all education preparation programs to require their students to take an array of courses on equity and inclusion. Teacher candidates should also be required to go through self-awareness and advocacy training. It should not be left solely to People of Color and minority-serving institutions to help the world see the complexity and the beauty of hues that People of Color bring to the world. ■

# Recruitment, hiring, and early-career induction support for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers

By Conra D. Gist, Travis J. Bristol,  
Francisco Rios, & Desiree Cueto

While there is a fairly large body of research into the recruitment, hiring, and induction support of K-12 teachers in general, relatively little of this research has focused specifically on the development of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. However, when it comes to building and sustaining a diverse teaching force, certain practices do stand out (Motamedi & Stevens, 2018). For instance, successful recruitment efforts tend to involve targeted and extended outreach to potential teachers, efforts to cultivate personal relationships with them, and frequent networking with partner institutions that serve significant numbers of Students of Color (Noonan & Bristol, 2020). When hiring new teachers, schools and districts make concerted efforts to publicize openings early (with early-hire deadlines), include current Teachers of Color in the selection process, and reduce bias in hiring decisions (by, for example, using multiple measures to evaluate applications). And to support and retain Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, schools and districts take care to offer competitive compensation and benefits, think strategically about teaching placements and assignments, provide high-quality induction and mentoring, and build capacity among school leaders to support these teachers.

Researchers have long found that induction and early-career supports are crucial to teacher retention in general (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Note, however, that the term *induction* tends to be used in a number of ways, referring to a unique phase in learning to teach, a process of socialization into new schools, and/or a formal and unique program for

supporting new teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2010; Ingersoll, 2012). Generally, induction is distinguished from professional development, which takes place over the trajectory of a teacher's career. It's no surprise, then, that much of the recent research into the early-career development of Teachers of Color has focused on induction. Four recent studies highlighted in the *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* (Gist & Bristol, forthcoming, 2022) expand the research base in this area.

## What the recent research shows

Pauline Williams and Elizabeth A. Skinner investigate a number of partnerships between educator preparation programs and school districts in supporting the induction of Teachers of Color, with a focus on promoting their cultural, social, and emotional well-being. They find that key features of such partnerships include collaborating on efforts to identify, recruit, and hire teachers and supporting prospective teachers through academic advising and the provision of financial resources.

More common, though, have been studies focusing on the *lack* of high-quality induction experienced by many Teachers of Color. For instance, three recent studies described in the *Handbook* examine the experiences of Black and Latinx teachers whose schools provided them with rigid and/or paltry supports.

For example, a qualitative study conducted by Erikca Brown describes how the racial composition of schools

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## Research topics to explore

- How to value personal assets and professional characteristics of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers in the human resources selection and induction process.
- The formation and sustainment of informal induction networks in the absence of adequate and responsive induction supports.
- The role and preparation of human resource leaders to foster equitable systems for teacher development across the career trajectory (novice, mid-career, and veteran) of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.
- The ways in which these teachers find voice, agency, and support in induction programs as they navigate race and racism in their school buildings.
- The use of a range of social network supports to support teacher development during the induction years.
- The critical preparation and development of human resource development and induction leaders.

affected Black teachers during their first three years of teaching. As visible members of a minority group in their schools, the teachers experienced intense and ongoing pressure to confront negative racial stereotypes and engage in cultural switching with their colleagues, and they believed they had to work harder than their white colleagues to prove their value and expertise. The study, Brown concludes, points to the importance of districtwide strategic diversity plans, which can include antibias training for teachers and administrators, hiring a critical mass of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, creating feedback loops with supervisors, and strong mentoring and professional support for all teachers.

In another study, LaRenda Janee' Harrison describes the induction experiences of Teachers of Color in a rural district in Mississippi. Much like Brown, she finds that these teachers grappled with colleagues' misconceptions about their preparedness, believed they were constantly scrutinized, and received limited opportunities for professional growth. Like Brown, she concludes by calling for mandatory induction and mentoring programs that are specifically tailored to meeting the needs of Teachers of Color.

Finally, a study by María E. Fránquiz and Cinthia S. Salinas, highlights the value of *informal* mentorship by describing how a group of nine bilingual Latinx teachers

offset the less meaningful induction supports provided by their school system. The teachers met regularly over the course of one year to participate in cross-generational dialogues called *pláticas* (Delgado Bernal et al., 2006), in which they drew upon their own cross-generational knowledge to analyze and make sense of their early teaching experiences. Through this informal experience, the participants strengthened their personal and collective commitment to the profession, the researchers conclude, suggesting that opportunities for such dialogue be provided throughout the continuum of their professional development.

## What we don't know yet

Clearly, there is a continuing need for research into the consequences, for new Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, of receiving inadequate human resource development supports from their schools and districts. As a number of studies have found, many new Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers feel highly visible and scrutinized by colleagues and, at the same time, invisible and unheard when it comes to their perspectives on teaching and learning. However, we don't yet know the extent to which current approaches to recruitment, selection, and hiring create barriers to the profession for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers (see D'Amico et al., 2017). Nor do we have solid research, as yet, into approaches to human resource management that effectively address the unique challenges that Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers face in various school contexts.

## Implications for policy and practice

- Use critical theoretical and conceptual orientations of race, justice, and education reform to understand and shape the policies, procedures, and practices of human resource development leaders charged with recruiting, developing, and retaining teachers, leaders, and staff.
- School districts in partnership with educator preparation programs should develop interlocking systems of human resource development supports committed to racial justice at each stage of the teacher onboarding process (i.e., recruitment, selection, hiring and placement, and induction). Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers should be involved in the routine assessment of the district's onboarding processes to ensure that effective human capital supports are in place to develop and sustain these teachers in the profession.
- Develop protocols to prepare human resource development leaders and induction specialists with

critical theoretical and conceptual orientations of race, justice, and education to better serve the development of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. ■

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## Research studies to conduct

- **Interpretive studies:** Researchers can use critical frameworks to examine human resource development selection, admission, and placement processes; the matriculation of Teachers of Color through induction programs across different school contexts and working conditions, and the subjective experiences of these teachers with human resource development and induction supports.
- **Design-based studies:** Researchers can create and test interventions in which induction programs help Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers navigate race and racism in their school buildings. Such interventions may also serve to develop and prepare human resource leaders, mentors, and teacher leaders to support the practices of these teachers.
- **Effect studies:** Researchers can investigate causal relationships between human resource development practices and induction programs and the hiring, placement, persistence, retention, and engagement of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. To provide more robust explanations related to outcomes, they can develop large data sets and pair these data sets with qualitative evidence related to human resource development and induction practices.

**Example:** If the problem of practice is the inequitable and disproportionate placement of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers in schools with difficult working conditions, then the partners may come together to develop theories of change and research studies to better understand and address the problem by implementing design-based interventions to elicit shifts in inequitable placement and working conditions. Additional research partners for this type of project could include human resource development and educational leadership scholars as well as economists, business and educator preparation scholars, and critical social theorists.

# Developing Indigenous Teachers: Look to those who speak the language — and start young

By Andrea Thomas



I grew up in Shiprock in the Navajo Nation, near the Four Corners area of New Mexico, and that is where I live and teach today. Earlier on, I lived in a more rural part of the reservation on a farm with my grandparents. I attended school on the reservation until 6th grade, and then I moved to Chandler, Arizona, to join my mom, where she was getting her master's degree in education. That was a complete change of environment for me, not only being exposed to non-reservation life — city life — and new and different ethnicities, but also

not being around the rest of my family. There were a few other natives at my school — Pimas and Maricopas — and we gravitated toward one another. We quickly became friends because we knew we shared something that made us different.

Schooling was much more challenging in Chandler, and I had to work hard to catch up. But I was losing something, too. I was missing out on the language and cultural practices that are learned in families. I was missing out on the activities that would have brought me back to my identity.

I come from a family of educators, but I had never intended to become one myself. The birth of my son changed all that. After working as a bank teller

for a few months, I started taking college classes. I decided to take a child development course to help me understand my son as he was growing up, and it ended up sparking an interest. I was already using the teachings of my grandparents and our Navajo cultural teachings to raise my son. I thought, if I can do this with one child, what would it be like to do it with a group of children?

Reflecting on my upbringing was where I found my purpose. I knew that education could be a force for good, but it could also be misused to cause harm. Like many Navajo people of his generation, my grandfather was forced to attend boarding school and was not allowed to speak his language. Raising my son, I realized why my grandfather, my mom, and other family members were educators. Education could help our people. The more our people become educated, the more we can advocate for ourselves and the more we can stand up and fight for our land, our people, and our culture.

I understood why my family pushed education so much after I had my son, and it made me reflect. Where do I want him to grow up? What do I want him to know? It was my identity and being a Diné'tah person — knowing I have a place I can return home to — that had enabled me to continue through the challenging times of my life. We have the four Sacred Mountains, the songs, the prayers, and the cultural practices of my grandparents and our elders. All these things have protected me. They have grounded me and helped me know who I am.

My mom believed that she had to take me away from the Navajo Nation to provide better opportunities for me, but that pulled me away from my language and my culture. So many of our families believe they have to move their children elsewhere to get a quality education. I became a teacher here so families and students wouldn't have to leave that place where they feel most comfortable. That gave me my purpose. I was continuing my grandfather's legacy.

Today, I am a member of the Navajo Nation Board of Education. We want to protect our people, our families, our elders, our language, and our culture. We want to reimagine education for the Diné'tah people.

As I reimagine, I think about my own early teaching experiences. I had a mentor who was a cultural Navajo language teacher. She had many years of experience teaching Navajo children her Diné'tah

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language and incorporating it into the classroom. She even knew my grandparents, so she knew where I came from. I was very blessed to have had her for a mentor.

But there were challenges, too. Because of her deep experience, my mentor was overwhelmed with responsibilities. So, although she reviewed my lesson plans and tried to prepare me for the challenges of teaching, she didn't have time to visit my classroom and give me feedback.

My principal, who was non-Navajo, trusted us teachers. I appreciated her confidence, but there were no formal support systems in place to help us hone our teaching skills. She had created an environment where everybody helped and supported one another, but no one provided professional development or established a teaching standard. We needed an action plan that focused on our students and their progress. I am not shy, so I was OK with figuring things out on my own, but I thought our students deserved better.

Based on my experiences as a student and teacher, I have three recommendations to ensure our school systems recruit, support, and retain Indigenous Educators.

1. **Start recruitment efforts early on.** We should recruit students who live in the most rural communities, the ones who speak the language, to become teachers. Preparation programs should enable teachers to complete their service learning in the communities where they intend to teach. There are some good models, such as that offered by the tribal Diné College, that incorporate the teaching from our elders. We must start with young candidates and find ways to grow our own teachers.

2. **Provide pathways to leadership.** Many teachers believe that when you teach here, in the Navajo Nation, you're stuck with nowhere to go. We must elevate the idea that if you're living here and you're serving Navajo students, implementing the Navajo Nation learning philosophy, that creates a pathway to leadership.

3. **Ensure that schools work to understand their students, teachers, families, and communities.** We must bring more Indigenous readings and perspectives into our classrooms. If educators take the time to learn about and show appreciation for and understanding of where students come from, all those special things about their family lives that excite them, it works wonders. It's always about the relationships with students and their families. Indigenous Teachers are more likely to continue teaching if their schools honor the culture and perspectives of their students.

The history of education in the United States demonstrates that many inequities exist, which the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted even more. But we can change that. If we encourage young people to go into teaching and if we can support them to become great teachers, they can advocate for retaining their language and their culture — and for providing an excellent education right here in our Indigenous communities. Just as I have returned to Shiprock to send my sons to school here and teach students from the families I grew up with, others can do the same. Once we build strong education systems and Indigenous Teacher voice is valued within those communities, change will come. ■

# Effective mentoring practices for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers

By Conra D. Gist, Travis J. Bristol,  
Belinda Bustos Flores, Socorro Herrera, & Lorena Claeys

Mentors help teachers develop a deeper understanding of their subject matter and how to teach it, while also providing them with emotional and psychological support (Wang & Odell, 2002). Most often, mentoring is offered to aspiring and novice teachers, but it is sometimes offered to experienced teachers as well. Although mentors tend to be veteran teachers who work at the same school as the teacher being mentored, they can also be university-based teacher educators or school district staff (Waite, Mentor, & Bristol, 2018). And while mentoring is often a one-to-one relationship, it can also be offered to groups of teachers, usually as part of an induction curriculum during the first two years of teaching (Moir et al., 2009).

In short, teacher mentorship should not be assumed to have only one fixed meaning. Rather, it should be understood as a continuum of teacher development, taking various forms and occurring at any stage of the career. Of the most influential research studies on teacher mentorship published to date, few have focused specifically on issues related to race or ethnicity, whether to examine when and what sorts of mentorship is provided to Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers (Flores et al., 2011) or to examine who provides that mentorship (Wang & Odell, 2002). However, the topic has begun to attract more focused research.

For example, some studies suggest that it may be extremely valuable to provide mentoring programs designed specifically to meet the needs of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. For instance, in a small study that has gained national attention, Travis Bristol (2015) describes a peer support network, which he cofounded, for male teachers

of color participating in the Boston Teacher Residency program, on the theory that mentorship can be a way of “addressing the unique challenges of male Teachers of Color [and] would help them develop tools and strategies to navigate their school environment” (p. 37) and better serve their students (who were mostly of color and from low-income backgrounds). The network succeeded in providing both valuable socio-emotional support and useful opportunities for participants to discuss and share effective teaching strategies. Subsequently, the Boston Public Schools adopted the peer support model districtwide as part of a larger effort to improve the retention of male Teachers of Color.

Like Bristol, several other researchers have turned their attention to the mentorship support provided to novice Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. Not only have they explored the potential benefits of culturally responsive and same-race mentorship, but they also point to the need to better understand the local contexts in which teachers work and the ways in which those conditions shape the power relations between these teachers and their mentors. Three recent studies highlighted in the *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* (Gist & Bristol, forthcoming, 2022) expand the research base in this area by examining efforts to strengthen mentors’ cultural competence and improve their effectiveness in mentoring Teachers of Color during their clinical teaching experiences.

## What the recent research shows

After implementing a study of 38 novice teachers and the narratives they tell about student teaching, Tonya Walls

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found evidence to support the “critical mentoring” model, an approach that aims to redefine the relationship between new Teachers of Color and their mentors. To become more effective at retaining and sustaining such teachers, argues Walls, mentors should begin by recognizing that novices have relevant experiential knowledge — grounded in their racial, cultural, and social identities — that they bring to their teaching and can leverage in their work within classrooms and schools. When provided with critical mentorship paired with critical professional development situated within a social justice framework (Kohli et al., 2015; Weiston-Serdan, 2017), these teachers develop positive attitudes toward teaching, are encouraged to continue to teach with a racial justice orientation, expand their informal support networks, and begin the process of becoming teacher leaders. Walls concludes that critical mentorship can help ensure that these teachers experience their profession in more culturally sustaining (Paris, 2012) and humanizing ways. This is consistent with research that affirms the value of critical mentorship for improving how such teachers experience the racial and cultural climates within the schools in which they serve (Kohli, 2018).

Along similar lines, Amanda Morales and colleagues describe the ways in which critical mentoring involves shifting from traditional, vertical relations — in which mentors avoid explicit discussion of teachers’ racial/ethnic identities and funds of knowledge they bring to the classroom — to a more horizontal orientation. This approach focuses attention on topics related to racial identity, encourages efforts to build informal mentoring networks, and explicitly addresses teachers’ experiences with racial aggressions in their early careers. Focus groups and interview evidence from this study suggest that effective mentoring for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers tends to be relational, not transactional, in nature, with effective mentors appearing to understand their role as a co-learner with the Teacher of Color. In contrast to mentors in more generic programs, critical mentors value the teachers’ culturally relevant expertise and racialized experiences and perspectives, while also providing *authentic care* (Valenzuela, 1999) and collaborative support. Teachers in the study who received this type of critical mentoring experienced a greater sense of confidence and agency, as well as a stronger professional identity early in their careers.

Finally, Belinda Flores and colleagues have studied a model for preparing mentors — with support from a community of practice — to provide culturally responsive induction to new Teachers of Color. They find that this model provides mentors with a safe and trusting space in which to discuss the personal, academic, and professional needs of their mentees. Further, while traditional mentorship models typically ignore the race, culture, and language of mentors and mentees, this approach foregrounds issues of identity and perspective taking, and it asks mentors to consider the demographics of the schools and classrooms in which they and their mentees work.

In short, we see growing interest among researchers in testing out and refining mentorship models and processes that make visible the racialized experiences of new Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, putting those experiences on the table for discussion. Further, recent studies have made use of research methods — teacher testimony, storytelling, and counter-narratives — that highlight the importance of listening carefully to what teachers have to say about their experiences. Critical mentoring, these researchers argue, must seek out and learn from diverse perspectives about the challenges new teachers face and the kinds of mentorship they need.

### What we don't know yet

While recent studies have looked closely at individual mentors and their communities of practice, researchers haven’t filled in the bigger picture, collecting data that show broad patterns and trends in the mentoring Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers receive, or whether they receive more or less the same kinds of mentoring as white teachers. Nor do we have clear information, as yet, as to how the needs of these teachers might differ from those of white teachers,

## Research topics to explore

- Critical and culturally effective frameworks for mentorship program designs.
- How Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers experience the different mentorship models — for example, school-based mentoring, community mentoring, co-mentoring, and informal mentoring.
- The varying orientations toward teacher learning within mentoring relationships — for example, critical constructivist, humanistic, critical race and justice, and situated apprenticeship approaches.
- Differentiated mentorship approaches at different stages of teacher development — for example, field and clinical experiences, induction approaches, and targeted support for both novice and veteran Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.
- The selection and training of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers as mentors and the influence of same-race mentors on their mentees.
- The ways in which supports are tailored to tap the strengths of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers so that they can offer meaningful guidance.

or whether Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian American Pacific-Islander teachers might differ from each other in the kinds of mentoring that benefit them. For instance, perhaps certain forms of mentorship — one-to-one mentoring, small-group mentoring, co-mentoring, and community mentoring — tend to be especially helpful for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, or perhaps the sociopolitical context of the educator preparation program, or of the school or district has an influence on the mentoring relationship.

Further, we do not know much about the types of mentoring that are most helpful at different stages of teachers' development (from early field experiences to clinical teaching, induction, and mid-career), or about the power relations associated with mentors and mentees of differing races, genders, and class backgrounds and how these power relations influence teachers' experiences.

Finally, researchers have only just begun to explore how best to prepare culturally effective Mentors of Color and Indigenous Mentors and to measure their influence on teachers' beliefs, instructional practices, and career development.

## Implications for policy and practice

- Culturally responsive and sustaining mentors should recognize their own identity, position, and privilege

and how these affect the mentoring relationship.

- In their work with diverse mentee populations, culturally responsive and sustaining mentors engage in critical reflection that allows for valuable perspective taking.
- Critical mentoring practices should center the personal and professional experiences of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. Culturally responsive and sustaining mentors create communities of practice that are safe, trusting, and nonevaluative spaces for dialogue about instructional concerns, power dynamics, and ethnoracial and social injustices. These communities also prioritize discussions about teachers' personal and professional goals. ■

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## Research studies to conduct

- *Practitioner studies*: Given the dearth of research on Mentors of Color and Indigenous Mentors, self-study of practice would expand the knowledge base. Of special interest are the different groups of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, the various school settings in which they work, the variety of engagement and development strategies, and effective approaches for reflecting on and strengthening mentorship expertise.
- *Interpretive studies*: In schools and districts that have substantive mentorship programs in place, field-based observations, interviews and focus groups, and both single case studies and comparative case studies are needed to explore the ways in which these programs address race and racism. Such studies can also look at the structure of mentorship programs, racial stratification between Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers and their mentors, and the various compositions and functions of informal and formal mentoring supports.
- *Design-based studies*: Partners can develop mentorship interventions across diverse school contexts and racial compositions that take into account the percentage of Students, Teachers, and School Leaders of Color as compared to the general school population. Such interventions might examine how to refine mentorship designs to support specific teacher outcomes (for example, teacher learning and engagement) as well as to improve teachers' self-reports of program effectiveness.
- *Effect studies*: Partners can examine causal relationships among mentorship models, designs, or leaders. They can look at Teacher of Color and Indigenous Teacher outcomes related to job satisfaction and retention, as well as student learning outcomes that include nontraditional assessments. Where possible, it's important to use large data sets and pair them with qualitative evidence of mentorship practices to provide more robust explanations related to outcomes.

**Example:** If the problem of practice is a lack of effective and responsive Mentors of Color and Indigenous Mentors, then partners may work together to craft a theory of change that guides the creation of a critical mentor development program.





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# We need more diversity in mentoring

By **Fernanda Pierre**



Having great mentors is crucial to the success and retention of all novice teachers. However, for novice Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, mentors tend to be hard to find, given how underrepresented we are in the profession. In Texas, where I teach, Students of Color account for 73% of public school enrollment (Texas Education Agency, 2019), but Teachers of Color make up just 41% of the faculty (Smith, 2020). If states like Texas truly want to diversify the teaching force, then they will have to build a more diverse network of

mentors, one that provides all new teachers with the support they need.

During my first year of teaching, I was assigned three teacher mentors, all of whom were white women with at least five years of teaching experience. I was comforted to know that these women had demonstrated success in the classroom, but I was disappointed to realize that whoever assigned them to me either assumed it wasn't important for me to work with a diverse team of mentors, or they simply couldn't locate such people.

My primary mentor was an instructional coach provided by my alternative certification program, and the other two included the dean of instruction from my campus and a mentor teacher provided by Teach for America. Fortunately, these women were outstanding coaches, and I had a largely positive experience with them. Still, though, it concerned me that I had no one to talk to about what it was like to work as a Teacher of Color in our school system. During coaching sessions, I felt limited in my ability to express myself authentically, without having to code-switch (i.e., speak in white English). I felt

somewhat vulnerable, and I was hesitant to share some of the more glaring challenges I experienced during my first year of teaching.

Another point of discomfort was that all three of these mentors guided their coaching conversations using a rubric. Even if their feedback didn't count as an official evaluation, I knew I had to appear as successful as possible to make progress on a teacher checklist. I felt pressured to perform, rather than show vulnerability and seek help. Ideally, mentors and novice teachers form personal bonds, allowing them to talk honestly about their personal and professional challenges. But our conversations had to do almost entirely with meeting specific goals and objectives, which left little room to build meaningful relationships.

Instead of resigning myself to spending the year without the sort of mentorship I needed, I drew on networks from my undergraduate days — including friends and members of the university's affinity groups — to assemble a diverse set of additional mentors. I was lucky in that I had friends who were a few years older than me and were already experienced Teachers of Color. With them, I didn't feel the need to put on a persona and conceal what I was actually going through, and when I ran into difficulties, I could immediately go to them for support, including emotional support, without waiting for a scheduled coaching session. Further, they were willing to model their own vulnerability, sharing with me their early-career struggles. Some even admitted that, like me, they felt disappointed in themselves for not having had as big an impact as they wanted on students who reminded them of themselves and their communities. They gave me space to share my failures without having to worry that my remarks would somewhere, somehow be recorded on a report or performance tracker. And they contributed enormously to my initial and continued success in the classroom. By my fifth year of teaching, over 90% of my 8th-grade students passed the state test for Algebra I, which is typically a course students take as 9th graders.

Some might argue that mentor diversity doesn't matter and that great mentors can model and give feedback on good teaching regardless of their background or personal experiences. Indeed, my instructional coaches did help me make dramatic improvements in teaching practice. But that's not the only factor that makes novice teachers feel successful and supported enough to stay in the profession.

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Novice Teachers of Color deserve professional *and personal* support, something that tends to be more readily available to their white counterparts.

I managed to find the support I needed, but it should not be up to novice Teachers of Color to do so on their own, even as they manage all of their other responsibilities and challenges. Nor can we afford to leave their mentoring to chance, or to recruit the same few Mentors of Color year after year, overburdening them. Schools and districts can and should certainly do more to prepare white educators to serve as effective mentors for all new teachers. But they should also take proactive steps

to establish much broader networks among Teachers of Color, creating opportunities for novices to build the professional and personal relationships that will sustain them throughout their careers. ■

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# Effective supports for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers

By Conra D. Gist, Travis J. Bristol, & Rita Kohli

As an extension of the teacher learning cycle, professional development stretches far beyond the reach of traditional educator preparation programs to support the development of teachers over the trajectory of their careers (Gist et al., 2018). Teachers' needs vary and, as such, development programs vary in structure, time, and focus, but they generally include support for effective instruction in specific content areas, active learning experiences, opportunities for collaboration, and opportunities to study models of effective practice (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; DeMonte, 2017).

The need for professional development support for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers has grown more pronounced as evidence continues to surface that these teachers are leaving the profession at a higher rate than their white

counterparts (Albert Shanker Institute, 2015; Keigher, 2010). However, despite the pressing need for targeted professional development to help Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers navigate the racialized contexts in which they work, few such supports are available (Kohli, 2019).

Although professional development opportunities are commonly offered in schools across the United States, efforts to provide differentiated teacher learning are rare, and past research has suggested that the field of education lags behind other professions in offering such supports (Booth, 1995; Grossman et al., 2009), largely due to the ongoing struggle to define teaching as a profession in which continual growth is expected (Cochran-Smith et al., 2017; Milner, 2013). Today, as calls escalate for professional development that responds to the needs, assets, and commitments of Teachers of Color

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and Indigenous Teachers, the demand for such support becomes all the more pronounced.

In a review of the existing research on professional development models specifically designed to serve Teachers of Color, Rita Kohli (2019) finds that three approaches have received the most attention from researchers: critical literacy development, racial affinity groupings, and teacher-led learning. All three are informed by the particular challenges Teachers of Color experience within their schools (Waite, Mentor, & Bristol, 2018). In response to the experiences of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, some schools and teachers have adopted a “critical professional development” framework that nurtures teachers’ commitment to political and racial justice. Four recent studies described in the *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* (Gist & Bristol, forthcoming, 2022) highlight the value of these critical professional development frameworks.

### What the recent research shows

Wanda Watson and Natalee Kēhaulani Bauer examine a university-affiliated professional development program focusing on critical literacy development, run by Teacher Educators of Color for Elementary Teachers of Color who are committed to ethnic studies. In response to the sense of racial and ideological isolation these teachers experienced at work, the teacher educators turned to critical race inquiry as a means of creating community and disrupting racism in the teachers’ schools. Based on an analysis of teacher interviews, the researchers find that participants valued this professional development because it drew on their collective experiences, enabled them to learn in community, and held them accountable to an ongoing process of learning about and reflecting on how they might develop and teach their own ethnic studies curriculum despite resistance or even hostility from their colleagues. After participating in the program, the teachers became more active in confronting racism at their schools by speaking up about bias, leading equity-centered and antiracist professional development, and explaining why they rejected the given curriculum and intended to replace it with culturally relevant lessons and materials. They also participated in larger school- and districtwide efforts to adopt ethnic studies throughout their K-8 grade curriculum, as well as antiracist, antibias curriculum and related professional development.

In a study of the use of racial affinity spaces in teacher development, Belinda Bellinger and Micia Mosely examine the Black Teacher Project (BTP), a professional learning community for Black teachers in the San Francisco Bay Area. The authors, who were also participants in the program, used journaling, archival notes, interviews of each other, and ethnographic field notes to understand how the BTP supports Black teachers. For Bellinger, having a space to reflect on and share openly about her school-based challenges helped

her to address microaggressions from fellow teachers, parents, and students, and to understand that Black teachers in other Bay-area schools had similar experiences. Moreover, the researchers describe how participating in BTP created “healing practices” that allowed participants to better serve their students.

In their research on another aspect of professional development, Anna Lees and colleagues examine a statewide teacher-led model in which Indigenous Educators — rejecting what they see as a Eurocentric approach to teaching and learning — provide professional development to settler teachers (that is, non-indigenous teachers). The model focuses on land education, which emphasizes Indigenous Peoples’ relationship with their nonhuman relatives and sacred landscapes (Cajete, 2000; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Simpson, 2017). This Indigenous Teacher-led model aims

### Research topics to explore

- Critically conscious and racial justice-oriented professional development design, curriculum, and assessments.
- How professional development can support agency, advocacy, or community engagement among Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.
- The relationship between critically conscious and racial justice-oriented professional development support and student and teacher outcomes.
- The intersection between critically conscious and racial justice-oriented professional development and the psycho-socio-emotional development and well-being of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.
- The integration of critically conscious and racial justice-oriented professionals alongside or in concert with induction and mentorship supports for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.
- The nature, formation, and function of informal professional development networks for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.
- The feasibility of professional development generated by Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers and an assessment of the labor burden involved.
- The roles that school leaders and working conditions play in influencing the efficacy and impact of professional development for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.

to confront the logic behind settler colonialism, promote practices that will secure positive Indigenous futures, and center the political goal of decolonization (Tuck & McKenzie, 2014).

Finally, Rita Kohli and colleagues describe research that expands the concept of critical professional development to encompass supporting the holistic needs of Teachers of Color, including their professional, socio-emotional, and physical well-being. Through an analysis of data collected from Teachers of Color who attended a continuing professional development session, the authors find that those who were struggling in their schools increased their self-efficacy and sense of belonging in the profession by having professional development that focused on three specific concerns: 1) addressing the impact of racism by providing a space for reflecting, healing, and developing skills to resist, 2) responding to their racial and ideological isolation by facilitating community building, and 3) offering opportunities for culturally sustaining professional growth. Because Teachers of Color are struggling with more than just how to engage students through curriculum or pedagogy, their professional development must respond to the complex struggles of working on behalf of communities of color in a predominantly white and often hostile professional context.

What's clear from the small body of research into critical professional development is that Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers often have to seek the support they need outside the school building. Further, if the schools in which these teachers are placed lack a commitment to

educational and racial justice for students, it's unrealistic to expect that such commitments will extend to teachers. Thus, studies informed by these kinds of support should be conducted in schools committed to racial and educational justice.

### What we don't know yet

To offer more effective support, we need to understand the types of professional development, including critical professional development, that are most meaningful for Teachers of Color after their first two or three years of teaching. These might include critical consciousness and racial justice-focused sessions, content-focused instruction, active learning experiences, opportunities for collaboration, or models of effective practice. Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers from different disciplinary backgrounds, school types, geographic locations, working conditions, or years of teaching or leading in schools might assess specific professional development opportunities differently. Understanding these differences would be helpful.

We need to learn more about the kinds of professional development networks that Teachers of Color cultivate and sustain, as well as the role that school leaders play in supporting them. How effective are these networks in fostering positive teacher outcomes, such as retention, teacher effectiveness, teacher engagement, and persistence? What types of school or district policies and practices best support these networks? We need to identify the barriers to providing such networks and learn how to effectively address those barriers.

## Research studies to conduct

- *Interpretive studies:* Researchers can use the critical professional development framework (Kohli, 2019) to design comparative case studies across different geographic and sociopolitical contexts that examine professional development approaches — such as online, small-group, whole-group, or coaching models — and the ways in which Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers experience and make meaning of them.
- *Design-based studies:* Researchers can create critical professional development design interventions, such as leadership development programs, teacher agency curricula, or programs dealing with racial microaggressions and resilience in school contexts. They can then refine these interventions to support such teacher outcomes as leadership growth, an increase in agency and advocacy, and an increase in socio-emotional support and tools.
- *Effect studies:* Differentiating for school context, researchers can examine the relationship between the provision or absence of critically conscious and racial justice-oriented professional development support and the persistence and retention of Teachers of Color, student learning outcomes, and teacher self-reports of psycho-socio-emotional well-being.

**Example:** If the problem of practice is the number of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers reporting a hostile racial climate in collegial interactions, then research might focus on implementing evidence-based programmatic interventions tailored to meet the teachers' needs. Additional partners for addressing this problem could include racial climate and organizational psychology researchers, experts in racial battle fatigue, designers of equity and racial justice learning experiences, and business and education leadership scholars.

We also need to look beyond traditional forms of professional development to more informal and holistic approaches, such as racial affinity groupings, self-guided or teacher-led structures, and approaches that seek to cultivate teachers' critical consciousness to support their socio-emotional, physical, and spiritual health.

## Implications for policy and practice

- Provide differentiated and tailored professional support for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers that extends beyond the teacher induction period. These supports should enhance the teachers' ability to resist their racialization, acknowledge and attend to their intersecting identities, and augment their ability to succeed and thrive in the profession.
- Routinely create safe and culturally sustaining feedback loops or forums in which Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers can voice their professional needs and drive the creation of policies, practices, and procedures to address those needs in both the short and long term.
- Offer district and school leadership training on effective professional development pedagogies and practices for supporting and developing Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. ■

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# Teachers need to learn about students' lived experiences

By Chantei Alves



I'm a 7th-year preK special education Teacher of Color who successfully includes, supports, and engages Students of Color, especially Black and Brown boys, in the classroom. But I didn't start out so successfully. It was only by seeking out professional development on my personal time that I learned how to integrate social-emotional standards into culturally responsive instruction, cut down on wrongful disciplinary referrals, and prepare my special education students to be socially, emotionally, and academically ready for kindergarten.

I have created an environment in which 92% of my students have met or exceeded their academic goals. Although I attribute this success to my ability to relate to and support my Students of Color, I shouldn't have had to develop that expertise on my own. If the instructional and professional development provided to me had addressed issues specific to Teachers of Color, I might have had a much more realistic view of my role and purpose in the classroom from the outset.

When I stepped into the classroom on the first day of my first year of lead teaching, I was unprepared, and largely unsupported, for what was to come. I had just completed a yearlong residency in which I was immersed in weekly professional development lectures on quality instruction, classroom discipline, and differentiated instruction. However, what I needed most was guidance on how to engage students through cultural connections

and relationships within the classroom and how to use the backgrounds of my students and their families to increase partnerships and agency. I needed to understand that traumatic lived experiences could be triggered in a classroom. I needed best practices to support my students and myself. In hindsight, I wish I had spent that year developing my skills as a Teacher of Color who would lead Students of Color. More specifically, I wish I had been given the opportunity to confront my own biases and engage in conversations about the ways in which my cultural background and life experiences might affect my classroom.

I thought I had half the journey completed already because I'm Black, and I assumed that I would immediately be able to connect with my Black students. However, as an Afro-Portuguese woman from Long Island, New York, I didn't know my students' families or understand much about their lives in Boston, Massachusetts, so I couldn't relate to the lived experiences of many of my students. Although I might have looked like them on the outside, my core values and experiences differed from theirs, and my lack of understanding hindered my effectiveness.

After a difficult first year of teaching that was plagued with student behavioral issues and insufficient progress, I knew I had to do something different. Although we all know that having diverse teachers in classrooms can boost the success of all students, just being a Teacher of Color is not enough to be effective. I needed training on ways to use my authentic experiences (and those of my students) to challenge my assumptions and engage my students — and I needed to learn these things from someone who could relate to me.

So, I researched courses and attended events that focused specifically on Teachers of Color, the need for greater numbers of us, and the impact we're capable of having on students. I attended one event that, to this day, I believe was most beneficial. It was called "Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain," led by Zaretta Hammond and hosted by my district. In this workshop, I learned to think critically about the ways in which my cultural and educational training was affecting my pedagogy. It helped me discover how my own background, biases, and awareness of the world could affect my classroom culture, as well as my students and their educational experience — and that was a powerful insight. It was through this workshop and the accompanying book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* (Corwin, 2014),

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that I realized that relying mainly on my cultural background hindered my ability to connect with my Afro-Caribbean and Latinx students growing up in Boston.

Since no two families experience the world the same way, and since culture is built from one's experiences, I had to get to know my students and their families, and the best way to do this was by visiting them at home (even though my school stopped paying teachers for such visits) and venturing into their communities. But instead of using this time with my students to conduct a long assessment or have their parents fill out paperwork — the usual routine — I spent the home visits playing with them, reading them their favorite books, responding to questions from their family members, and developing a better understanding of the local culture.

Making connections like this provides an invaluable lens into the world of students and families. That's why I believe that every school district should invest in opportunities to support all teachers, among them Teachers of Color, through culturally relevant workshops that highlight the importance of such approaches.

Teachers of Color are as diverse as the students they teach. We have to move away from required and inflexible teacher professional development,

the one-size-fits-all version that doesn't reflect teachers' day-to-day experiences inside and outside the classroom. Effective Teachers of Color aren't born — they're made. If employers want to attract, cultivate, and retain those teachers, they need to do a better job of providing them with the professional development they require to continue growing and succeeding in the classroom.

The onus shouldn't fall entirely on teachers to seek out professional development on their own time and with their own money. Districts should send out surveys to teachers to query them about their specific professional development needs; this information could inform both the choice of relevant professional development and the choice of teacher mentors. My district began this work by providing every school with Zaretta Hammond's book and encouraging educators to study and implement its recommended strategies. Such best practices should become commonplace in all school communities. ■

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# The power of intersectional interventions for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers

By Conra D. Gist, Travis J. Bristol,  
Boni Wozolek, Jason Irizarry, & Ed Brockenbrough

It's well understood that people's identities are complex and that no single marker can define who a person is. Similarly, a variety of power dynamics shape how people live within our society, specifically the ways they are relegated to the margins and rendered invisible. The term intersectionality is often used to describe these various and sometimes competing identities that affect how individuals navigate societal structures, cultural differences, and interpersonal relationships.

An awareness of these intersectional dynamics is important when considering how teachers are developed and supported over the trajectory of their careers; otherwise, discussions about how best to support teachers can easily become dominated by the experiences of white female teachers, given their large numbers within the profession. Yet, when attempting to consider nondominant perspectives, we must be careful not to view Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers as monolithic groups. Efforts to expand the conversation to include Teachers of Color (Waite, Mentor, & Bristol, 2018) should not distract us from conversations about how race interfaces with these teachers' sexuality or sexual orientation, gender, class, nationality, immigrant status, indigeneity, racio-linguistic status, and (dis)ability.

In short, the field must consider the *multiple* identities that belong to every Teacher of Color and Indigenous Teacher, as well as the complex ways those identities are experienced within different sociopolitical and geographic contexts. This allows us to consider what it is like, for example, to work as a Black, bisexual teacher in a rural Southern school, or how a biracial (Hmong-white) first-generation college graduate experiences teaching English in a wealthy suburban district in the Midwest.

Recent years have seen the emergence of numerous lines of inquiry into the multiple identities of Teachers and Students of Color related to how race and gender affect workplace experiences (Macias & Stephens, 2019); how the confluence of sexuality, race, and school climate can shape academic identities (Ocampo & Soodjinda, 2016), and how complex, multiple, and intersecting identities can be used to foster commitments to social justice in teacher education (Pugach, Gomez-Najarro, & Matewos, 2019). Still, significantly more research is needed to advance our understanding of the ways in which intersectional analysis, methodology, and theories can prepare the field to diversify the educator workforce. Five recent studies highlighted in the *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* (Gist & Bristol, forthcoming, 2022) expand the research base in this area.

## What the recent research shows

In one study, Tanja Burkhard and colleagues explore how conversations about race among four Black women educators surfaced the ways these women have been marginalized not only by race, but also by gender, language, and place. The authors suggest that, despite the complexity and difficulty of engaging in conversations about the intersections of multiple identities, such "race talk" is necessary for enabling Educators of Color to cocreate the knowledge they need to navigate educational and professional spaces, and, perhaps, to build meaningful connections that honor and affirm the complexity of their experiences (Nash, 2019). In addition, they note that these teachers' stories illustrate how policies that *prohibit* conversations about race (as seen in the school district of Kaye-Ann, one of the study's coauthors) can harm Teachers and Students of Color by rendering racist

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experiences as “unverifiable” and treating them as individual incidents rather than outgrowths of white supremacy. The stories also show that these conversations are important even in educational spaces where People of Color hold leadership positions.

In another study, Allison Mattheis and colleagues investigate how the creation of a Queer Studies in Education course at a Latinx-serving institution can support the learning of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. Through observations and interviews with student participants, the authors document how preservice and practicing educators engaged with learning about their own identities and how those identities affected their teaching practice. The educators taking the course noted how narrow understandings of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and ability limit opportunities for expression in schools. By applying theory to practice and working collaboratively, the teacher participants proposed ways of disrupting these limitations for themselves and young people (e.g., through individual identity development and collective solidarity building) and imagining transformational spaces that embrace difference.

A study by Grace Player and Jason Irizarry supports four key recommendations for how teacher educators and program leaders can use an intersectional framework to decenter white perspectives within their teacher education programs. First, these educators should expand the racial literacy of preservice teachers by creating opportunities for them to unpack and critique how whiteness defines and informs the types of knowledge that are valued in education systems. Second, they need to recognize how teacher education programs use People of Color and Indigenous People to represent diversity without critiquing the structural racism that has kept them on the margins of these programs. Third, they need to examine

application and selection processes that elevate white experiences, but treat Students of Color and Indigenous Students as tokens, who are admitted to improve program diversity numbers without valuing their knowledge as assets that can challenge whiteness and expand critical learning experiences in teacher education. Finally, they should create opportunities for centering the voices of Students of Color and Indigenous Students in efforts to change program practices, procedures, and policies.

Drawing on data from two ethnographic case studies of two grassroots social justice collectives in California that were led and organized by critical Educators of Color (i.e., those committed to and actively engaged in resisting and dismantling oppressive education systems and practices while still working within them), Farima Pour-Khorshid and colleagues explore how the collectives created their own grassroots learning spaces to center intersectionality and collective vulnerability as a form of resistance and liberation. Intersectionality was centered in these critical affinity spaces through healing practices (such as *testimonio*, in which participants explore how various forms of oppression have molded them) and pedagogical practices (such as using curricular and instructional strategies to teach about intersectionality as a way of disrupting various forms of oppression in schools). Specifically, the authors focus on how these groups shaped the participants’ pedagogies, politics, and experiences, finding that discussing how their various identities affected their work lives and made them feel vulnerable promoted healing and helped them uncover opportunities for transformative resistance.

Finally, a study by Boni Wozolek explores the notion of *assemblages of violence*, arguing that “instead of looking at singular, discrete identities, assemblage speaks to the multi-

dimensional, far-reaching impact of multiple forms of oppression as they are manifested across identity categories as they are reconciled in one body or one set of ideas.” Reflecting on her own identity as a queer biracial woman, Wozolek considers how certain present forms of emotional, physical, or intellectual violence are always built on past iterations of aggression and lead to future ones. In schools and across scholarly communities, this often occurs in the form of narrowly defined identity politics that do not account for a range of multiple and varying perspectives, which can not only negatively affect students’ sociocultural understandings, but also further marginalize Faculty of Color who are overlooked or rendered invisible by these perspectives. As a person whose identities have caused her to be characterized as not “Brown enough” or “queer enough,” Wozolek expresses concern for future generations, namely her own children, whose multiracial identities are in some ways more complex than her own. This study challenges educators to consider how identity politics can mask and ignore the multilayered forms of oppression that Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers experience and navigate in schools.

### What we don’t know yet

Although there is clearly a need for scholarship on ethn racially diverse educators, given the rapidly changing demographics in our nation, simplistic and monolithic

descriptions of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers will be inadequate to advance the field in the future. As we enter the third decade of the 21st century, close systematic investigation of differences within, between, and among ethnoracial groups that also examine interactions with other identity markers (i.e., sexuality or sexual orientation, gender, class, nationality, immigrant status, indigeneity, racio-linguistic status, and [dis]ability) are imperative if research is to drive policy and practice in meaningful ways.

Indeed, there is a need for more intersectional scholarship within each of the 10 other domains of inquiry reviewed in the *Handbook* — recruitment, program design, minority-serving institutions, human resource development and induction, mentorship, professional development, educational impact, pedagogical and leadership practices, retention, and policy. Ultimately, expanding intersectional research in these domains could significantly advance current understandings of how to best remove barriers to supporting the academic and professional advancement for different groups of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers in more tailored and effective ways. In sum, research into educators’ intersectional identities is growing, yet there is significantly more research needed to advance our understanding of the ways in which intersectional analysis, methodology, and theories can prepare the field to diversify the educator workforce.

### Implications for policy and practice

- Avoid simplistic categorizations of the race of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers and recognize the variety of difference that exists within each racial category.
- Differentiate teaching and learning experiences at each stage of the teacher development continuum in ways that take into account how Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers vary within and across a range of identities — for example, sexuality and sexual orientation, gender, class, nationality, immigrant status, racio-linguistic status, and (dis) ability.
- Honor the complex experiences of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers within and across different school systems and geographic locations. ■

### Research topics to explore

- How the differences among Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers within and across various groups relate to their experiences at each stage of their development as teachers.
- The intersectionality of race, gender, language, and place for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.
- How understanding the intersections among their different identities can promote teacher agency, advocacy, or organizing.
- Innovative methodologies for exploring and investigating intersectionality and Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.
- How Teachers of Color might use intersectional frameworks in the classroom and/or with Students of Color and Indigenous Students.
- Intersectional pedagogy, learning, and engagement for preservice and in-service teachers.

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## Research studies to conduct

- **Interpretive studies:** Researchers can develop ethnographies, autoethnographies, field-based observations, case studies, and other methodologies that center nondominant voices to understand how teachers of various identities experience preparation, pedagogy and leadership, mentorship, induction, and professional development programs or practices tailored for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. They explore the subjective experiences of teachers and the degree to which they experience feelings of oppression across and within racial, gender, linguistic, place, and class positions.
- **Design-based studies:** Researchers can create and test intersectional preparation, pedagogy and leadership, mentorship, induction, and professional development programs for teachers of various overlapping and competing identities.
- **Effect studies:** Researchers can investigate causal relationships among relevant data points (for example, admittance rates in teacher education programs) and the intersectional identities of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers (for example, Black male economically distressed teacher candidates). Data points might include program patterns (for example, placement in certain types of schools); preparation and evaluation policies (for example, certification exam and coursework requirements), and academic and nonacademic outcomes (for example, student engagement metrics).

**Example:** If the problem of practice is the marginalization of Asian American and Indigenous Teachers in rural schools, then partners may engage in a set of interpretive studies to understand the nuanced and complex experiences of the teachers (e.g., intersections with other identity markers such as gender, sexuality or sexual orientation, and/or class, and differences related to content expertise in STEAM, English language arts, and so on) and the policies, practices, and education system in which they work. On the basis of their findings, partners would begin to develop interventions that address the marginalization of these teachers in rural schools. Additional partners for this line of inquiry may include women, ethnic, and/or global studies scholars, gender equity community-based organizations, and district human resource and professional development officers.

# One race, multiple identities

By Takeru Nagayoshi



In the high school where I work, with its student body of more than 2,000 kids, you can count the Asian students on two, maybe three, hands. As the resident Asian teacher, I should know: Virtually all of those Asian students are active members of my after-school Film Analysis Club.

I highlight this fact to raise two points. The first is that identity matters. I have no doubt that my race plays an important role in the demographic makeup of this club. In an environment with few educators of color, especially those of

Asian descent, my Asian students are hungry for adult role models who look like them.

My second point concerns the diversity of the U.S. Asian population. For example, a freshman in the film club, Minh, is the son of war refugees who escaped by boat from Vietnam. In contrast are the Yang siblings, first-generation Chinese Americans whose parents emigrated as scientists in the 1980s. The parents of another student, Jin, are also from mainland China, but they resettled as restaurant workers, not professionals. Unlike the Yangs, Jin speaks Fujianese, not Mandarin. Finally, Jonah, a biracial student with an Asian father, doesn't like to talk about his heritage at all and speaks only English. These children have complex identities that intersect in various ways — by socioeconomic class, national origin, immigration stories, and the lived impact of colonial and imperial legacy — so it takes an awareness of intersectionality to capture their full humanity.

I often wonder where I fit in this tapestry of Asian representation, too. I am a first-generation Japanese American. My parents emigrated to the suburbs of

New Jersey during Japan's bubble economy era. As professionals, they afforded me the privileges of dual citizenship, frequent trips to Tokyo, and an education that included private tutoring and a bilingual Saturday school to help me retain my linguistic heritage.

Yet, despite the multiple ways in which my students and I differ and intersect in our identities, people who visit my Film Analysis Club tend to see only a classroom full of Asian kids with an Asian teacher. They miss our rich diversity of history, culture, language, and diaspora. Even when educators make it a priority to put discussions about race at the center of their work, they often neglect to think about such dynamics. For instance, I've witnessed teachers and school leaders emphasize unity among supposedly "similar" students, while ignoring the nuances of their identities. That makes for shortsighted policy and practice.

For instance, in my high school, English language learners account for one-third of the student body. The majority are from Latin American countries, but district policy tends to homogenize them all under the "Hispanic/Latino" umbrella, despite measurable gaps in the students' access to power and privilege. A typical English as a second language class represents an array of complex identities, ranging from undocumented Chicanos, to climate refugees with U.S. citizenship from Puerto Rico, to white-identifying Colombians who speak fluent Spanish, to darker-skinned Indigenous K'iche who emigrated from Guatemala but who don't speak Spanish.

Yet, we tend to generalize the students' lived experiences solely along racial lines. For example, Massachusetts' state policy on standardized testing treats all language acquisition experiences the same, despite the wide range of political and linguistic obstacles that our English learners (ELs) face. This disadvantages my Indigenous K'iche students, many of whom have limited exposure to English (and, at times, to formal education) in comparison to other EL populations.

Even well-intentioned diversity curricula and culturally responsive pedagogy tend to use a U.S.-centric racial discourse that seldom transcends the Black-white binary. For example, the cultural heritage of many Black Cape Verdeans living in the United States does not entirely overlap with the legacy of slavery that affects most African Americans. In my school community, many Cape Verdeans

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are recent immigrants or descendants of whaling ship migrants in the 19th century. Thus, my student Maria, a proud first-generation Cape Verdean American, might not share the same understanding of “blackness” that most U.S. history textbooks describe. It’s clear that approaching our students through race alone can render other core identity experiences less valid or even invisible.

From an instructional point of view, an intersectional lens can help students understand and navigate their world, which is one of the reasons I lean on it as pedagogy. When we push our students to reflect on their identities, we encourage them to examine their lives vis-à-vis the various social and cultural frameworks and broader systems of the world. Similar to the intellectual work conducted in psychology and sociology, thinking with an intersectional framework is cognitively demanding and builds skills such as cultural competence, self-awareness, and critical reasoning.

Consider the cognitive unpacking I use to talk about my identity to students. I always begin with the premise that, like many people, I stand at the crossroads of power, privilege, and oppression. My East Asian heritage, for example, makes me perpetually “foreign” to many in white America, yet being light-skinned insulates me from racial profiling by the police. I’m openly gay but generally fear holding my partner’s hand in public. However, being able-bodied and cisgender means that I seldom worry whether my doctor can provide me with adequate health care.

As these examples reveal, an intersectional lens shows my students the nuanced ways in which identity and power are connected, helping them become

more aware of the implications for their own lives. Bringing to light the interplay of our identities engages them in higher-order thinking that feels relevant and teaches them to be authentic. Above all, an intersectional lens fosters quality social and emotional learning experiences. When students are encouraged to acknowledge the nuances within their identities, especially in relation to other people, they often become more willing to recognize our shared humanity.

When educators lean on trust and honesty to forge spaces that explore all identities, especially those hidden or less visible to others, they foster empathetic communities of allyship and liberation. When I first came out as gay to students, it opened up channels to freely explore issues of gender with them. As those who have historically lived outside the margins of gendered expectations, queer folk (and queerness) can impart to students novel ways of reconciling their gender with its stereotypes. Whether straight or not, students can find this insight liberating.

In this way, intersectionality helps me foster nuanced dialogue that challenges dominant narratives of oppression. In embracing the authenticity and vulnerability we share across our different identities, my students and I find empathy in our common struggle and commit to improving the world in solidarity.

Even equity-conscious spaces can be afflicted with myopia about identity. Each of us is multifaceted — not just in how we identify ourselves but in how we relate to our students, our schools, and the broader institutions of which we are a part. Let’s make sure our teaching practices reflect that. ■

# The positive effect of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers

By Conra D. Gist, Travis J. Bristol, & Donald Easton-Brooks

Although some evidence suggests that all students, white students included, tend to benefit from studying with Teachers of Color (Bristol, 2020; Goldhaber, Theobald, & Tien, 2019), most research in this area has focused on whether Students of Color benefit from studying with teachers of the same race or ethnicity (Dee, 2004; Foster, 1997). For example, researchers have found that the presence of at least one Black teacher in kindergarten through 5th grade is related to higher test scores for Black students in reading (Easton-Brooks, Lewis, & Zhang, 2009) and mathematics (Eddy & Easton-Brooks, 2011). Likewise, the presence of Asian American teachers has been found to be related to increases in learning for Asian students in middle school math (Egalite, Kisisa, & Winters, 2015).

Studies have also found that interactions between Students of Color and Teachers of Color are related to improvements in students' academic growth overall (Easton-Brooks, 2019; Gershenson et al., 2017); that teachers have more positive perceptions of the academic abilities of students with whom they share racial affinities (Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Easton-Brooks, 2019), and that teachers who do not share an ethnoracial affinity with Black students are more likely to punish or penalize them for classroom infractions (Lindsay & Hart, 2017).

A number of researchers have recently turned their attention also to the effects that Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers have on the *nonacademic* factors associated with student success, such as a sense of belonging, intergenerational bonding with teachers, and positive and caring student-teacher relationships. Five recent studies highlighted in the *Handbook of Research in Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* (Gist & Bristol, forthcoming, 2022) expand the research base in this area.

## What the recent research shows

Jemimah Young and Donald Easton-Brooks share a conceptual framework for analyzing the positive impact that Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers have on

students' sense of belonging at school, which includes influencing students' academic, communal, and personal identities. Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, they note, promote school belonging by engaging in instructional, institutional, and interpersonal practices that communicate to Students of Color that their success matters to them, while cultivating positive student-teacher and peer relationships that foster a positive sense of self-efficacy, pride, and empowerment.

A study by Natalie Holliman and Florentia Spires examines how veteran women Teachers of Color (those with 20-plus years of teaching experience) from various regions of the United States support learning for their students of color. The researchers find that these educators have two particularly valuable approaches in common: They model an ethic of warm but demanding care, and they are careful to learn about and value their students' cultural backgrounds.

Similarly, a study by Derrick Robinson, focusing on two large urban school districts in the mid-Atlantic and southeastern regions of the U.S., finds that when Students of Color take classes with Teachers of Color, they tend to benefit from high-quality interpersonal and intergenerational connections, personalized insights into subject matter, and exposure to new perspectives on academic content. In turn, according to Students of Color, having a Teacher of Color leads to stronger self-esteem among students and a reduction in students' internalized racism.

A case study by Chrystal Johnson and Jennifer Sdunzik examines the care-oriented pedagogies (which focus on creating healthy relationships with predominantly Black students and providing positive classroom experiences) of a Black male charter school teacher in three middle school classes over one academic year, to assess the influence of these pedagogies on students' civic participation and racialized identities. Based on survey data from students in three classes, the researchers find that the Black male teacher positively influenced the civic and social values and behaviors of Black youth in his classes.

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Finally, a study by Regina L. Suriel and Tonjua Freeman describes a duoethnography (a collaborative research method that involves studying and comparing life histories) in which they explore the impact of their practice on the science learning experiences of their predominantly white students in the Deep South. The researchers confronted students' racist beliefs about People of Color by highlighting the contributions of People of Color in the sciences. In so doing, the researchers cultivated positive classroom relationships that supported students' learning.

In short, a new and emerging strand of research has begun to explore the nonacademic outcomes for students

who have opportunities to study with teachers of the same race/ethnicity, adding to previous research on academic outcomes. The most recent educational impact research studies differ in their methodologies, and they analyze data from differing school contexts — both urban and suburban, large and small — as well as from differing grade levels and academic subject areas. To date, however, this research has been consistent in pointing to specific benefits, including a heightened sense of belonging in the school environment, as well as stronger and more personally supportive relationships among students and teachers and fewer negative perceptions of students and their academic potential.



## What we don't know yet

While strong evidence suggests that Students of Color benefit academically from studying with teachers of the same ethnoracial background, and while emerging research has begun to explore nonacademic benefits as well, we still have much to learn about the specific contexts and conditions under which Teachers of Color might have these effects on students. For instance, we do not yet know how these benefits are related to factors such as working conditions within schools, school leaders' commitments to racial and educational justice, or the proportion of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers in a given school. Nor do we know why Students of Color benefit from studying with some Teachers of Color more than with others, nor how Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers influence parent engagement, professional relationships among their colleagues, or overall school culture.

Further, it would be valuable to learn more about the ways in which Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers influence *all* students, not just those with whom they share a racial affinity. Finally, researchers have only just begun to compare how teachers from various racial and cultural backgrounds may *differ* from one another in their effects on students and the ways in which their influence differs from that of white teachers in the same schools.

## Research topics to explore

- Ethnic matching between students and teachers using broader cross-sections of both Teachers and Students of Color positioned across various intersectional identities (for example, race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation).
- Mixed methods studies — those that integrate quantitative and qualitative data — focused on the educational impacts of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.
- Cross-disciplinary and grade-level analyses of the academic and nonacademic educational impact of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers on their students.
- The influence of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers on colleagues, school culture, and local school neighborhoods.
- Innovative methods for documenting, analyzing, and portraying the nonacademic educational impact of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.

## Implications for policy and practice

- School systems should provide differentiated and responsive mentoring and induction supports for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers — in particular, for early-career teachers. These supports should enhance teachers' ability to cultivate belonging and culturally sustaining practices that involve relationship building and a deep valuing of nondominant knowledge and linguistic systems.
- Explore the use of racial pairing between students and teachers when the data indicate that Students of Color and Indigenous Students are performing below level or are being disproportionately affected by disciplinary actions.
- Offer district and school leadership training on equity and diversity that highlight effective pedagogical practices of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers with Students of Color and Indigenous Students.
- To increase the interest and retain a highly diverse educator workforce and student population, school districts and states should think seriously about reforming curriculums to be more inclusive to diverse populations.
- Higher education teacher prep programs and school districts should work closer on strategies to recruit and retain more diverse educators, counselors, and leaders.
- States should invest in and promote the need for a diverse educator workforce as a method to enhance educational outcomes and reduce dropout rates among all students, which in turn would have a great impact in workforce development. ■

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## Research studies to conduct

- **Interpretive studies:** Researchers can use critical, decolonial, and culturally responsive pedagogical and leadership frameworks to explore the practices of effective Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers on racially matched students (see Easton-Brooks, 2019). Studies of this sort would examine the subjective teaching and learning experiences of both Teachers and Students of Color in classrooms using nondominant sources of evidence — that is, sources that value their community cultural wealth and assets — to understand positive academic and nonacademic factors.
- **Design-based studies:** Researchers can develop interventions across different school contexts and teacher racial compositions that examine how Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers use critical, decolonial, and culturally responsive pedagogical practices and programs to improve outcomes for their students of color.
- **Effect studies:** Researchers can examine causal relationships among broader cross-sections of Teachers of Color and Students of Color from various intersectional standpoints (for example, race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation). They might pair these investigations with qualitative methods that observe the practices of Teachers of Color and document the subjective experiences of both Teachers and Students of Color in classrooms.

**Example:** If the problem of practice is the differential outcomes of Black teachers recommending Black students for gifted and talented programs compared to the corresponding practices of white teachers in a given school or schools, then the partners may develop interpretive studies to better understand the disparate outcomes and may use the findings to create design-based interventions to address these inequities. Possible partners for this type of research may include anthropologists and educational ethnographers, teacher education and school leadership scholars, professional development officers, and economists.

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# Believing in Students of Color

By Julia Burrola-Ortiz



I am in my seventh year of teaching and am a founding elementary teacher at Mission Achievement and Success, a Title 1 charter school located in one of the most high-needs areas of New Mexico. According to *U.S. News and World Report*, “Less than a third of all New Mexico students are proficient in reading and only about one-fifth are proficient in math” (Contreras, 2019). In Albuquerque, where I work, some schools have single-digit proficiency numbers.

When I look around my classroom, I see mostly Latinx students, many of whom live in financially strained circumstances. As a proud Chicana woman, I can also see myself, my father, and even my grandmother sitting in one of those seats.

I recently participated in a community engagement meeting hosted by my state’s education department. I sat with teachers from other high-needs, high-minority schools. One white teacher made a comment about how our students cannot be expected to learn to the same level as students in more affluent and less diverse areas of our city. This comment hurt me deeply. I immediately thought of *her* students sitting in a classroom where their main champion didn’t fully believe they were capable of greatness. It was a harsh reminder that teachers who struggle to identify with their students can also struggle to believe in their students’ ability to succeed.

As a native New Mexican, I always struggled with school projects assigned by well-meaning teachers who asked me “where my family came from.” I struggled because we were always here. People who expect me to identify my country of origin as Spain or Mexico simply don’t understand my heritage.

I have seen my own family become successful in

the face of adversity, so I know that my students’ background is not a deficit. Like many other People of Color, my parents faced hardships and had to break down many barriers for my sister and me. Generations of my family members have made difficult decisions to make life a little easier. For instance, my grandparents and parents chose not to pass on their Spanish language to my sister and me because, when they were growing up, they were punished for speaking Spanish in school. They grew up afraid to be themselves; they felt forced to hide their heritage.

My dad relocated to Albuquerque from Chihuahuita, an area of Roswell, New Mexico, for more opportunity. He describes where he came from as poor in money but rich in family. He eventually became a college graduate. Most of his friends didn’t finish school because they died or went to jail. His parents are the reason he was successful, he said, because they believed in him when his teachers did not. I imagine his teachers resembled the lady I met during my community engagement meeting — teachers who don’t think their students are capable of much.

The students at my school face a lot of the same adversity my dad did. We have students whose primary language isn’t English. We have students who have grown up not having enough to meet their basic needs. Yet, my school and my students are continually described as “beating the odds” for academic achievement. In fact, Mission Achievement and Success Charter School was one of only 13% of New Mexico schools that earned an “A” rating in the 2017-18 school year.

My students have made even more meaningful strides that tests can’t measure. I have heard brave students’ first declarations in the English language. I have seen the eyes of my young students shine with joy. I have heard them proclaim, “I am going to college!”

My students differ from my dad in one major way. They know that their teacher believes in them. Many of my students form an instant bond with me as a Teacher of Color. They have an inherent trust in me. I’m their role model. I embody the potential they feel inside themselves, and I challenge the negative narrative they have heard and believed about themselves. Maybe they can sense that my family has also struggled with hardship. Maybe they can sense that we’re more alike than different.

After having proved that my majority-minority

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students can achieve at unprecedented levels, I now have a fire in me to advocate for all Students of Color. This enables me to stand in classrooms and see students “at potential” rather than “at risk.” I know my students can and will achieve at the same levels as other students. Their struggle behind them pushes them to achieve at even higher levels.

I support diversifying the educator workforce because research shows that Teachers of Color tend to have a positive impact on Students of Color. This is reflected in my own experience. I have seen firsthand that when students identify with their teachers, they connect at higher levels and achieve

at higher levels. More important, I have seen that when teachers identify with their students, they tend to have a greater belief in their students’ potential and ability. As the population of Students of Color continues to increase, we must take action to increase the diversity of educators. Our students’ future — and our nation’s future — depends on it. ■

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# Valuing the practices of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers

By Conra D. Gist, Travis J. Bristol, & Dorinda J. Carter Andrews

Scholarship on the pedagogical and leadership practices of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers during the last decade of the 20th century and early part of the 21st century was often generated by Scholars of Color (Bristol, 2014; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). Core themes centered on commitments to educational and social liberation (Gist, 2014), as well as on curriculum and pedagogical practices that advance the intellectual prowess of children routinely marginalized in schools (Dilworth & Brown, 2008).

Some researchers have compared the cultures of teaching and pedagogies of Black educators before and after *Brown v. Board of Education* (Anderson, 1988; Foster, 1998; Siddle-Walker, 2005). Others have examined native educators' struggles against deculturalization and assimilation through culturally responsive and Indigenous practices (Grande, 2015; Marin & Bang, 2015; Yazzie-Mintz, 2007). And still others have highlighted the advocacy and pedagogical work of Latinx educators (Colomer, 2019; Valenzuela, 2016) and Asian American educators (Chow, 2019; Lei, 2006; Naseem Rodríguez, 2019; Nguyen, 2008). This is in addition to research into the important instructional contributions of Teachers of Color and within and across ethnoracial groups (Gordon, 2000).

A number of recent studies build on previous scholarship, analyzing pedagogical and leadership practices across a diverse set of educators. Six studies highlighted in the *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* (Gist & Bristol, forthcoming, 2022) expand the research base in this area.

## What the recent research shows

Lasana D. Kazembe analyzes the impact of culturally responsive instruction, tracing its effectiveness to six common characteristics of the teachers who practice it, including those teachers' own awareness and depth of understanding of sociocultural dynamics. Related findings indicate that the

culturally affirming pedagogical and leadership practices of Educators of Color have a prosocial impact on the educational and cultural lives of Students of Color.

Focusing on Asian American teachers — who have been largely overlooked in previous research — Noreen Naseem Rodríguez describes the critically conscious pedagogical practices a set of teachers used to teach Asian American history in a highly political context in Texas. The three Asian American teachers in her study described feeling disconnected and misunderstood as students, never learning histories that reflected their Asian American identities and cultures. Those experiences resulted in their determination to assert their Asian American identities as teachers and work to decenter whiteness in the curriculum and foster racial solidarity through teaching Asian American histories and experiences (e.g., exploring the experiences of Japanese Americans during World War II).

In another study, Tanji Reed Marshall examines the experiences of three Black female educators to learn how they understand their identity as Black educators of primarily Black students. Findings show these educators see themselves as responsible for ensuring the academic success and identity formation of their Black students.

Taking a different approach, a study by Rosa M. Jimenez looks at how Latinx educators engage in critical care and identity formation practices to foster equity in their work with students. This classroom study provides practical examples of how teachers can leverage students' migration experiences as a catalyst for autoethnographic writing. Findings demonstrate that, through their classroom practices, educators countered negative stereotypes about immigration and made tangible the array of cultural knowledge of Latinx migrant communities. They supported students' lived experiences, identities, and literacies through a lens of cultural pride.

Also, investigating the pedagogical practices of Latinx teachers, Ramona Alcalá and colleagues share a study of how teachers' *testimonios* challenge deficit discourse in their

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work in majority Latinx schools in Chicago. Most of the teachers in the study spoke of returning to or “reclaiming” Latinx *barrios* — the Spanish-speaking quarters in which many of the students live — as positive spaces where strong cultural and linguistic identities are forged. Latinx bilingualism was an assumed and unrecognized professional and pedagogical asset to their work. Finally, most of the teachers in the study leveraged expressions of *cariño* (i.e. affection) to connect with their students.

Finally, a case study by Nimo M. Abdi and colleagues focuses on the culturally responsive and decolonial leadership practices of a Black immigrant teacher in her work with immigrant students. The teacher drew on Somali familial forms of care to foster student-centered leadership. Six months of ethnographic data reveal that she helped other teachers care for students as well, thereby becoming an educational leader and significantly contributing to culturally responsive school leadership practices in her school. The teacher affirmed and celebrated her students’ academic identities and used community-based ways of knowing to

work against schoolwide policing and disciplinary policies. Her leadership improved school/community engagement and trust between parents and teachers.

Although these six studies vary in size, scale, location, and participant group, their observations of Teachers of Color share a common finding: The voices and experiences of these teachers reflect a commitment to affirming and sustaining the cultural and ethnoracial backgrounds of their students, as well as challenging the status quo in curriculum and pedagogy in ways that are affirming and work toward educational equity.

### What we don’t know yet

As educational impact studies continue to draw relationships between student success and the presence of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, research on the pedagogical and leadership practices of these teachers is necessary to understand how they cultivate student engagement and learning. There is a significant need for research that offers more nuanced descriptions of how these teachers’ specific



## Research topics to explore

- The ways in which the specific pedagogical and leadership practices that are common among Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers influence student outcomes.
- The outcomes associated with Indigenous and decolonial pedagogical and leadership practices, particularly those that aim to challenge Eurocentric ideologies, discourses, and methodologies.
- The extent to which Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers tend to be grounded in specific cultural and political practices and the ways in which their culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining pedagogies are differently enacted based on social and demographic contexts.
- Whether certain kinds of leadership practices, supports, and professional development tend to be particularly beneficial for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.
- The extent to which the pedagogical and leadership practices of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers are integrated in teacher preparation programs and the associated outcomes for future teachers' pedagogical effectiveness.

practices shape teaching and learning by, for example, advancing humanizing pedagogy in schools across the United States (Carter Andrews et al., 2019).

## Implications for policy and practice

- Provide learning opportunities for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers to deepen their critical orientations to teaching and learning and strengthen effective practices with their students.
- Create support structures that nurture the critical leadership practices of these teachers in ways that equip them to challenge educational inequity in unsupportive or challenging school contexts. ■

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## Research studies to conduct

- **Interpretive studies:** Through ethnographies, autoethnographies, field-based observations, and case studies, researchers can look at the pedagogical and leadership practices of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. They can use theoretical or conceptual frameworks to document, analyze, and expand the evidence base on critical, decolonial, and responsive pedagogy and leadership practices. Availing themselves of decolonial research methodologies (such as *testimonios* and counter-story narrative) and asset-based epistemologies, they can examine the complex and nuanced ways in which Teachers of Color use a range of pedagogical and leadership practices to foster transformative and liberating learning experiences.
- **Design-based studies:** Researchers can examine how Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers use a range of critical, responsive, and decolonial pedagogical and leadership approaches to better understand the relationship of such approaches to student engagement and learning.
- **Effect studies:** Researchers can look at the practices of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers in terms of racial justice and decolonial pedagogies, curricular content, dispositional stance, and leadership practices. They can compare these with student learning outcomes (such as grades and achievement exams); nonacademic measures (such as absenteeism and participation in after-school and extracurricular activities); parent engagement within schools and across districts, and the types of schools involved (in terms of demographic, geographic, and performance outcomes; grade levels, and disciplinary backgrounds).

**Example:** If the problem of practice for a school district is the persistent underperformance of Latinx students in grades 4-8 on mathematics exams, then research-practice partners may consider developing an intervention study by first examining the ethnoracial composition of the mathematics teachers working with these students; the presence of school leaders committed to critical, racial justice, or culturally relevant and decolonial pedagogies; and the types of pedagogies and curricula delivered in grades 4-8 mathematics classrooms. Informed by these findings, a series of design-based and effect studies may be implemented to reverse the underperformance of Latinx students in grades 4-8 on mathematics exams.

# Standing up for diversity — and for bilingual education

By Maribel Vilchez



Global literacy is of crucial importance in today's world. Alongside academic and cultural literacy, global literacy is geared toward making people more aware of the various cultural orientations, philosophies, practices, norms, and histories that exist in the world. One issue of vital importance in global literacy is bilingual education. Originally from Peru, I teach in the state of Washington at a low-income elementary school in which 74% of students receive free and reduced-price lunch. As a specialist in bilingual

education (Spanish and English), I have worked in a dual-language program for 10 years and have received training in pedagogy for language acquisition, which I share daily with my students and colleagues.

There are many avenues open to teachers who wish to become more responsive to their diverse students' needs. For example, I decided to pursue professional development on culturally responsive practices with a focus on bilingual education. I became a Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) trainer. This model has a range of scaffolding and intentional instructional strategies that result in improved student performance. After I implemented these strategies, I saw substantial improvement in my students' achievement.

Culturally responsive practices tailored for language acquisition are simply good instruction. Continuing to look for growth, I decided to pursue National Board certification, which enabled me to

become a more reflective practitioner. Now my pedagogy incorporates the language and cultures of my students more than ever.

Many professional opportunities exist outside the classroom as well that focus on good teaching practices and strong leadership in global literacy and bilingual education. For example, I became a state trainer on culture, language, and equity and supported new National Board candidates in these areas. Through a series of in-service trainings, I was now reaching out and influencing a far greater number of students throughout my state.

I realized I'd become a teacher leader. As such, I became a voice for my students and colleagues. In addition, I was appointed by the governor of my state to become a member of the Professional Educator Standards Board to be part of policy making. Now I'm part of the process of how policy is set for the students and teachers in my state, an experience more teachers should be involved in.

My 16 years of teaching have shown me that many educators need support enhancing their professional development to properly serve our diverse students. All educators' knowledge and understanding need to be attuned to our students' needs. All educators need high-quality professional development opportunities to support students in becoming globally literate, and at the same time many more educators should be given the opportunity to provide their input on education policies that affect them and their students.

Pedagogy and leadership matter. It's only through policy making, research-based practices, and teacher voice that we can advance our educational system and foster the best education for our students. I know because I've gone down that pathway, and I've seen that it works. ■



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# Motivating Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers to stay in the field

By **Conra D. Gist, Travis J. Bristol, Desiree Carver-Thomas, Maria E. Hyler, & Linda Darling-Hammond**

**R**ecruitment efforts over the last 20 years have resulted in a modest increase in the numbers of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers working in the nation's public schools — they made up 16% of the teaching force in 2000 and 19% in 2019 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; Warner-Griffin et al., 2016). However, those gains would have been more significant if not for high (and growing) attrition rates among these teachers — about 19% of Teachers of Color left their positions in 2013 compared to 15% of white teachers. In 1992, 13% of Teachers of Color left their positions, a rate comparable to white teachers.

The existing research into teacher retention tends to address the experiences of teachers in general, without considering the distinct experiences of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. For instance, studies have found that teachers of all races and ethnicities tend to leave the profession when they experience a lack of support from colleagues and administrators (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Also, researchers have found that teacher attrition tends to be higher at charter schools than at other public schools — in 2008-09, 7.9% of teachers left public schools in comparison to 12.5% teachers leaving charter schools (Keigher, 2010).

In the relatively few studies that *have* focused specifically on the attrition of Teachers of Color, those teachers cite some of the same reasons for leaving the profession as in studies of teachers in general, sometimes with different degrees of emphasis, as well as some unique challenges. The range of responses includes inadequate educator preparation experiences (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011); difficulty navigating relationships with colleagues (Gist, 2018) and

relating to school administrators (Farinde-Wu & Fitchett, 2018); limited professional development supports (Bristol et al., 2020); a restrictive curriculum (Philip, 2013); racial microaggressions (Quinones, 2018); hostile racial climates (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016), and too few career and leadership development opportunities (Rogers-Ard et al., 2013).

Further, data show that relative to their white counterparts, Teachers of Color tend to be much more likely to work in schools serving more Students of Color and students in poverty, which are often under-resourced, resulting in challenging working conditions (Carver-Thomas, 2018) that no doubt contribute to high rates of attrition (Simon & Johnson, 2015). More specifically, Betty Achinstein and colleagues (2010) have divided the umbrella term “working conditions” into several distinct variables — student body characteristics, financial capital, human capital, social capital, and power structures and relations — that can each influence the overall quality of the work environment, influencing teachers’ decisions to stay on the job or quit the profession. Teachers of Color, the researchers note, are disproportionately employed at schools that are rated poorly on at least a few of these variables.

Additionally, evidence suggests that school and district administrators’ personnel decisions often reflect conscious or unconscious bias about Black educators, with further effects on their retention. For example, researchers have found that administrators are less likely to hire Black teachers than white teachers with similar credentials and professional experience (D’Amico et al., 2017), and they tend to give Black teachers lower teaching evaluations than other subgroups of teachers, regardless of their students’

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performance (Bailey et al., 2016; Drake, Auletto, & Cowen, 2019). Likely because of the concentration of teachers of color in high-needs schools, when district administrators designate schools for closure, they tend to choose schools that employ large numbers of Teachers of Color (Cook & Dixson, 2013; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Six recent studies highlighted in the *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* (Gist & Bristol, forthcoming, 2022) expand the research base in this area.

### What the recent research shows

While researchers continue to explore the causes of high attrition among Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, we're also beginning to see a more concerted effort to identify strategies that will help boost their retention. In one study, Richard Ingersoll and colleagues analyze 30 years of survey data on teacher turnover, along with data on shortages of Teachers of Color. Echoing previous studies, they find that higher turnover is closely associated with poor working conditions, with Teachers of Color citing low salary levels, inadequate professional development, low-quality classroom resources, and — the most important factors, according to teacher surveys — their exclusion from school decision making and their lack of instructional autonomy. To increase the retention of Teachers of Color, the researchers conclude, efforts by school and district leaders should include strengthening teachers' participation in school decision making and allowing them greater professional discretion in the classroom.

Policy makers have often hypothesized, also, that economic incentives (such as merit-based pay, salary schedule modifications, and retirement packages that reward length of service) can boost teacher retention. Andrene Castro has reviewed the research into such policies, focusing on

those implemented between 2008 and 2018, to see if the design and/or duration of the incentive program affected the retention of Teachers of Color in particular. She finds that certain kinds of policies do show promise of motivating Teachers of Color to remain in the profession. Education and training-related incentives (i.e., tuition subsidies, preservice teacher scholarships, financial assistance for nontraditional comprehensive teacher preparation, and tuition tax credits) appear to be particularly promising. However, Castro concludes, to learn more about the effects of such policies on teacher diversity, we'll need to be careful to make sure that school staffing data are disaggregated by race and ethnicity.

These education- and training-related subsidies may be particularly promising for several reasons. Student debt presents a disproportionate burden on Teachers and Teacher Candidates of Color. Black undergraduates, for example, graduate with more debt than white borrowers, and this gap grows over time, amounting to a difference of more than \$40,000 12 years after graduation (Scott-Clayton & Li, 2016). Black college students are more likely to report that they changed their career plans because of their loans, or that their loans were burdensome (Baum & O'Malley, 2003). It is little surprise, then, that Teachers of Color are more likely to enter the teaching profession through alternative certification pathways that significantly reduce the cost of preparation (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017b). However, alternative certification pathways typically offer little to no preservice student teaching and coursework and are associated with higher teacher turnover rates (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017a). Indeed, teachers who enter the profession with the least preparation have higher turnover rates than those who enter with the most comprehensive preparation (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2012).



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Other recent studies have focused on how professional relationships support or undermine the retention of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. For instance, a study by Socorro Herrera and colleagues finds that Latinx teachers in predominantly white rural settings often choose to isolate themselves from their colleagues, largely to shield themselves from racial microaggressions and hostile criticism of their efforts to include topics related to race and ethnicity in the curriculum. The more often Latinx teachers have to confront these two forms of hostility, the weaker their resolve to remain in the profession. To improve retention, the researchers recommend providing teachers with professional development opportunities that foreground workplace issues and challenges related to race and ethnicity, build on their cultural assets, and foster strong support systems and networks.

In another study, Ashley Griffin and colleagues find that many Black K-12 teachers experience constant hostility from colleagues and administrators, undermining their commitment to teaching. The researchers conducted a series of focus groups in New Jersey, North Carolina, Alabama, Texas, California, Colorado, Tennessee, and the District of Columbia as a means of gauging Black teachers' perceptions of the professional challenges they face and how those challenges are likely to influence the length of their teaching careers. The participants described being routinely subjected to various and often subtle forms of racism and discrimination, such as being assigned to teach Black students only, being regularly put into the role of classroom or school disciplinarian, being constantly scrutinized and pressured to prove their worth and ability to colleagues and parents, and being offered limited opportunities for professional growth and development.

Similarly, Toya Frank and colleagues surveyed more than 500 Black K-12 math teachers across the United States, eliciting their views on mathematics content and pedagogy, their racialized experiences as teachers, and their current working conditions. A majority of respondents indicated that racism had significant effects on their professional lives, likely influencing their future decisions about whether to continue teaching. For example, more than half said they are subjected to race-related microaggressions at least a few times a month (32.6%), or once weekly (19.5%), suggesting that they endure a steady stream of hostile and demeaning remarks and other slights, which degrade the quality of their teaching experiences and relationships with colleagues.

On a more encouraging note, Maria Tenorio and colleagues examined an American Indian Teacher Program (AITP) that features an Indigenous community of practice, which aims to affirm teachers' Native identity, support their advocacy for tribal educational sovereignty and nation building, and nurture long-term professional relationships and networks. Analyzing data and records from 2010 to 2018, the researchers find that the program has boosted teacher retention, largely due to the quality of the

mentorship it offers — specifically, mentors' efforts not only to help participants cope with the everyday challenges of teaching, but also to reinforce their motivation to stay in the field and serve their community. Of the 35 teachers who graduated from the program during the eight years of the study, 32 remain classroom teachers, two became administrators, and only one has left the profession (due to illness).

### What we don't know yet

There has been less research on the impact on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, specifically, of policies and programmatic interventions that have been found effective at influencing job satisfaction, persistence, mobility, attrition, and retention among teachers, generally. Future studies could investigate the effects for Teachers of Color of economic interventions (e.g., signing bonuses, forgiveness of student loans, and housing supports); human resources (e.g., specific approaches to mentorship, networking, and professional development), and social-emotional supports (e.g., mental health resources and approaches to self-care).

Because school administrators play a key role in teachers' job satisfaction and retention, it would also be helpful to know more about the ways principals (and others who supervise and evaluate Teachers of Color) can foster a racially literate and supportive school climate. It would also be useful to know whether and how teacher retention is influenced when teachers and school administrators share the same racial or ethnic background. And it would be valuable to know whether certain types of programs and learning experiences are effective at preparing principals and other administrators to create a school climate that supports the retention of Teachers of Color.

### Implications for policy and practice

- Provide Teaching Candidates of Color and Indigenous Candidates access to high-retention pathways into teaching by underwriting the cost of comprehensive preparation through programs such as teacher residencies, loan forgiveness, and service scholarships.
- Offer differentiated induction, mentorship, and professional development support that address the teaching strengths and racialized challenges of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers in ways that make race visible, honor these teachers' funds of knowledge and community cultural wealth, and provide antiracist and Indigenous tools, resources, and communities of practice that enable them to remain in the profession.
- Tailor retention support for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers to various stages of career



development, such as novice, mid-career, and veteran, as well as those who have moved into school leadership.

- Invest in high-quality antiracist school leaders who foster formal structures, such as racial climate committees and education and training incentives, to help teachers, staff, and school administrators become aware of and disrupt racism and inequity. ■

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## Research topics to explore

- How differences in working conditions affect Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers within and across groups.
- Critical and racial justice conceptual frameworks for understanding attrition, retention, promotion, advancement, and other professional transitions across an educator's career.
- Various economic and noneconomic interventions that support the persistence and retention of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.
- Metrics for assessing the racialized experiences of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers using national data sets.
- Antiracist and Indigenous clinical induction and professional development models designed to support the retention of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.
- The role of education policies in retaining or displacing Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.

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## Research studies to conduct

- **Interpretive studies:** Researchers investigate the experiences of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers who remain in or leave the profession in the same school or district, differentiating for years of experience, working conditions, disciplinary background, school type, preparation pathway, and teacher development and evaluation policies. Using culturally responsive and decolonial methodologies, researchers should engage with teachers who have left the profession and those who have chosen to stay.
- **Design-based studies:** Researchers can design interventions that examine how different economic and humanistic supports influence job satisfaction, persistence, mobility, attrition, and retention for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.
- **Effect studies:** Researchers can develop causal studies that examine the relationships between the retention of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers at district, state, and national levels and program pathways, teacher characteristics in schools, working conditions, and reform policies. This research should be paired with qualitative sources of evidence, such as focus groups, interviews, and teacher testimonies, to clarify outcomes. Where possible, the research should be conducted longitudinally to more reliably ascertain what factors influence teacher retention.

**Example:** If the problem of practice is that Latino men working in middle schools exit the profession at a higher rate than other Teachers of Color, then researchers might engage in interpretative studies to better understand these teachers' experiences and the middle school contexts in which they work. Drawing from these investigations, researchers would develop theories of change that would drive the development of design-based interventions to foster improved retention outcomes for Latino men.

# To retain Teachers of Color, nurture them

By Kiah Duncan



I left teaching after four years with no intention of returning. It wasn't because the students lacked discipline or because I couldn't handle the pressure. It wasn't even because the pay was too low. The real problem was that every time I began to flourish, something cut me down.

Imagine a sturdy tree that keeps being struck by lightning, until it finally falls. The first time lightning hit me was when I was given a pink slip, right after having received great evaluations and positive feedback from my principal. Meanwhile, colleagues who no longer had the passion for teaching kept their jobs simply because they started before I did. Perhaps I should have known that nontenured teachers could be let go for any reason, but I was caught completely off guard.

To make sure I didn't have a gap in employment, I took a new job, teaching 2nd grade, that paid \$5,000 less per year. Two months into the fall semester, a new principal took over the school and abruptly turned everything upside down, including the master schedule. I was given just one day to move my entire classroom (furniture included) to the other side of the school, with no assistance. More important, I had only that one day to prepare myself to teach 1st grade — a grade I hadn't taught before. That was another lightning strike.

Nevertheless, despite the stressful circumstances, and even though the 1st graders were bewildered by the sudden change of teachers, we had a successful year. Once again, I received glowing evaluations, and the new principal complimented my work, telling me I was an accomplished teacher. However, he added, he did have one problem with me: He told me I needed to “perk up” and that I should smile

more often. At that point, I could sense the storm clouds beginning to gather once again. What did my face have to do with the quality of my teaching? Was I being stereotyped as an angry Black woman, simply because I didn't plant a smile on my face and meet the principal's desired level of perkiness?

By the following year, the principal had become displeased with me for neglecting to overhaul my face and personality. During my evaluation, he insisted that I do something to address this “issue,” telling me, “You know your stuff, and the kids seem to really like you. But if you plan to continue to work for me, you'll have to change who you are.”

I couldn't believe he actually expected me to transform into a new person. I couldn't do such a thing, I said, so he would have to do whatever he found necessary. Of course, on my next evaluation, he gave me extremely negative feedback. This time, the lightning lit me on fire and burned me down. I was stressed out already from working long hours, but now it was clear that my hard work would not be recognized, no matter how well I did my job. Nor were my veteran colleagues spared from this principal's harassment. Some tenured teachers even lost their jobs midyear, and the teachers union did nothing to help.

I loved my job, but only when the doors were closed and I was in my own world with my students. Every time I left the classroom, my stress level would rise. I couldn't stand being there and couldn't wait to be fired. As predicted, I received a pink slip. This time I was calm. My tree had been reduced to a stump. Like many early-career Black teachers working in underserved and overpopulated low-income schools, I was ready for reincarnation.

I knew I had to leave teaching before my anger poisoned my work with children, so I found a job as an office manager, which was fun for a while. However, I couldn't stop thinking about how much I had enjoyed teaching. So, I decided to go to graduate school to get my master's degree in reading. I went back into teaching, better prepared this time, and armed with new expertise and wisdom. Going to graduate school had given me a chance to root myself in a better place, where the lightning didn't strike.

My new principal gave me opportunities to grow. It started small, with me leading a few staff meetings, mentoring, and taking on more responsibility. Then it grew to leading large events for the community, leading professional development programs, and sitting on committees at the district level. With

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the confidence I gained from these experiences, I decided to seek out a new position: I now work as an instructional interventionist for grades K–5, which enables me to coach other teachers; work in small groups with students who need support; select teaching materials, and guide my entire school building in collecting, interpreting, and using data for improvement. All this has led me to study leadership so I can be a bigger part of the change that is needed.

Leaving teaching was necessary to prevent me from becoming a jaded teacher. I refused to be

someone who contributes to that vicious cycle of systematic inequality, in which substandard educators work with the most vulnerable children, damaging them further.

Unfortunately, though, most teachers who leave don't find their way back to the profession. And among those who do come back (or never leave at all), some do so because they see no other options. Unless we find better ways to nurture those educators — both when they start their careers and later on, when they need to be rejuvenated — we will all suffer. ■



# Centering race and racism in educator diversity policies

By Conra D. Gist, Travis J. Bristol,  
Anthony L. Brown, & Keffrelyn D. Brown

Historically, well-intended education policies have often had unforeseen and negative consequences, leading to greater inequities (Anyon, 2005; Nieto, 2005) and less teacher diversity (Dillard, 1994; Irvine, 1988) in public education. Indeed, scholars commonly note that while the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which put an end to legally sanctioned school segregation in the United States, was a great achievement, it prompted many white state and district officials, especially in the South, to enact blatantly racist and inequitable educator hiring and placement policies, which resulted in the displacement of tens of thousands of Black educators and steep reductions in teacher diversity in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Dilworth & Brown, 2008; Fultz, 2004).

Increasingly, since then, advocates have called upon federal, state, and local policy makers to invest in more carefully designed and effective approaches to recruiting, preparing, hiring, and retaining Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2017; Putman et al., 2016). In recent years, many new policy approaches aimed at diversifying the educator workforce have been introduced across the country, such as the Council of Chief State School Officers' Diverse and Learner-Ready Teachers Initiative, the California Department of Education's cosponsorship of Assembly Bill 520, the California Diversifying the Teacher Workforce Grant Program, and the New York City Department of Education's NYC Men Teach. State and local education agencies have led these efforts in response to a glaring disconnect between their mostly white teaching force and the fast-growing diversity of their student enrollments (Noonan & Bristol, 2020; Washington State Professional Educators Standards Board, 2019).

As yet, a relatively small number of studies have been conducted into the effects of these initiatives, but one clear finding has emerged from the research: Policies designed to improve the recruitment of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers have opened doors to the teaching profession, but the creators of those policies have given too little thought to the kinds of schools those teachers will enter, the conditions in which they will be required to teach, and the kinds of supports they will need. As a result, while the country has seen increased recruitment of Teachers of Color in recent years, these gains have been largely offset by leaks in the teacher development pipeline and high rates of teacher attrition. Six recent studies highlighted in the *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* (Gist & Bristol, forthcoming, 2022) expand the research base in the area of policy.

## What the recent research shows

A pair of studies begin the *Handbook's* policy section by providing historical overviews of policy initiatives designed to diversify the educator workforce, as well as analyses of the *outcomes* of those initiatives. Diana D'Amico Pawlewicz and colleagues examine both formal and informal decision making in public school systems over the last 50 years, showing how specific decisions created barriers that inhibited racial diversification among teachers. Through a case study of hiring reforms intended to bring Teachers of Color into New York City schools during the 1970s, the authors reveal that it was not just the *Brown* decision that led to a dramatic reduction in the numbers of Black educators — specific district-level policy decisions had the effect of reducing the number of Black teachers. These policies included relying on teacher

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certification examinations as the primary criteria for entering the profession and union rules such as “last-in-first-out,” which, during an economic downturn, privileges veteran teachers, most of whom are white, and disadvantages recently recruited teachers, many of whom are People of Color.

Looking back over the past 15 years, Mary Dilworth examines why *federal* policy makers have done little to enact policies designed to increase teacher diversity. One reason is that federal policy makers have been unwilling to pass race-based policies because race continues to be our country’s most divisive issue. To gauge what might prompt them to take more action in this area, Dilworth interviewed government officials and policy advocates who have succeeded in influencing federal education policy making on other topics. She concludes that if advocates were to emphasize the ways in which teacher diversity benefits all students, if a handful of well-placed officials were to champion this issue, and if advocacy organizations were to demonstrate a strong and consistent commitment to teacher diversity, then federal policy makers could be moved to establish robust programs and policies to support it.

There is also a body of research considering whether recent state and local policies have prevented many aspiring Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers from entering the profession even at a time when growing numbers of local education leaders are calling explicitly for more teacher diversity. In an analysis of recent demographic data on new teachers, focusing on members of the millennial generation, Michael Hansen and Diana Quintero find that the newest cadre of public school teachers is even more disproportionately white (relative to the overall population of same-age college graduates) than were teachers of previous generations. Surprised by this finding, Hansen and Quintero go on to explore whether demographic and policy trends in recent decades — including the erosion of real teacher salaries, increasing student diversity outside of urban centers, and the expansion of charter schools — may have hindered efforts to diversify the teacher workforce. Unlike D’Amico Pawlewicz and colleagues, Hansen and Quintero find no evidence of specific policies that have had this effect, leaving them uncertain as to why fewer Teachers of Color are entering the profession. However, their analysis calls attention to the urgency for policy makers to respond to this new trend and to consider whether existing policies may be having unintended consequences for teacher diversity.

Focusing on one policy in particular — states’ use of teacher certification exams — Yukari Takimoto Amos gauges the psychological toll that these exams take on aspiring Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, who tend to pass them at lower rates than white aspirants. Amos finds that for teacher candidates who fail multiple times, this part of the licensure process tends to become a major preoccupation, distracting them from other aspects of their professional preparation and creating prolonged emotional distress. In the face of unsuccessful attempts and continued emotional distress,

Teacher Candidates of Color persisted until they passed the certification exams.

Similarly, Amber Kim and colleagues examine how a common policy strategy — supporting alternative teacher certification programs — has affected teacher diversity. Specifically, their study focuses on Teach for America (TFA), a national corps that trains teachers and places them in racially and economically marginalized communities. In their analysis, the researchers highlight a tension that they find to be inherent to this approach: On one hand, TFA has publicly espoused the need for greater teacher diversity, as well as its successful recruitment of Teachers of Color; on the other hand, the authors find that the organization, in its preparation of teacher candidates, upholds white supremacist ideas, which are manifested in instructional practices centered on direct instruction as well as classroom management focused on policing the bodies of Children of Color. Moreover, TFA promotes a deficit view of the communities of color that they serve, portraying them as lacking in the knowledge, skills, and expertise that TFA recruits bring to local schools. This often leads the program’s recruits to become disillusioned with teaching, the study concludes, as they find that TFA’s good intentions, promotion of diversity, and support for culturally relevant teaching are contradicted by its assumptions about and attitudes toward local communities.

Finally, a study by Amaya Garcia and colleagues focuses on specific parts of the teacher preparation process that often present challenges for aspiring Teachers of Color (specifically for Latinx aspirants in Washington State), asking what state policies might help patch these leaks in the teacher pipeline. First, they argue, state policy makers should create programs designed to help aspiring Latinx teachers make a successful transition from high school to college teacher preparation programs, and from college programs to their initial classroom placement — according to their data, these tend to be the leakiest points in the pipeline. Second, they argue that policy makers should make it a priority to provide college and university students with better social-emotional, academic, and financial supports, which tend to be crucial to the persistence and success of Students of Color in higher education overall and particularly in teacher preparation programs. Finally, they argue that policy makers should create initiatives specifically designed to recruit community members to teach in their local schools, as well as to fund their preparation and help them meet certification requirements, which often pose obstacles for racially and linguistically diverse individuals who show an interest in working in nearby schools.

### What we don’t know yet

Recent experience suggests that policy supports for *recruiting* more Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers are not sufficient to build and sustain a more ethnoracially diverse teacher force. Researchers have begun to shed light on what



## Research topics to explore

- The variation in federal, state, and district teacher diversity policies in their racial and social justice commitments.
- The similarities and differences between past education policies that created the underrepresentation of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers and current teacher diversity policies and their implications on the educator workforce of the future.
- The varied political commitments, organizing processes, and knowledge products advanced by education reform funders who espouse support for educator diversity initiatives.
- The effects of various education reform policies on the recruitment, preparation, retention, and professional advancement of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.
- The positioning of teacher diversity as a *policy* problem and equity and justice problem, related to teacher learning and organizational and leadership capacity in schools.

other kinds of federal, state, and local policies are needed, and to show which policy strategies have created more obstacles for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. However, we urgently need more studies in this area, especially into policies designed to help all aspiring educators succeed in the teacher preparation and certification process and to promote equitable hiring and promotion practices, support systems for new teachers, and professional development systems (Gist et al., 2021). Further, we need more research into how best to ensure that new policy strategies include Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers, that they respect diverse school communities, and that they avoid the sorts of harmful, if unintended consequences of previous policy initiatives.

## Implications for policy and practice

- Future policy work must articulate the ways in which racial and educational justice commitments drive policy when policy makers are committed to the academic and professional advancement of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers.
- We must move beyond thinking about educator diversity as a simple policy problem. Instead, we must grapple with the complexity of the issue. Policy

makers must keep in mind how all aspects of a teacher's formation — teacher learning, school organization and leadership, and cultural norms in the professionalization of teaching — can be mired in race and racism in ways that obstruct equitable access to and support in the profession. ■

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## Research studies to conduct

- **Interpretive studies:** Researchers can develop ethnographies and case studies that investigate the influence of particular educator diversity policies on the representation of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers along the teacher development continuum — recruitment, preparation, retention, human resource development and induction supports, mentorship, professional development, pedagogical and leadership practices, and educational impact. They can examine the subjective experiences of teachers interacting with these policies using nondominant and decolonial methodologies, such as teacher testimonios, narratives, autoethnographies, journals, storytelling, and photovoice. They can create longitudinal studies that examine how teacher diversity educational policies — their initiation, implementation, conclusion, and aftermath — have affected the lived experiences of Teachers and Students of Color.
- **Design-based studies:** Researchers can design methodological interventions that explore past teacher diversity policy and how the successes and failures of such policies can inform policy solutions going forward. They can subsequently develop and test teacher diversity policy interventions designed to increase the representation and retention of Teachers of Color.
- **Effect studies:** Researchers can examine evidence of causal relationships among state, diversity, and federal teacher development policies (for example, online alternative certification programs, certification exams, micro-credential programs, loan forgiveness, incentive pay, affinity hiring, and placement groups) and variation in outcomes related to hiring rates; movement, attrition, and retention rates; student loan debt and income increases; type of schools and working conditions; outcomes on academic and nonacademic factors, and evaluation scores, promotion, and advancement. These studies would account for differences in preparation pathway, geographic regions, and intersectional identities.

**Example:** If the problem of practice at the state level is the high number of Teacher Candidates of Color and Indigenous Teacher Candidates who fail certification exams in comparison to white teacher candidates, and if these outcomes coincide with new certification testing requirements in state educational policy, then partners might develop interpretive and effect studies to determine which features and mechanisms of the certification policy are most closely associated with the disparate exam outcomes. On the basis of their findings, the partners may decide to develop and implement design-based policy interventions for Teacher Candidates of Color and Indigenous Teacher Candidates throughout the state to address these disparities. Possible research partners for this type of project may include state, district, and/or national boards of education, teacher policy groups, critical and social justice-oriented think tanks, and education and public policy scholars.

# Policy Matters

By Juanita Price



Beginning my junior year of high school in a new district, I entered the hallways of an unfamiliar school. It was a world away from my comfort zone; I was in for a culture shock. My old school, in Indiana's Gary Community School Corporation, had become my second home. There I was met by warm voices and kind faces that resembled mine and those of my family. This was my community!

In this new school, I could not relate. Nothing about this change made me feel welcomed, not even the pairing with a Black guidance counselor who ultimately fed into my withdrawal and self-doubt. Being removed from a learning space that confirmed my Blackness and excellence raised questions in my mind of my worthiness and preparedness to occupy this new learning space. I still wonder whether it was a matter of the white teachers not believing in me or whether the schoolwork genuinely became more difficult. Either way, I no longer felt capable — and I definitely didn't feel supported. In lieu of providing the necessary scaffolding, the teachers suggested that I take a lesser course load or "basic" courses, rather than the Advanced Placement classes I was consistently encouraged to take in my previous district.

As I reflect on this now, as an educator, I'm certain it was the bigotry of low expectations. If policies existed to support teachers and staff members to bring out the best in all students, more students would benefit from traditional schooling, no matter which district they're in. Students tend to rise to the expectations of their teachers, especially teachers who share the students' cultural experiences (Lombardi, 2016). Research suggests that Black students are more successful when they've had just one Black teacher (Rosen, 2018). Imagine how much more successful Black students could be with multiple Black teachers throughout their academic careers.

Despite my experience in the new school, being

taught by Black teachers throughout the majority of my public school education provided a rich foundation. The teachers in Gary believed in me, and their support still sustains my will to reach high expectations. Ultimately, attending Fisk University — a historically Black university — allowed me to recover that early momentum. And so began my trajectory of becoming a teacher who meets the needs of Black and Brown students.

It is essential that we establish policies to recruit, hire, train, and sustain Black teachers. Two approaches in particular offer attractive incentives and long-term professional support, as well as opportunities for career advancement. The first, *compensated teacher residency programs*, pairs resident teachers with highly effective teachers on completion of undergraduate coursework. Resident teachers receive mentoring and supervised training to equip them with the skills and experience they need to succeed in high-need areas. Residents are compensated while continuing their work toward a master's degree.

*Mentoring programs*, the second approach, support teachers as they adjust to teaching within their own classrooms. This gives novice teachers a space to speak openly about their successes and challenges, without fear of repercussions on a formal review. Induction programs usually offer two tracks — one for new teachers (whether they are just out of school or transitioning from another career path) and one for experienced teachers who are new to a school or district.

In addition to providing for such programs, state and local policies should ensure that principals are trained to support Black teachers and teachers in urban settings that predominantly serve Black and Brown students. New teacher orientation programs, in which administrators review the school's expectations and identify each teacher's needs and strengths, can help create a sense of collaboration and point teachers to professional development tailored to their needs.

Imagine policy that would provide Black teachers with a mentor during their first few years of teaching. Mentor teachers should be highly qualified and should be compensated for their time. Mentor and mentee would meet to review and internalize lesson plans, record lessons for feedback, and participate in practice clinics. Building leaders should be accountable for the success of these programs; they should meet with mentor teachers and track goals and progress. Ultimately, the mission should

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be clear; every staff member in the building needs to be committed to supporting the aspirations of every student.

Other approaches are worth noting, too. *Competitive compensation* implies that an educator's salary should align with the salary of other careers that require the same amount of education and experience. Considering how much professional development and training are necessary for teachers to remain licensed and up-to-date, educators deserve a more competitive salary and corresponding raises and benefits over the years.

*Culturally responsive pedagogy*, *culturally sustaining pedagogy*, and *universal design for learning* prioritize professional development. Every adult who is in contact with students should commit to attending training sessions in which everyone explores the science of learning and teaching and how to serve and support their community. Policies should hold administrators accountable for providing high-quality professional development, so teachers will be better prepared and more likely to stay in the profession.

If policies were in place to support these approaches, more students would share my first schooling experience, one in which they're

surrounded by teachers who look like them and who believe they can succeed. The Black teachers who intentionally taught our heritage and incorporated our culture in interactions helped us become more conscious of the world as it *should* be while nurturing our confidence and strengthening our skills to critically think about and exist in the world as it is.

Policies are important. They should be designed to ensure that teachers receive the training they need to boost their confidence to manage a classroom; to internalize, differentiate, and implement the curriculum, and to productively engage with parents and the community in which they serve. Policy normalizes support and sets standards and expectations while providing a framework for accountability. ■

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# Teacher diversity and the state of our democracy

BY CAROL D. LEE

*The Handbook of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers*, edited by Conra D. Gist and Travis J. Bristol, addresses one of the major challenges facing the field of education in the United States: the lack of diversity among public school teachers. But our teaching force didn't *always* lack diversity. During the era of Jim Crow, segregated schools were staffed primarily by Teachers of Color. Ironically, following the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which mandated the desegregation of public school systems, thousands of Black teachers and administrators lost their jobs, displaced by white teachers and administrators (Hudson & Holmes, 1994; Madkins, 2011). Nearly 70 years later, U.S. public schools remain largely segregated, but the effects of that displacement linger on. Today, the teaching force is mostly white and female, even in large urban districts that enroll few white students (Hussar et al., 2020).

If we hope to build a teacher workforce that reflects the growing diversity of our student populations, it is important that we understand both this historical legacy and the ongoing challenges we face in recruiting and sustaining teachers who are Black, Latinx, Native American, or Asian American/Pacific Islander. But it is just as important that we ask ourselves why this work *matters*. Why is it so important that we address this disjuncture between the ethnicities of our teachers and those of our students?

One answer is that it matters to students' academic outcomes —

specifically, it has been found that when the race/ethnicity of teachers and students match, students tend to score higher on standardized achievement tests. However, while it may be important to raise test scores (though it's unclear what those tests really tell us about student learning or preparation for college), I would argue that we have a much more compelling reason to care about teacher diversity: It matters to our democracy.

Education in a democracy has multiple goals. It must prepare young people to develop the skills they will need to succeed in the workforce and sustain themselves economically, as well as to cultivate their individual talents and enable them to lead fulfilling lives. Further, it must prepare them to engage in the kinds of civic reasoning, discourse, and debate that a democracy requires (Kahne & Bowyer, 2017; Lee, White, & Dong, forthcoming, 2022; Mirra & Garcia, 2020). This demands not only that they develop the disposition to participate in civic life, but also that they become well-grounded in literacy, science, mathematics, literature, history, the arts, and other subject areas, as well as understand how our government works. Moreover, it requires that they come to understand and embrace basic democratic values, including an appreciation of human diversity, respect for human rights (not just the rights of legal citizenship), and a commitment to rational deliberation, decision making, and the pursuit of compromise on issues of public importance.

In deliberating about what our democratic values entail, and how we should prepare our children to live out those values, our country has struggled most of all over conceptions of race, class, and gender and whether it makes sense to arrange people into hierarchies based on those conceptions (Gould, 1981; Lee, 2009). As we've seen in recent months —

especially in the intense ideological partisanship and even violence surrounding the 2020 presidential election and the transition to a new administration — tensions over the significance of race, class, and gender remain as salient as ever.

So, what is the role of public education in preparing young people to wrestle with the demands and dilemmas of democratic decision making in such a climate (Gutmann, 1999)? More specifically, what must teachers do to ensure their students develop the capacity to perform their civic responsibilities, especially to participate in enduring debates about race, class, and gender (and, I would add, in debates about how race has been defined in relation to ethnicity, ability and disability, and other categories)? That is, what must teachers understand about the complexities of human diversity, the range of cultural practices and resources their students bring to the classroom, and the challenges involved in living in communities that are both homogeneous and woven into the heterogeneous fabric of the nation (Nasir et al., 2020)?

The publications in this *Kappan* report tackle these very questions as they relate to recruiting more Teachers of Color into the profession and providing them with the kinds of preservice preparation, professional development, and broader supports needed to sustain a teaching force that is well-equipped to educate students for a diverse democracy.

Ironically, one factor contributing to the dearth of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers is the growing range of professional opportunities now available to Black, Brown, and Indigenous college graduates. During the Jim Crow era, teaching was a major route to economic progress for People of Color, but today's potential teaching candidates may view the work as less attractive and less

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competitive than other professions in terms of salary, autonomy, and working conditions.

But solutions can be found. The articles in this report address recruitment, retention, mentorship, professional development, program design, and the policies and human resources required to expand the diversity of our teaching force and retain these teachers in the profession. The authors look at the crucial role of minority-serving higher education institutions as well as the various grow-your-own programs aimed at recruiting candidates from local school communities.

By expanding the diversity of our teaching force in public education, we enhance opportunities for all our children to develop the technical skills and dispositions they need to uphold democratic values and fully participate in our democracy. In the long run, however, these challenges are not the purview of the teaching profession alone. Rather, they are challenges to our society writ large. With this special report that focuses on growing

and sustaining ethnoracial teacher diversity, *Phi Delta Kappan* offers valuable resources that will enable all of us to think about how we can best work to produce the conditions that will strengthen the teaching profession and create robust opportunities for all our children. ■

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# What will it take to change teacher demographics?

BY PAM GROSSMAN

I'm fond of saying that the resources that matter most in education are human resources, and that the *school-based* human resources that matter most are teachers. So, not surprisingly, I applaud any publication that focuses on the importance of teachers. This *Kappan* report is especially relevant because it addresses crucial questions related to the recruitment, preparation, and retention of Teachers of Color who represent both valuable and rare resources in the educational landscape.

*The Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers*, edited by Conra D. Gist and Travis J. Bristol, shows that, in this time when issues of racial justice are at the forefront of our national conversation, we still know very little about how best to recruit and support Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers in U.S. schools.

As the research syntheses make clear, Teachers of Color represent only 19% of teachers in U.S. public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), whereas Students of Color represent more than half of public school students. And these numbers present an incomplete picture because Teachers of Color are not evenly distributed across districts or states. For example, in 2017, Students of Color represented 71% of Texas students, whereas Teachers of Color represented only 38% of the teachers; and in Washington State, Students of Color made up 44% of the student

population, whereas only 10% of teachers identified as Teachers of Color (Brown & Boser, 2017). This means that in all too many schools across the United States, Students of Color can go through their entire schooling without ever seeing teachers who look like them. As one pair of researchers (Bireda & Chait, 2011) noted, “in over 40 percent of public schools there is not a single teacher of color” (p. 1). The research presented in the *Handbook* also makes clear that Teachers of Color have a positive effect on student achievement and graduation rates for Students of Color, as well as on students' sense of belonging in school. If we are to provide the most robust learning opportunities for historically marginalized students, then creating a more diverse teacher workforce must be part of the solution.

There is no shortage of ideas as to how we might accomplish this; many of them are described in this special report. But, as the powerful commentaries from teachers convey, all too often Teachers of Color fail to receive the specific kinds of preparation or support that would help them remain in the classroom. This failure reflects a larger challenge around retention in the teaching profession that is greatly intensified for Teachers of Color.

So, how can we move toward changing the demographics of the teaching force? The first step is to recognize and understand the nature of the problem and to face the challenge, for as James Baldwin (2010) famously commented, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced” (p. 42).

This publication squarely addresses the challenge by helping us understand the realities Teachers of Color face. It also makes clear, however,

that we have not sufficiently invested in the kinds of systematic research studies that would help us understand which programs and practices are most effective, for which populations of teachers and under what conditions.

Perhaps most important, we have too little research into the policies that might lead to substantive improvements in teacher diversity. We know that federal and state policies can change the nature of educational opportunity for *students*, particularly when we look at clusters of equity-oriented policies. (For instance, Rucker C. Johnson's 2019 book, *Children of the Dream*, details how the combination of school funding, access to Head Start, and school integration leads to greater social mobility.) But we do not yet know which policy strategies are most effective at increasing the diversity of the teaching workforce.

Still, the problem is too urgent for us to wait for the research in this area to mature. We need to act now, both at the federal and state levels, to create policies that aim to improve the recruitment and retention of Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers. For example, we can provide forgivable loans for Students of Color who become teachers; create robust pathways and financial support for Paraprofessionals of Color to earn degrees and certification; offer better financial, pedagogical, and culturally appropriate supports during both teacher education and the early years of teaching, and compensate Teachers of Color who take on additional tasks of mentoring younger colleagues and student teachers. And in the meantime, while we pursue such reasonable policy strategies, we can also invest in sustained, longitudinal research to help policy makers learn from and improve upon these efforts.



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With a new U.S. presidential administration in place, and as our national reckoning with racial injustice continues to unfold, now is the time to take action to ensure that the adults in our public schools reflect the country's racial diversity and to ensure that all students, most especially Students of Color, have the opportunity to learn from Teachers of Color. ■

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