SEE OUR TRUTH

The State of Teacher and School Leader Diversity in New York, and Why It Matters for Students, Educators, and Our Future

DIVERSITY SYMPOSIUM OF THOUGHT LEADERS
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Why Teacher and School Leader Diversity Matters

- The critical role that strong teachers, school leaders, and other professionals play in student success is central to closing achievement and opportunity gaps for students at all levels.
- Studies indicate that for students of color, having a teacher of color during their educational experience can have a positive impact on improving student performance in reading and math, increasing the likelihood that Black students are identified as gifted, reducing suspension rates, decreasing dropout rates, and improving students’ hopes of attending college.
- Teacher and school leader diversity is at the intersection of two of the most important current issues in education policy: improving equitable access to strong educators and addressing school integration.
How We Developed This Report

Combining qualitative and quantitative data to shine a light and seek solutions

- Our methodology included:
  - Interviews and focus groups with nearly 100 students, teachers, and school and district leaders of color, and other experts;
  - Original analysis using unpublished New York State Education Department data;
  - Exploration of promising practices across New York State; and
  - Development of detailed policy recommendations.

- This report represents just the **beginning** of this project, not the conclusion.
What We Heard From Students

Students said they felt a special connection with their Latino and Black teachers, often resulting in greater engagement and higher expectations.

“Teachers of color are like the parents you don’t have at school with you every day. They see themselves like you.” – Lisette, New York City student

“Different teachers can teach you different things because they’ve had different experiences.” – Ralph*, Buffalo student

“Teachers of color really pushed me to go beyond what I thought I could settle for.” – Iman, New York City student
“You need to believe that’s what you expect them to do. It’s more than a word. You have to feel it, you have to breathe it, you have to believe it. And you have to live it and make sure they understand it. I think that’s why those of color are able to keep that high expectation because they know what it’s like to struggle. They’ve seen it. They know what it feels like.” – David*, Buffalo teacher
What We Heard From Educators

Educators of color report that the relationships they are able to build with students can also have negative professional repercussions.

“Our teachers of color get disrespected a lot. Like they’re not good enough.” – Aneth, New York City student

“They see us as a ‘bouncer.’ We’re supposed to go into the most difficult schools and make them safe, not necessarily high-achieving.” – Raúl*, New York City principal

“From a Latino standpoint you get those who say to me, ‘What is it about this Latino thing? I don’t understand why they don’t send their kids to school. I don’t understand why they go to Puerto Rico in the middle of the school year.’ You almost try to become like a spokesperson.” – Herbelto*, Rochester educator
What We Heard From Educators

Educators of color told us they face unique career challenges due to prejudice

“You already know how microaggressions go. ‘Are you a really a teacher? You don’t really belong here.’ It starts to weigh on you a little bit.” – Tiffany*, Buffalo teacher

“Sometimes it was a little hard as a Black woman and science teacher. People wanted to know what my credentials were. When I went to workshops, because there weren’t many women of color in these workshops, it was almost questioned, ‘Are you teaching outside of your license area?’” – Irene*, New York City assistant principal
What We Heard From Educators

Educators of color told us they, like many teachers, are frustrated by an educational system that does not put students first.

“Our kids want to learn, too, but our teachers don’t make it accessible.”
– Tiffany*, Buffalo teacher

“We don’t want you for so long in our schools because you cause too much trouble, you ask too many questions, you expect children to have solid units of study, you expect children to be fully bilingual, you expect too much.”
– Crystal*, New York City teacher
Educator Diversity by the Numbers

New York’s educator workforce does not come close to representing the rich diversity of the state’s students.
STATEWIDE SHARES OF...

Latino...

Black...

Latino and Black...

Source: New York State Education Department. Student enrollment data downloaded from data.nysed.gov. Educator information is based on unpublished 2015-16 dataset. Analysis conducted by The Education Trust–New York. The category ‘Other Professional Staff’ includes administrators (except principals and assistant principals), guidance counselors, school nurses, psychologists, and other professionals who devote more than half of their time to non-teaching duties.
Finding 1

More than 115,000 Latino and Black students attend schools with no teachers of the same race or ethnicity, and an additional 80,000 Latino and Black students attend schools with just one teacher of the same race or ethnicity.

- 10% of Latino and Black students in New York State attend school with no teachers of the same race or ethnicity.
- That figure rises to 17% of Latino and Black students — or nearly 1 in 5 — with no or just one teacher of the same race or ethnicity.
- White students across New York State also lack access to Latino and Black teachers. In fact, nearly half of all White students — 48 percent, or more than 560,000 White students — are enrolled in schools without a single Latino or Black teacher.
Finding 2

Latino and Black students outside of the Big 5 school districts are nearly 13 times more likely than their Big 5 peers to have no exposure to a same-race/ethnicity teacher.

Nearly 98,000 Latino and Black students in district-run schools outside of the Big 5 attend school without a single same-race/ethnicity teacher, compared to less than 16,000 Latino and Black students in Big 5 school districts.
Finding 2

Latino and Black students outside of the Big 5 school districts are nearly 13 times more likely than their Big 5 peers to have no exposure to a same-race/ethnicity teacher.
Latino and Black educators are better represented in school leadership at the principal and assistant principal levels than in the classroom — but major gaps in the pipeline exist for Latino principals in New York City and for Latino and Black principals in the rest of the state.

Finding 4

Schools with a Latino or Black principal are more likely to have a greater share of Latino and Black teachers and to have higher enrollment of students of color and low-income students

• 61% of Latino and Black teachers work in schools where at least three-quarters of students are low-income, compared to just 21% of White teachers.
• Latino and Black principals are far more likely than their White peers to work in schools with significant numbers of Latino and Black teachers.
• White students rarely experience an educator of color in a leadership position in their school. 84% of White students — more than 977,000 students — attend schools without a single Latino or Black principal or assistant principal.
Making Teacher and School Leader Diversity a Policy Priority
Strengthen the educator preparation pipeline for future teachers and leaders of color

1. Require diversity data collection, use, and transparency for educator preparation programs.
2. Require educator preparation programs to improve diversity and strengthen program components that prepare all teaching and administrator candidates to educate all groups of students.
3. Expand the Teacher Opportunity Corps grant program, which recruits and supports historically under-represented and low-income teaching candidates.
4. Strengthen relationships between school districts and teacher preparation programs, including through the expansion of “Grow Your Own” initiatives.
5. Expand career pathways through targeted strategies and innovative alternative certification pilots.
6. Encourage “quality sustained clinical practices” — including residency programs and other field work — that provide opportunities for teaching candidates to gain intensive, structured classroom experience.
Improve recruitment and hiring at the school district level

1. Collect and use data to examine school district recruitment, interview, and hiring practices.
2. Provide state-level oversight and transparency.
3. Encourage school boards to signal and embrace the importance of teacher and school leader diversity.
4. Question and change recruitment practices to identify additional qualified applicants of color.
5. Address implicit bias in the hiring process.
Focus greater attention on retention, support, and career advancement for educators of color.

1. Improve the working environment for teachers of color.
2. Create and support cohorts of teachers, assistant principals, and principals of color.
3. Invest in mentorship and career ladders for current and aspiring teacher, school, and district leaders.

“There are a ton of people right now in the pipeline if given the right opportunity and the right exposure and the right mentoring could be dynamic administrators throughout New York State. But if you’re in a community or an environment where your qualities are not nurtured and then advanced, then you get stuck.”

– Shaun Nelms, University of Rochester Educational Partnership Organization at East superintendent (Rochester)
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