



RETAINING TEACHERS OF COLOR: EVIDENCE-BASED BEST PRACTICES

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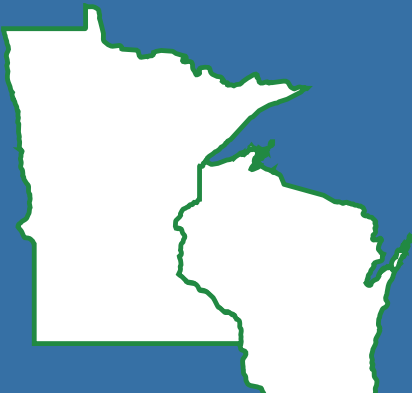
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The vast majority of Black and brown leaders and teachers were pushed out of schools following *Brown v. Board* and the push for classroom desegregation. The notion of having Black and brown educators in classrooms instructing white children was unsettling for many white people. Desegregation was a clear, one-way street that moved Black and brown students from their schools into white schools. This gave preference to white educators retaining their jobs and little to no space for new teaching positions to be filled by experienced Black and brown teachers. Schools serving minoritized populations shuttered their doors and teachers of color, principals, and staff alike were pushed out.ⁱ This history illustrates why the teaching workforce is 80% white—a large decrease over the past 30 years, where that number consistently rested at or above 90%. It contextualizes the current atmosphere by untangling how no protections existed for teachers of color then.

Today limited protections and flawed practices result in similar outcomes in schools for teachers of color. High-poverty schools that serve Black and brown students were closed under NCLB legislation removing teachers of color from the classroom. As the increase in teachers of color peaked to nearly 20% in 2019—relegated predominantly to high poverty schoolsⁱⁱ—policies such as last in first out (LIFO) subject these teachers to being the first to go when budget cuts occur. Additionally, high stakes teacher exams dating back to the 1960's and oppressive practices of higher education institutions keep teachers of color out of traditional teacher preparation and certification programs.ⁱⁱⁱ Driven by these flawed policies as well as personal reasons, teachers of color are disappearing from the classroom at a faster rate than their white colleagues—Ingersoll indicates a rate of 45%, making recruitment efforts negligible.ⁱⁱ

In addition to providing context, this brief presents ways that practitioners and leaders can successfully keep teachers of color in the classroom. Conra Gist,^{iv} Associate Professor of Teaching and Teacher Education at the university of Houston, offers an application of Hughes human resources conceptual model^v—“illustrating the need to attend to human investments with the same urgency as technological investments”—to retain teachers of color by presenting five key values that frame the research in this brief: (1) location, (2) use, (3) maintenance, (4) modification, and (5) time. Each section provides research-driven recommendations collected and/or proposed by Gist and other scholars.

- i. Anderson, J. (1988). *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. University of North Carolina Press.; Walker, V. (1996). *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*. University of North Carolina Press.
- ii. Ingersoll, R. M., & May, H. (2011). Recruitment, Retention and the Minority Teacher Shortage. Consortium for Policy Research in Education.
- iii. Carter Andrews, D. J., Castro, E., Cho, C. L., Petchauer, E., Richmond, G., & Floden, R. (2019). Changing the Narrative on Diversifying the Teaching Workforce: A Look at Historical and Contemporary Factors That Inform Recruitment and Retention of Teachers of Color. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 70(1), 6–12.
- iv. Gist, C. D. (2018). Human Resource Development for Racial/Ethnic Diversity: Do School Systems Value Teachers of Color? *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 20(3), 345–358.
- v. Hughes, C. (2010) “People as technology” conceptual model: Toward a new value creation paradigm for strategic human resource development. *Human Resource Development Review*, 9, 48–71 as cited in Gist, C. D. (2018).



Location

An issue created in part by LIFO policies, but also by the selection processes, teachers of color are most often employed in “hard to staff” schools. Research indicates that many teachers of color find themselves in hard to staff schools because they have a deep concern that students of color will be overlooked in traditional schooling. With that said, these spaces typically have extremely low resources and funding. This lack of access to dollars for classroom materials, professional development, and adequate pay contributes to teachers of color leaving the classroom. Additionally, when schools close for financial reasons, this also contributes to the attrition rate as teachers of color tend to be staffed in schools slated for closure.

Research-driven recommendations

- Offer preferential placement for teachers of color.
- Provide broad professional development opportunities that are not tied to the funding of one school.
- Develop local recruitment programs. For example, recruiting teachers to return to their alma maters as a better reflection of the community.
- Develop preferential transfer tiers for teachers of color overrepresented in under-resourced schools to provide teaching opportunities in other schools.

Use

Extensive research indicates the benefits of students of color having instructors that reflect their race/ethnicity and background. Richard Milner accounts through qualitative analysis that teachers of ethnic backgrounds can have “culturally congruent” instruction that connects with students of color. Villegas,^{vi} Carter Andrews,ⁱⁱⁱ Carver-Thomas^{vii} and many other scholars have written on similar impacts of teachers of color. Bandura indicates that role models or modeling is part of social learning theory in which he states new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experience or observing the behavior of others. Though the research widely supports teachers of color providing tremendous benefits for students of color, they bring value to white students as well. Having teachers of color in the classroom can lead to more critical and culturally-responsive pedagogy. Many teachers of color who ascribe to more critical pedagogies that do not align with traditional curriculum feel as though they are being stifled in the classroom. Providing teachers of color with autonomy over what is taught in their classrooms can mitigate this.

Research-driven recommendations:

- Empower teachers to enact culturally responsive curriculum in the classroom.
- Normalize teachers of color in the hiring process, including creating diverse hiring committees or compensating teachers for attending recruitment fairs.

- Include teachers of color in curricular, pedagogical, and policy decisions for the school/district.

Maintenance

According to Gist, the investment in the maintenance of teachers of color is very low. Gist defines maintenance as “the need to create and invest in support structures for teachers of color to thrive and perform.”^{iv} Creating continued learning and professional development opportunities is vital to the sustained maintenance of teachers of color. As indicated earlier, teachers of color are most likely situated in poorly funded schools that on their own cannot afford to provide professional development opportunities for their teachers.

Research-driven recommendations:

- Shrink funding gaps that persist in public schools to pool local, district, or state funding to ensure that teachers of color have access to professional development regardless of their employing school.
- Create spaces for teachers of color to have mentors and affinity groups that provide a safe space as they navigate normalized spaces of whiteness. Informed by the 2019 Biennial Minnesota Teachers Supply and Demand report, having a mentor ranked first of what made a big difference in retaining teachers of color.^{viii}
- Provide professional development spaces for teachers of color to address race and racism in their teaching and learning experiences.^{ix}

Modification

Current systems of teaching do not support the existence or persistence of teachers of color in the classroom. Changes need to happen on a rolling basis and be nuanced for different teachings and different spaces. This will require adjustments to systems, inputs, and metrics. It is not enough to read this brief or other literature and execute the top three recommendations. In some cases, higher salary will be necessary to retain high quality teachers of color. In others, it may require more resources for teachers of color than their colleagues (remembering that the majority of teachers of color work at under-resourced schools). Gist highlights the modification value is different from maintenance value in that an intentionality is required to “fine tune and advance opportunities for Teachers of Color to remain relevant, effective, and valuable to students and schools.”

Research-driven recommendations:

- Underwrite cost of teacher preparation and loan forgiveness programs.
- Develop professional titles and positions that enable teachers of color to transition to other leadership and professional roles in ways that capitalize on their experience.

vi. Villegas, A. M., & Irvine, J. J. (2010). Diversifying the Teaching Force: An Examination of Major Arguments. *Urban Review*, 42(3), 175–192.

vii. 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, (April), 1–34.

viii. Figure 2: Source 2019 Biennial Teacher Supply and Demand Report.

ix. Kohli, R. (2016). Behind school doors: The impact of hostile racial climates on urban teachers of color. *Urban Education*, 53, 307–333 as cited in Gist (2018)

- Create integrated structures of support that begin at the educator preparation level and extend to veteran teacher status, which account for teaching and learning developmental changes over time.^{vii}

Time

Research suggests that the teaching field needs programs that increase the time of teachers of color in classrooms as well as highlight their commitment to the students and schools in which they remain. Gist suggests that placing a value on time is integral to retaining teachers of color. This can include acknowledging their commitment from teacher preparedness programs to senior teachers. Additionally, having integrated development supports for teachers of color as they progress through the ranks of teaching—that also should be adjusted to recognize additional milestones in the process to senior/veteran teachers.

Research-driven recommendations:

- Develop a “Grow Your Own” program, residency programs, and others identified for higher retention rates.
- Improve compensation packages for those teaching in “hard-to-staff” schools to retain the most resilient people of color into the teaching profession.