

# EDUCATOR DIVERSITY



## INTRODUCTION

The racial imbalance between U.S. students and their teachers is stark: nearly 80% of all K–12 teachers identify as white, while more than half of students identify as students of color. The lack of racially diverse teachers presents an urgent problem that federal policy, states, and districts can address immediately. This disparity is a direct result of the disconnect between systems that recruit, prepare, and hire educators. These disparate, marginalizing systems hinder efforts to achieve a workforce of educators who represent our students.

Once hired, research demonstrates that Educators of Color (EOCs) are retained at lower rates than their white counterparts. They face the challenge of navigating an unforgiving workplace while often bearing the pressure of being one of the only Educators of Color in the building. EOCs are frequently asked to assimilate into systems designed for white teachers and students, systems that do not honor the richness of their culture and community.

Students of color and their families have expressed the need for educators who understand and effectively work with them as crucial to their success in school. PSESD's Youth Wisdom Council and Community Wisdom Council, the NAACP Youth Council, and the student advocacy group The Root of Our Youth all identify the need for more educators of color as a key priority.

School systems that devalue EOCs have a trickle-down impact on our student population, negatively affecting their educational experiences and outcomes. At the same time, there is compelling evidence showing that Educators of Color have profound, beneficial impacts on the success of our nation's most underserved students—and on white students as well. Recent research has demonstrated the positive academic and social-emotional benefits that teachers of color provide, and their potential to bolster the academic success and well-being of all students while addressing the critical opportunity gap students of color have historically faced.



## INVESTING IN A DIVERSE EDUCATOR WORKFORCE

Our educator workforce is at a critical juncture. Attrition over the last few years has been dramatic, as educators across the board have left the profession. We believe the time is now to focus our efforts across systems to identify, recruit, and retain educators who represent our students, understand their lives, and embody the practices that will help them learn and achieve their full potential. Federal funding can remove barriers to becoming an educator, incentivize the creation of pathways that connect our systems, and create a collective commitment to diversifying our educator workforce for the benefit of all students. Specifically, we propose legislation that:

- 1. **Incentivizes collaborations, alignment and partnerships between community-based organizations serving Black, Indigenous and Educators of Color**, institutions of higher education, and school districts creating pathways into educational careers for Black, Indigenous and People of Color
- 2. **Invests in community-based solutions in which financial support is available, accessible and controlled by community-based organizations and people they serve.** Communities know best what they need and how to use resources effectively. It is crucial to avoid unnecessary barriers and gate-keeping that can occur when funding is allocated only to universities and state agencies
- 3. **Provides tuition relief, waivers, or reimbursement** for Black, Indigenous and People of Color who wish to pursue education as a career
- 4. **Provides financial support** for Black, Indigenous and People of Color who need to give up full-time employment to complete student teaching requirements
- 5. **Offers financial incentives for districts and educational service agencies to provide professional learning for all educators on culturally responsive practices**, and to implement active efforts to recruit, retain, and advance educators and leaders of color, such as:
  - Grow Your Own programs for paraeducators
  - High school teacher academies
  - Culturally responsive mentoring and intentional placement for new Educators of Color
  - Affinity-based support groups for Educators of Color
  - Leadership development or mentoring programs for Black, Indigenous and Educators of Color seeking advancement
  - Implementing anti-racist hiring policies and practices
- 6. **Incentivizes the recruitment and retention** of Black, Indigenous and People of Color in educator preparation programs in institutions of higher education
- 7. **Provides financial incentives for states mandating the intentional recruitment**, placement and mentoring of new Educators of Color



A diverse educator workforce has the potential to transform our schools into humanizing places that allow all students to thrive. When adults of color in a school feel valued, honored, and included the students who most relate to them will feel the same. With investment in the systems that recruit, prepare, retain, and advance Black, Indigenous, and Educators of Color, we believe policy can play a powerful role in transforming our educator workforce into one that effectively serves our nation's students.

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