

From Recruitment through Retention: Strategies to Repair and Strengthen the BIPOC Teaching Pipeline

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The absence of sustainable recruitment, hiring, and retention processes for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) educators is a long-standing failure within the U.S. education system. Since the 1980s, there have been calls for states, universities, and school districts to increase the number of BIPOC educators in our schools (Villegas et al., 2012; Torres et al., 2004). Yet today, only 20.6% of teachers identify as BIPOC (U.S. Department of Education, 2018), compared to 52% of students (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Even more concerning, the racial gap between BIPOC students and teachers continues to widen. In the 1987-88 school year, there was a 14.9 percentage point gap between the number of BIPOC students and teachers; by the 2011-12 school year this gap increased to 26.8 percentage points (Ingersoll et al., 2019) and is now at 31.4 percentage points (U.S. Department of Education, 2021; U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Policy makers and educational leaders have most often responded to this gap by creating policies to encourage more BIPOC high-school graduates to enter teaching preparation programs (Villegas et al., 2012). Since the 1980's, the number of BIPOC educators hired, "has increased by over 100%, outpacing growth in the number of nonminority teachers and outpacing growth in minority students" (Ingersoll et al., 2019, p. 31). Yet, these gains have faltered; the turnover (i.e., teacher migration and leaving the profession) of BIPOC teachers from 1988-2013 is significantly higher than that of white teacher turnover in five out of the seven cycles of the National Center for Education Statistics' Teacher Follow up Survey. The past three cycles of the nationally representative survey from 2004-2013 show BIPOC teacher turnover increasing from 18 to 25 percentage points higher relative to white teacher turnover. Turnover thus offsets gains in BIPOC teacher recruitment (Ingersoll et al., 2019). These findings point toward systematic failures within school systems that limit BIPOC educators' access to or push them out of the teaching profession.

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The purpose of this research brief is to address the organizational, systemic, and leadership barriers to create an enhanced BIPOC pipeline and provide education leaders with research guidance on creating sustainable pipelines for BIPOC educators.

The BIPOC Educator Pipeline

Understanding recruitment, hiring, and retention of BIPOC educators and specifically Black educators begins with understanding the systematic firing of tens of thousands of Black educators following the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme court ruling to racially integrate schools. Following the *Brown* decision, Black educators across the U.S., oftentimes with generational connections to teaching, were forced out of teaching with the closing of all-Black schools. They were then subjected to discriminatory hiring practices in integrated schools, revocation of teaching licenses, and targeted discriminatory certification exams (Tillman, 2004). The reverberations of recruitment, hiring, and retention policies following *Brown* can still be felt and seen today within the modern U.S. teaching pipeline.

Many educational leaders state they are interested in increasing the racial diversity of their teaching staff for the purpose of representation for BIPOC students. The interest in providing BIPOC students access to teachers who match their racial and cultural background is grounded in research that indicates that BIPOC teachers build closer relationships (Easton-Brooks, 2019; Villegas & Irvine, 2010), have higher expectations (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019; Villegas & Davis, 2008), and use more culturally competent or sustaining pedagogies (Gándara & Maxwell-Jolley, 2000) than do white teachers. These practices by BIPOC teachers result in higher motivation, increased feelings of connection to their school community, and increased academic achievement for BIPOC students (Rasheed et al. 2020; Blazar, 2021; Eddy & Easton-Brooks, 2011; Egalite et al., 2015).

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When districts express an interest only in improving their BIPOC teaching pipeline for representational purposes for BIPOC students, it reflects a shallow understanding of the impact of BIPOC teachers. Moreover, focusing on representation can lead to the marginalization of current and future BIPOC employees, where many school systems and leaders segregate BIPOC teachers to majority BIPOC classrooms or designate their BIPOC teachers as disciplinarians (Stanley, 2021). It should be understood that the benefits that BIPOC teachers bring to school communities are not

exclusive to BIPOC students. When white students are taught by BIPOC teachers this can counter implicit racial biases about who does or does not hold power in our society and confront racist notions of People of Color as less intelligent or less deserving of leadership authority (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; White et al., 2020; Irvine, 1988, Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Additionally, white students benefit from culturally sustaining pedagogies that many BIPOC teachers deploy in their classrooms (Carver-Thomas, 2018) and research indicates that white students often feel more cared for and academically challenged by BIPOC teachers as compared to their white counterparts (Cherng & Halpin, 2016).

Before districts begin plans to improve their BIPOC teaching pipelines, they should commit to transparency surrounding their interest in improving their BIPOC teaching pipeline and clearly state their intent to all school members. Schools and districts that treat the recruitment, hiring, and retention of BIPOC teachers as a taboo topic and do not engage all levels of their organization (district leadership, school leadership, and teachers) in improvement processes often fail to improve their BIPOC pipelines (Simon, 2021). Districts and schools interested in engaging in the work of enhancing and repairing their BIPOC teacher pipeline should therefore intentionally provide authentic opportunities for current BIPOC educators to contribute to pipeline enhancement plans (Simon & Johnson, 2015). At the same time, districts should be mindful to avoid tokenizing current BIPOC educators or placing the labor of improving their BIPOC pipeline solely on BIPOC employees.

Recruitment

In considering recruitment processes, districts and schools should initiate hiring timelines as early as possible and cast a wide net to increase BIPOC candidates' probability of encountering these job opportunities (Carver-Thomas, 2018, Bhalla, 2019). Large teaching universities oftentimes have low percentages of BIPOC teaching candidates (Matias & Liou, 2015). Thus, district leaders should actively recruit from HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), BIPOC serving institutions, and alternative certification programs (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Furthermore, district and school leaders should be intentional about developing relationships with Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian clubs and organizations such as fraternities and sororities, college career centers, alternative certification programs, and community organizations. District and school leaders should also consider how they are leveraging their social networks; work by Simon and Johnson (2015) found that many BIPOC educators are recruited to their current position by friends and colleagues.

If districts are committed to the recruitment and retention of BIPOC employees they should consider offering financial support to potential and current employees. Financial support could include paying for applicants' travel expenses to interview, childcare, testing or certification fees, and/or tuition. Studies of loan forgiveness programs for teachers have found that those who receive loan forgiveness are more likely to remain in the profession (Podolsky et al., 2019). This is especially relevant for BIPOC teachers who often cite the relatively low financial rewards of teaching and associated student debt as a reason to not enter or to leave the teaching profession (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Farinde et al., 2016).

Job Postings

Before posting a teaching position those involved in the hiring process should identify the benchmarks they want to see in applications (Palmer and Mullooly, 2015; Palmer, 2018; O'Meara et al., 2020), with a targeted focus on skills, abilities, and competencies needed for the role. Hiring leaders should also survey current employees about actual job requirements to uncover if there are any gaps in listed job requirements (Johnson, 2020). Job postings should be mindful to avoid gendered or racially coded language, such as overly masculine examples including words like “outspoken,” “competitive,” and “best of the best” or feminine like “nurturing,” “collaborative,” or “loyal,” or racially coded or charged screening terms such as narrowly defining what “counts” as experience or as acceptable education background (Johnson, 2020; Gaucher et al., 2011; O'Meara et al., 2020).

Grow Your Own Programs

Grow Your Own programs are gaining popularity as a means to recruit and retain BIPOC educators through partnerships between districts/schools and certifying universities and organizations. Grow Your Own Programs are non-traditional pathway programs to the teaching profession, where local community members such as teacher-aides, community leaders, caregivers, cafeteria workers, and local high school students who do not yet have teaching certificates can gain certification and later be placed within their own communities as teachers. Grow Your Own teaching candidates who have connections to their school system are more likely to have high levels of commitment to their schools and remain in them (McCullom, 2011; Gist et al., 2019). Common structures used in Grow Your Own Programs include academic, social, and financial supports (Gist et al., 2019). Successful Grow Your Own Programs that have resulted in higher retention of BIPOC educators often include cohort structures for BIPOC candidates, identifying mentors who value diverse cultural wealth and knowledge, standardized test preparation sessions, tuition assistance and/or scholarships, certification test fee coverage, transportation supports, and childcare (Ross & Ahmed, 2016). Given the importance of financial support for BIPOC educators making decisions surrounding the financial feasibility of pursuing teaching certification (Carver-Thomas, 2018), those engaged should consider common funding sources such as private foundations, universities, and federal grants (Gist et al., 2019). Last, districts should be mindful to build strong relationships with the certification program of their choice, whether it be a university or private organization, and ensure that those organizations are committed to valuing diverse cultural knowledge and social justice-oriented pedagogy (Gist et al., 2019; Achinstein et al., 2010).

Hiring

Screening - First-Round Evaluation

Applications should be reviewed blindly, with the removal of a candidate's name and identifying information, such as the school or certification program they attended. This information can lead reviewers to act on their bias for, or against, a candidate's aptitude or “fit” rather than focusing on their

skills and abilities (Villadsen & Wulff, 2018). A rubric should be used to score candidates' suitability for the posted job. This rubric should match the skills, abilities, and competencies that were determined collaboratively with teachers and leaders for the job posting (Palmer & Mullooly, 2015; O'Meara et al., 2020). The rubrics and interview questions should follow a similar structure across departments. Additionally, the selection criteria should remain the same across candidates of a particular job vacancy (Palmer & Mullooly, 2015). All reviewers should take implicit bias training and be trained at assessing applications on the rubric scale and check in regularly to discuss assessments to discover discrepancies among reviewers (Wildy et al., 2011). Additionally, all reviewers should provide evidence for their scoring by maintaining written documentation of each step of the hiring process with a rationale for each score on the rubric and share this with other screeners only when all potential candidates have gone through the process (Palmer & Mullooly, 2015; Wildy et al., 2011).

Interviewing

Homogeneous groups tend to replicate their racial, gender, or other shared characteristics in hiring decisions (Giuliano, et al., 2009). Having a diverse hiring committee may reduce implicit bias by presenting differing views and counter-stereotypic images. Committees should also be aware of hierarchical relationships in hiring committees that may influence underrepresented members' ability to influence hiring decisions. For instance, leaders should consider if committee members with the highest titles or seniority are white men and women and make adjustments to attend to committee power imbalances (O'Meara et al., 2020).

“Information rich hiring processes that support two-way information gathering for both teaching applicants and hiring leaders have proved to be promising in creating sustaining teaching pipelines”

Information rich hiring processes that support two-way information gathering for both teaching applicants and hiring leaders have proved to be promising in creating sustaining teaching pipelines (Liu, 2004). Teachers value adequate time to learn about their new potential workplace - practices such as leaving time for applicant questions, tours of the school during a regular school day, and providing applicant observation time in a class that authentically matches the job posting. District leaders can prioritize the use of a diverse set of application materials in the evaluation of applicants such as: résumés, cover letters, teaching portfolios with videos, and including a mock lesson (preferably with students) within the interview process. Findings from Wildy et al. (2011) suggest a much higher reliability in the agreement of reviewers is found in performance based tasks, such as mock lessons, to evaluate potential hires as opposed to panel hiring. This type of information-rich

interviewing process can jump-start the teacher and leader coaching relationship. Districts have seen decreased turnover when targeted hiring practices such as these just mentioned occur (Simon, 2021; Podolsky et al., 2019). Additionally, research suggests that the standard use of interview questions concerning equity, where the hiring committee seeks to assess a candidate's values or experiences related to equity, can screen for candidates who value and reflect on equitable practices and can signal to BIPOC candidates the importance the district places on equitable practices (Liera, 2020). Again, continue to use standardized rubrics across all candidates, do not evaluate candidates on attributes/tasks/questions outside of the predetermined rubric, and do not discount any candidate from the position until all candidates have been interviewed and evaluated holistically (Palmer & Mullooly, 2015).

Retention

Induction & Mentorship

Induction and mentoring programs are a popular and proven approach to enhance the retention of new teachers (Borman & Dowling, 2008). An analysis of mentoring programs found that first-year teachers have a 34% reduction in turnover when they receive robust induction support such as mentoring from an experienced teacher, along with beginning teacher seminars, opportunities for collaboration with other teachers, and reduced teaching loads (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). However, not all induction and mentoring programs are of equal quality and their efficacy depends a great deal on program design and implementation. Research by Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond (2017) found that first-year Black teachers on average reported comparable mentorship opportunities to first year teachers overall. However, Black teachers rated their mentorship experiences less effective than did their white peers. Additionally, recent findings from Bristol (2018) show that Black male teachers report less overall access to professional support, a longstanding, significant reason Black teachers report choosing to leave their current schools (Achinstein, 2010). The New Teacher Center (NTC) offers a mentorship model that may increase the effectiveness of the mentorship experience for teachers. In evaluations of the NTC program, new teachers were more likely to have trained mentors and participate in high-impact mentorship activities such as developing professional growth plans, observations with feedback, and instructional methods discussion and support (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

A final consideration for enhancing induction support is to prioritize mentor-mentee pairs that share the same racial or ethnic backgrounds. Research indicates that when mentor-mentee pairs are non-racially matched, specifically when Black women are paired with white women mentors, Black women professionals feel that their white women mentors exhibit competitiveness and distrust towards them (Black, 1999). Other studies indicate that mentees with same race mentors receive significantly more job related support (Murrell et al., 2008; Ensher & Murphy, 1997).

School leaders can enhance both the psychosocial and pedagogical support for newly hired BIPOC teachers by 1) offering robust and ongoing induction supports and 2) proving both racial/ethnic affinity spaces and prioritizing racially/ethnically matched mentors (Murrell et al., 2008; Ensher & Murphy, 1997). When individual schools or districts cannot provide same race or ethnicity mentor

pairs districts can build BIPOC teacher networks that span schools and nearby districts that can aid in mentorship matches and creation of affinity groups such as Sister Circles (Dingus, 2008; Neal-Barnett et al., 2010). If it is not at all possible to provide same race or ethnicity mentor pairs, districts should ensure that non-racially/ethnically matched mentors value diverse cultural knowledge and experience, have expertise in the mentees' subject, and are committed to the professional development of new BIPOC teachers (Ross & Ahmed, 2016; Tillman, 2001).

Ongoing Supports

One of the most frequently cited reasons for the departure of BIPOC teachers is related to a lack of principal support (Bristol, 2020; Ingersoll et al., 2019; Boyd et al., 2011). Principal support is a broad category and includes leadership behaviors such as encouraging and providing space and time for collaboration, promoting open communication across leadership and teachers, supporting co-construction of improvement plans among all staff, and clearly articulating vision and goals (Boyd et al., 2011). In contrast to these positive leadership behaviors, BIPOC teachers frequently cite a lack of decision making influence, classroom autonomy, feeling threatened by administration, and being criticized without feedback (Farinde et al., 2016; Stanley, 2021). To attend to these issues, leaders should consider the degree and frequency with which they involve BIPOC staff in authentic and consequential decision making opportunities and how they support classroom and instructional autonomy (Achinstein et al., 2010). Principals can take action to gauge teachers' experience of principal support by developing feedback mechanisms such as bi-yearly surveys and focus groups that measure principal support factors, such as opportunities for collaboration, communication access and quality, teacher decision-making power, autonomy, access to classroom resources, experience of equitable practices, safety, professional development, and opportunities for advancement (Campoli, 2017; Johnson, 2006). Principals may then use this data to make adjustments to their leadership practice and improvement plans based on teachers' support needs.

Attending to Racial Violence, Microaggressions, and Cultural Competency

On top of the everyday challenges of being a teacher, BIPOC teachers in particular are subject to a variety of policies and interactions that inflict racial violence and stress on them. BIPOC teachers who leave their schools report a lack of value for multicultural capital in their schools including, "low

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expectations or negative attitudes about students of color, lack of support for culturally relevant or socially just teaching, and limited dialogue about race and equity” (Achinstein et al., 2010, p. 96). BIPOC teachers, who often have a humanistic commitment to serving BIPOC students frequently feel unsupported, disrespected, and alienated by their school community in their commitments to BIPOC students (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Achinstein et al., 2010) and isolated from their school community, particularly when the school is a predominantly white staffed school, as most are (Bristol, 2020).

The pervasive racism that is inflicted on BIPOC teachers and students through norms, policies, and interactions by racially dominant white teaching and administrative colleagues subsequently affects BIPOC teachers’ willingness to persist in such toxic environments (Achinstein et al., 2010). Given this, there are calls for education professionals, particularly white teachers and leaders, to critically examine their own racialized identities, assumptions, actions, and organizational structures, norms, and policies, and work towards changing the racism embedded within their school system (Matias, 2016).

To address systems of racialized inequality in schools, some researchers point to the usefulness of equity audits of teacher assignment by experience and race, student class placements, discipline instances, and academic achievement by race and targeting the inequities through collaborative school-wide decision making (Skrla et al., 2004; Green, 2017). School leaders should also consider how they will continuously integrate critical racial reflection into their professional development plans for their teachers (Matias, 2016). These plans should also consider how they intend to differentiate learning plans based on teachers’ racialized identities and previous racial identity work. Leaders should be wary of assigning or asking BIPOC teachers to lead professional development or groups related to racial equity and identity without the teacher’s prior stated interest in leading such a group. BIPOC teachers frequently cite feeling uncomfortable and tokenized when they are pressured to lead such groups, which only further diminishes their connection to their school community (Weiner et al., 2022).

Last, administrators should have action plans of support for when racial violence or microaggressions affects their BIPOC teachers and students. Work by Sue et al. (2019) offers concrete steps to disarm perpetrators of microaggressions (i.e., “the everyday slights, insults, putdowns, invalidations, and offensive behaviors that people of color experience in daily interactions” (Sue et al., 2007)) and systems-wide inequitable practices by 1) naming the injustice or aggression, 2) disarming the aggressor through communication, 3) educating the offender, and 4) seeking external intervention such as reporting the act or providing supports for the person who was aggressed [See Sue et al.’s 2019 work for the complete disarming microaggressions guide]. While many BIPOC teachers feel like administration does not support their commitments to BIPOC students and feel unheard and discounted when issues of racial violence, aggression, and justice affect them or their school community, when administrators do take action to attend to these issues, listen, and support BIPOC faculty, these teachers feel more positive about their school community and are more likely to stay at their school (Stanley, 2021; Achinstein, 2010; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Conclusion

Many districts currently have a great interest in hiring and retaining BIPOC educators. However, interest does not always translate to results, as typical pipeline strategies often fail to sustain BIPOC educators. The good news is that districts can take immediate steps to enhance their BIPOC teacher pipelines by using effective pipeline strategies. Education leaders can focus their energy on 1) providing clear, early, non-rationally coded job postings and using connectors, 2) using information-rich and standardized hiring processes, and 3) providing robust induction/ ongoing supports including - racially matched mentoring programs and affinity groups, supporting teachers when racialized aggression affects teachers and students, and involving BIPOC teachers in meaningful school-wide decision-making. Through the use of such practices, districts should not only see gains in the number of BIPOC educators hired but also see improvement in the number of BIPOC educators who choose to stay in their districts.

Additional Resources:

EdKnowledge

- [A Collection of Strategies and Resources for Building a Diverse Educator Workforce](#) – From The Connecticut State Department of Education
- This is an updated living digital resource that houses promising practices to enhance the BIPOC teaching pipeline.

Black Girls Teach

- Founded by Deidra Fogarty a native of Bridgeport, CT, [Black Girls Teach](#) is a Black woman led education consulting group that offers services in professional development and affinity groups specific to Black women educators. The group also offers DEI professional development and leadership coaching services.
- [Black Girls Teach - Instagram](#) - Thought provoking reflections on experiences of Black women educators.

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