State- and District-Level Strategies – Ideas for Diversifying the Field

Rationale

As noted in the accompanying IDRA EAC-*South* literature review and summary, all teachers require more intentional, culturally-based preparation to reach a growing diverse student population by building on students' academic, cultural, and linguistic strengths (Higgins, Shaffer, & Schlanger, 2017). However, teachers themselves should represent racial diversity. Increasing diversity in the teaching profession can have positive impacts on student educational experiences and outcomes. While this is especially true for students of color, having teachers of color benefits White students as well. The following are important findings highlighting the need to ensure a racially diverse teaching workforce.

- Many teachers of color report feeling called to teach in low-income communities of color, positions that are often difficult to fill (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Three in four teachers of color work in the quarter of schools serving the most students of color nationally (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

- Some studies have found that teachers of color boost the academic performance of students of color (Dee, 2004; Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007; Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010; Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015; Fairlie, Hoffman, & Oreopoulous, 2014).

- Students of color can experience social-emotional benefits to having teachers of color, such as fewer unexcused absences and lower likelihood of chronic absenteeism and suspension (Holt & Gershenson, 2015).

- Teacher diversity may also benefit teachers of color experiencing feelings of isolation, frustration and fatigue (Simon & Johnson, 2015; Griffin & Tackie, 2016; Osler, 2016). Increasing teacher diversity may improve teacher satisfaction and decrease teacher turnover, a key contributor to teacher shortages and school instability (Ingersoll, 2001; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016).

Research-Based State and School District-Level Strategies to Consider in Diversifying Teachers

Research illustrates the importance of supporting a pipeline of teachers of color at every stage of the teaching career, from preservice to veteran teaching status. While more teachers of color are being recruited than in years past, their turnover rates are high, in part due to inadequate preparation and mentoring, poor working conditions, and displacement from the high-need schools they teach in, where accountability strategies can include reconstituting staff or closing schools rather than investing in improvements. Increasing the number of teachers of color in the workforce requires both intentional preparation and hiring and provision of ongoing support to overcome the barriers to recruitment and retention described in the literature review. Fortunately, programs and initiatives across the country provide evidence that an intentional and sustained approach to recruiting and retaining teachers of color can be successful. The following describes policy strategies for state and local education agencies aimed at overcoming barriers to recruiting and retaining teachers of color.

1. Build high-retention, supportive pathways into teaching

Research shows that improving teacher retention begins with high-quality teacher preparation; however, in many cases, teachers of color are more likely to begin teaching without having completed comprehensive preparation – if they choose teaching at all. This is not surprising given the cost of traditional teacher preparation programs and the debt burden faced by college students of color. Here are a few ways state and local policymakers can both encourage more students of color to pursue a teaching career and to do so through a high-quality program:

- States can design **data systems** that monitor the racial diversity of teacher preparation enrollees and completers. This creates an incentive for teacher preparation programs to take innovative approaches to recruiting and supporting diverse applicants into high-quality programs – a crucial first step often missing in state pathway policies and practices.

- States can adjust **teacher licensure requirements** to allow teaching candidates to demonstrate their competency through rigorous but more authentic performance assessments, such as the edTPA, that do not generate the racial disparity in pass rates of traditional exams. Such a shift may encourage more students of color to enter and complete high-quality teacher preparation.

- States can support candidates of color by underwriting the cost of teacher preparation. **Service scholarship and loan forgiveness programs** cover or

reimburse a portion of tuition costs in exchange for a commitment to teach in high-need schools or subject areas, typically for three to five years. These programs tend to be more effective when they underwrite a significant portion of educational costs (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2016).

- States can also support candidates of color by funding intensive teacher preparation support programs that offer **ongoing mentorship**, tutoring, exam stipends, job placement services, and other supports that ensure their successful completion of preparation programs. Districts can help supplement these funds and programs, as necessary.

- States can provide funding for **teacher residencies**, which are partnerships between districts and universities that subsidize and improve teachers' training to teach in high-need schools and in high-demand subject areas (Guha, Hyler, & Darling-Hammond, 2016). Participants spend a year working as apprentices with highly effective mentor teachers while completing related coursework at partnering universities. During this time, residents receive financial support, often in the form of a stipend and tuition assistance. They commit to teaching an additional three to four years in their district, with ongoing mentoring support.

- Because many teacher of color candidates continue to pursue certification through low-retention alternative pathways, states can **strengthen alternative certification programs** by requiring that those programs include: high quality, rigorous preservice preparation, intensive mentoring, asset-based approaches to learning, and professional learning community and supports, including comprehensive induction and supervision through the early years of teaching.

- Districts can develop **grow-your-own** programs that recruit teacher candidates from non-traditional populations (i.e., high school students, paraprofessionals, and afterschool program staff) who are more likely to reflect local diversity and more likely to stay in their communities. States can also support these programs through university-based partnerships and other financial and programmatic policies and support. the IDRA EAC-*South*'s accompanying document, "Grow Your Own Educator Programs – A Review of the Literature with an Emphasis on Equity-based Approaches" (http://www.idra.org/eac-south/).

2. Create pro-active hiring and induction strategies

Once a prospective teacher is trained and certified, district and school hiring practices can influence their decisions to enter the teaching force and whether to stay in their schools. States and districts can influence several hiring conditions associated with effectively recruiting and retaining teachers, including timing of hiring, information in the hiring process, and licensure and pension portability (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2016):

- Districts can **shift hiring timelines** earlier. Research suggests in-demand diverse candidates may be more likely to be available for hire earlier in the year. Districts can offer incentives for teachers to announce their resignation, retirement, and transfer intentions in early spring.

- Districts can **partner with local teacher preparation programs** to coordinate student teaching placements and vet candidates for hire before they graduate. This is a strategy that can be pursued specifically with minority-serving institutions (MSIs) or historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs), and tribal colleges and universities (TCUs).

- Districts can **include teachers of color in the hiring process** in meaningful and collaborative ways. This could include the creation of diverse hiring committees or compensating teachers for attending recruitment fairs.

- Districts can offer **comprehensive induction** to support beginning teachers of color in their first years of teaching. Induction often includes being matched with a veteran mentor teacher and can also include seminars, classroom assistance, time to collaborate with other teachers, coaching and feedback from experienced teachers, and reduced workloads.

- States can support many of these practices with financial and programmatic policies and support.

3. Improve school teaching conditions through improved school leadership

Teaching conditions, and administrative support particularly, play a key role in teachers' decisions to stay in a school or in the profession. Recent evidence shows that administrative support is especially critical in improving retention of teachers of color (Bednar & Gicheva, 2017). School administrators are responsible for making hiring decisions, being instructional leaders, setting norms for students and staff, nurturing a positive and encouraging culture, keeping schoolwide systems running smoothly, and more (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). State and district policies can help school leaders develop the skills to do these things well and create school environments where teachers want to stay.

- States can support improved principal preparation by establishing comprehensive principal preparation **program accreditation and licensure standards.** These regulatory strategies could help improve retention rates for teachers of color by requiring that program participants have clinical experiences in schools with diverse students and staff and learn to create collaborative, supportive work environments for the teachers with whom they work.

- States can take advantage of **Title II optional 3 percent leadership set-aside funds** to strengthen the quality of school leaders, including by investing in principal recruitment, preparation, induction, and development (Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, 2015).

- ESSA allows greater flexibility in how school systems respond to low-performing schools. Rather than closing schools, states and districts can invest in evidence-based school improvement strategies to improve instructional quality and supports for students without displacing teachers of color who most often teach in struggling schools. Such strategies include **early childhood education**, **mentorship** for beginning teachers, and **community schools** that focus on whole child development through community partnerships (NAACP Task Force on Quality Education, 2017).

- Districts can **partner with local universities** to actively recruit talented future administrators into administrator preparation, especially those who have demonstrated a commitment to working in hard-to-staff schools.

- Districts can provide **ongoing professional learning** opportunities for school leaders to develop the skills to support teachers effectively.

- Districts can develop school- or district-based **learning networks** where teachers can, for example, access coaching supports to assist with instructional techniques and classroom observations (Lavadenz & Colón-Muñiz, 2017).

- States can support many of these district policies and practices noted above with financial and programmatic policies and support.

The IDRA EAC-*South* is available to provide technical assistance to state and local education agencies to help improve and increase pathways to teaching for faculty of color, among other capacity-building services addressing equity issues in race, national origin, sex/gender, and religion. For more information, please visit our website at www.idra.org/eac-south or send us at email to eacsouth@idra.org.

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