



RECRUITING TEACHERS OF COLOR: EVIDENCE-BASED BEST PRACTICES

April 2021

Victor Coy Carter Jr.

Nationally, teachers of color represent approximately 20 percent of the teaching workforce; in Minnesota, that number is closer to 4 percent. This poses many negative effects for the increasingly-diverse student population of our public K-12 schools. Having teachers of color in the classroom provides necessary and valuable attributes that are less likely to be contributed by the predominantly white teacher workforce and school leadership of traditional K-12 education.

- They are inclined to include culturally responsive pedagogies into everyday classrooms.
- They have higher expectations for students of color, which lead to improved academic outcomes for marginalized populations.ⁱ
- They provide a unique empathy and connection of experience in and outside of the school building with students of color.ⁱⁱ

Furthermore, the research indicates teachers of color do not benefit only students of color, but also their white peers as they experience teaching and learning through a different lens that helps shape their perspective by offering curriculum from different lived experiences. Knowing the importance of teachers of color in the classroom, what can be done to recruit more of them?

Teachers of color are generally recruited in five documented ways:

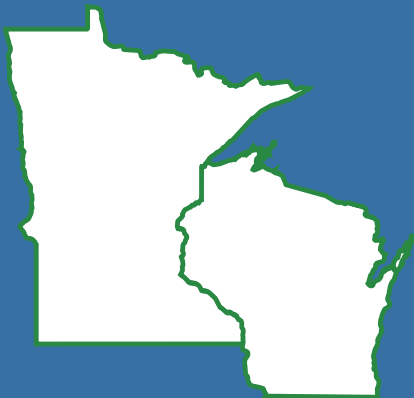
1. **Financial incentives** such as scholarships, grants, and loan forgiveness programs that can be tied to teaching requirements.ⁱⁱⁱ
2. **State government mandates** to support teacher diversity goals. Generally, these take the form of a state recruiting plan, reporting on teacher diversity or reporting data.ⁱⁱⁱ
3. **State-supported recruitment programs** that target new teachers of color through pre-college, 2-year to 4-year college agreements, and/or paraprofessional career ladders.ⁱⁱⁱ
4. **District recruitment centers** that provide recruitment plans and opportunities for professional development.ⁱⁱⁱ
5. **Alternative certification routes** that specifically target people of color.ⁱⁱⁱ

What does the research say is most effective?

Federal Contribution to Recruitment

From a federal perspective, the literature identifies **funding** as the prominent mechanism for increasing teachers of color. The federal government can provide additional funding directly to state and local recruitment efforts that are essential to creating and sustaining effective

- i. Villegas, Ana María, & Irvine, J. J. (2010). Diversifying the Teaching Force: An Examination of Major Arguments. *Urban Review*, 42(3), 175–192.
- ii. Carver-Thomas, D. (2017). Diversifying the Field: Barriers to Recruiting and Retaining Teachers of Color and How to Overcome Them. Literature Review. Equity Assistance Center Region II, Intercultural Development Research Association, 1–34. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED582730.pdf>
- iii. Villegas, Ana María, Strom, K., & Lucas, T. (2012). Closing the Racial/Ethnic Gap Between Students of Color and Their Teachers: An Elusive Goal. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 45(2), 283–301.



programs. In addition, the federal government can reward districts and schools that creatively and intuitively increase numbers of teachers of color. Concrete examples from the literature include:

- Creating a national teaching corps where schools have access to well trained teachers to select from.
- Funding the Congressionally–authorized August F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence program that increases the rigor for higher quality teachers coupled with the correct and adequate supports to allow for “high quality” to be obtained.

State and Local Recommendations

Research highlights state and local recommendations more than those of federal origin. Much of the research examining the different pipelines used to recruit teachers of color ultimately finds that “Grow Your Own” and residency programs are most successful in recruiting teachers of color, both in Minnesota and nationally.^{iv} Grow Your Own programs generally draw from paraprofessionals or other non–traditional licensed staff within a district to provide a path to licensure whereas residency programs draw from all over. The 2019 Biennial Minnesota Teacher Supply and Demand report indicates that pipeline programs like Grow Your Own made the largest difference in recruiting teachers of color.

Though efforts from other state programs have been impactful, these programs are most successful when creating partnerships with the community and demographic of the schools seeking teachers of color. Other mechanisms to recruit teachers of color include funding grants and scholarships for teaching exams, mentoring, and job placement. This also requires partnering with local teacher preparation programs.^{iv}

University Contributions

Research identifies how existing institutions need to invest resources and time. Local university commitments to increasing teachers of color are equally important as exercising alternative recruitment mechanisms. Universities need to invest in faculty and departmental projects geared towards increasing teachers of color in K–12 classrooms.

The University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) provides the Meyerhoff Scholarship to recruit undergraduate students of color into STEM fields. The Meyerhoff Scholars program is an extensive and revered model created to address the performance and persistence of undergraduate students of color in STEM.

Approximately 91 percent of the students in the program have pursued graduate or professional degrees. It consists of 12 components:

1. Recruitment of highly qualified students
2. Summer bridge program
3. Comprehensive, merit scholarship support
4. Active faculty involvement
5. Strong programmatic values, including high achievement, and academic and professional preparation
6. Substantive research experiences for students
7. Intensive academic advising
8. Active involvement of the entire campus
9. Linking students with mentors
10. A strong sense of community among the students
11. Communication with students’ families
12. Continuous evaluation and documentation of program outcomes

Building on this work, UMBC employs iterations of the Meyerhoff framework in other programs such as the Sherman STEM Teacher Scholar program to recruit and develop STEM teachers with cultural competency.^v

- The development of a community of teachers
- Summer bridge program to prepare students to successfully meet programmatic expectations
- Academic, professional, and personal advising, coaching, and mentoring
- Classroom fellowships or summer internships in diverse academic settings under the guidance of teacher–mentors

Each program has built in heavy support systems via mentorship and advising.

Philanthropy

Funding is a significant aspect of any programmatic endeavor, and much of the funding for scholar programs like those as UMBC comes from philanthropic dollars. The Gates Foundation, The Ford Foundation, and many others contribute funding to education. However, the literature notes the importance of working with the communities in which change is desired. For instance, philanthropies donating to existing institutions that have a foothold in the communities they are trying to reach and are doing the work. As the research reiterates often, this work cannot be successful unless work is done in tandem with communities of color and not enacted on them.

iv. Gist, C. D., Bianco, M., & Lynn, M. (2019). Examining Grow Your Own Programs Across the Teacher Development Continuum: Mining Research on Teachers of Color and Nontraditional Educator Pipelines. *Journal of Teacher Education, 70*(1), 13–25.
v. Hrabowski III, F. A., & Sanders, M. G. (2015). Increasing Racial Diversity in the Teacher Workforce: One University’s Approach. *Thought & Action, 101*–116.