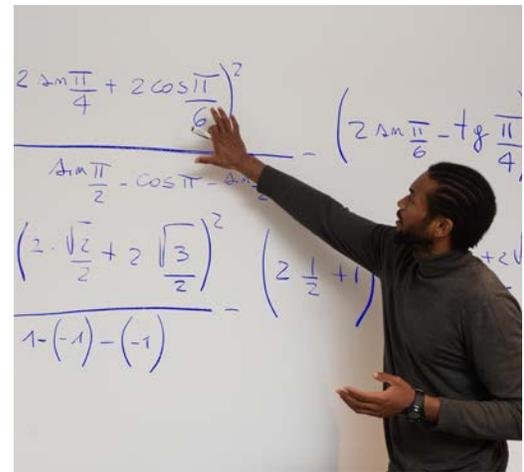




Diversifying the Educator Workforce: A Guide for Minnesota Districts and Schools



Prepared by:
Coy Carter Jr., Alyssa Parr,
and Katie Pekel

Access Appendix
A and B





Table of Contents

Background on this Guide	2
Racial/Ethnic Diversification of the Educator Workforce Nationally and Locally	3
Why diversify the educator workforce?.....	3
Brief Historical Context	6
Recent Legislative Action to Diversify the Educator Workforce	8
Scope of this Guide	9
Theory of Action	10
Culturally Responsive School Leadership.....	11
Culturally Responsive Work Environment.....	11
Recruitment & Retention Strategies.....	12
Strategies Towards Success	13
Explore & Become	14
Grow Your Own	14
Multiple Pathways to Licensure.....	16
Grow & Thrive	18
Affinity Groups & Mentoring.....	18
Financial Incentives.....	21
Contract Changes.....	25
References	26



Background on this Guide

This report was compiled by the Wisconsin–Minnesota Comprehensive Center—Region 10 (R10CC), which is one of 19 federally funded centers that provides high quality and intensive capacity-building services to its regional state departments of education (the Minnesota Department of Education and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction) as well as local education agencies and organizations. The R10CC is operated by three organizations: the University of Minnesota’s Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI), the University of Wisconsin–Madison’s Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative (WEC), and Education Analytics (EA).

The content presented here was informed by and compliments the:

1. Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota’s [Increase Teachers of Color Act](#),
2. Minnesota Department of Education’s [Equitable Access to Excellent and Diverse Educators resources](#), and
3. R10CC’s [Research Briefs on Diversifying Minnesota’s Educator Workforce](#).

Our hope is that this guidance will continue to be updated as the work of organizations, such as these, and the research on the racial/ethnic diversification of the educator workforce evolves.



Racial/Ethnic Diversification of the Educator Workforce Nationally and Locally

By the numbers



Nationwide

20%

of teachers identify as teachers of color or American Indian

51%

of public school students identify as students of color



Minnesota

5.6%

of licensed teachers in Minnesota identify as a teacher of color or an American Indian teacher

36%

of students identify as students of color, indigenous students, or mixed race

As the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to exacerbate existing racial inequities, the spotlight shines on Minnesota’s many racialized gaps in health disparities, homeownership, income, student outcomes, college preparedness, and access to higher education. Notably, COVID-19 has impacted PK-12 education in innumerable ways and continues to do so. As schools and districts continue to grapple with in-person learning in school buildings along with synchronous or asynchronous online and/or hybrid models, this is a necessary time for PK-12 district and school leaders to reflect on and re-evaluate PK-12 education.

Nationally, teachers of color¹ and American Indian teachers represent approximately 20% of the teaching workforce while students of color make up approximately 51% of public schools. In Minnesota, roughly 30% of students identify as indigenous students or students of color; that number increases 36% when accounting for students who identify as mixed race.²

In comparison, only about 5.6% of licensed teachers in Minnesota identify as a teacher of color or an American Indian teacher.³ This is one of many racialized gaps in Minnesota and it poses potential negative effects for the increasingly diverse student population in Minnesota’s public PK-12 schools who do not have access to a diversified teacher workforce that looks like them.

Why diversify the educator workforce?

According to recent scholarship, there are three primary reasons for diversifying the educator workforce. The first argument is that teachers of color serve as role models for all students.⁴ Part of this assertion stems from social learning theory,⁵ which supports the idea that if “I can see it, I can be it.” The lack of teachers of color limits the career potential for students of color as they see their teachers as predominantly white women and principals or school leaders predominantly as white men. Students can see the lack of teachers of color and thus may not consider teaching as a career choice due to seeing few who look like them [sic] teach.

*if I can
see it,
I
can
be it*

1. Due to the framing and positionality of synthesized research, teachers of color is the terminology we use to reflect Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers.
2. Minnesota Department of Education (2022)
3. Wilder (2021)
4. Villages & Irvine (2010)
5. Bandura (1971)



Additionally, some scholars⁶ argue that seeing only white teachers and leaders in school impacts students' understanding of the legitimacy of only white people as teachers and the distribution of power also concentrated among white educators.

The second argument for diversifying the educator workforce is the (empirically proven) potential for teachers of color to improve the academic outcomes and school experiences of students of color. Several studies have suggested that when teachers of color are paired with students of color, overall reading and math scores increase, as do standardized test scores.⁷

Five Observed Practices that Contribute to Better Academic Outcomes

1. Having high expectations of students;
2. Using culturally relevant teaching;
3. Developing caring and trusting relationships with students;
4. Confronting issues of racism through teaching; and
5. Serving as advocates and cultural brokers.

Source: Villages and Irvine (2010)

Examining these practices reveals that white teachers tend to have deficit perceptions of students of color while teachers of color tend to have higher expectations of these students, comparatively.⁸ Additionally, teachers of color often step in and shield students of color from anti-Black and other discriminatory perceptions of them.⁹ A study examining Black males found that, having one Black teacher in the third, fourth, or fifth grade reduced their dropout rate by seven percentage points.¹⁰

In addition, studies have shown that all students benefit when having teachers of color. For example, students of color and white students reported feeling more cared for and academically challenged by their teachers of color.¹¹ Additionally, teachers of color provide all students opportunities to learn through different perspectives represented in diversified curricular resources and lived experiences they naturally bring to the classroom.

**...all students benefit from having
teachers of color.**

6. Mercer & Mercer (1986) as cited in Villages & Irvine (2010)

7. Dee (2004); Hanushek (1992) as cited in Villages & Irvine (2010)

8. Villages & Irvine (2010)

9. Oates (2003) as cited in Villages & Irvine (2010)

10. Gershenson et al., (2017) as cited in Carver-Thomas, D. (2018)

11. Carver-Thomas (2018)



The third major argument to diversify the teacher workforce is the longevity teachers of color contribute to teaching in schools serving predominantly students of color in comparison to their white peers. Studies in Washington, North Carolina, Michigan, and Texas show that Black and Latinx teachers had the lowest attrition rates in schools serving students of color.¹²

The purpose of this report is to highlight the gap in the racial/ethnic diversity of the teacher workforce and why it is necessary that we address the shortage of educators of color and American Indian educators in our classrooms—not just to close a gap—but to provide a quality and equitable education for all students.

12. Elfers et al. (2006); Kirby et al. (1999); Murnane et al. (1991) as cited in Villages & Irvine (2010)



Brief Historical Context for Educator Racial/Ethnic Diversification

The legacies of racial exclusion and harm along with the desegregation of public schools in the United States have played a large role in the lack of racial/ethnic diversity in the teacher workforce today. Throughout U.S. history, the exclusion of Black and Brown students from schools intentionally crafted for white students, the harm committed against American Indian students kidnapped and forced into schools designed to assimilate them into whiteness, and other atrocities against minoritized students culminate in systemic exclusion of teachers of color and American Indian teachers from public schools today. Though not included in school spaces, minoritized communities have fought school segregation, or at the least the equitable consequence of school segregation beginning around 1849 in which inequitable segregation was taken up in *Roberts v. The City of Boston*. This was followed by similar cases like *Tape v. Hurley*,¹³ *Mendez, et al v. Westminster*,¹⁴ as well as 11 Kansas school segregation cases, which lead up to arguably the most recognized Supreme Court decision concerning school segregation and possibly the largest exodus of teachers of color from public schools: *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka I*.

The legacies of racial exclusion and harm along with the desegregation of public schools in the United States have played a large role in the lack of racial/ethnic diversity in the teacher workforce today.

The vast majority of Black and Brown leaders and teachers were pushed out of schools following *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka I*.

Following the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka I* and the push for classroom desegregation, the vast majority of Black and Brown leaders and teachers were pushed out of schools. 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, created by integration, 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.¹⁵

13. *Tape v. Hurley*, 66 Cal. 473, (1885)

14. *Mendez, et al v. Westminster* [sic] *School District of Orange County, et al*, 64 F.Supp. 544 (S.D. Cal. 1946), [1] aff'd, 161 F.2d 774 (9th Cir. 1947)

15. Anderson, J. (1988); Siddle-Walker (1996)



This history illustrates why the national teaching workforce is 80% white—a large decrease over the past 30 years, where that number consistently rested at or above 90%.¹⁶ This grounding stemming from *Brown v. Board* helps contextualize the current environment by untangling how nonexistent protections for teachers of color amid the implementation of integration via *Brown v. Board* directly contributed to the absence of teachers of color now.

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, again removing teachers of color from the classroom. As the increase in teachers of color peaked at nearly 20% in 2016¹⁷—relegated predominantly to high poverty schools—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.^{18,19} Driven by these flawed policies, as well as undisclosed personal reasons, teachers of color are disappearing from the classroom at a faster rate than their white colleagues—a rate of 45%, making recruitment efforts negligible.²⁰

16. Ingersoll, R. M., & May, H. (2011)

17. Ingersoll, R. M., & May, H. (2011)

18. For the purpose of this guide, licensure and certificate/certification are synonymous.

19. Carter Andrews, D. J., et al. (2019)

20. Ingersoll, R. M., et al. (2018)



Recent Legislative Action to Diversify the Educator Workforce

Recognizing the longstanding and ongoing work of grassroots organizations, activists, and organizers, such as the [TeachMN2020 campaign](#), the Minnesota Legislature has recently engaged the work of the [Coalition to Increase Teacher of Color and American Indian Teachers \(TOCAIT\)](#). This coalition is comprised of members from the Minnesota Education Equity Partnership, Equity Alliance Minnesota, St. Paul Public Schools, Minneapolis Public Schools, and more. Established in 2015, the coalition demonstrates through experience and research that, “racially and ethnically diverse teachers are important to the success and learning of ALL students, especially students of color and American Indian students.”²¹

The Increase Teachers of Color Act—authored by Dr. Paul Spies, TOCAIT’s legislative team, and championed by Representative Hodan Hassan—introduced House File 217 and Senate File 446 that, “will create comprehensive systemic change needed to address opportunity and achievement gaps for students while strengthening existing programs and creating new efforts needed to attract, prepare, license, and retain an increased percentage of teachers of color and American Indian teachers (TOCAIT) in Minnesota.”²²

The Increase Teachers of Color Act resulted in Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan’s Due North Education Plan providing resources to increase teachers of color and American Indian teachers and passing SF 466 in the 2021-2022 Education Omnibus Bill, thus increasing the funding three fold to recruit and retain teachers of color through:

1. [Come Teach in Minnesota](#) hiring bonuses for out-of-state teachers;
2. Mentorship programs and scholarships; and
3. The largest increase applied in [Grow Your Own](#) program funding.

Additionally, funds were allotted to support a [Teacher Recruitment and Marketing Campaign](#) through the Professional Educator Licensing Standards Board (PELSB) to build a sense of community and shared vision among educators as well as advance more positive and compelling narratives about being a teacher.

21. Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota (2021)

22. Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota (2021)



Scope of this Guide

Given the concerning lack of teachers of color in Minnesota, the positive outcomes of having a diverse educator workforce, and growing legislative action in this area with the Increase Teachers of Color Act, the Minnesota Department of Education with the assistance of the [Wisconsin-Minnesota Comprehensive Center Region 10 \(R10CC\)](#) sought to better understand the strategies Minnesota public school districts and charter schools were using to recruit and retain teachers of color. To do so, the R10CC analyzed data from three sources:

1. Applications for the Minnesota PELSB Teacher Mentorship and Retention Grant funding program;
2. Responses to a statewide survey of Minnesota school leaders (i.e., superintendents or charter school leaders); and
3. Interviews of education organization leaders, superintendents, human resource personnel, and teachers identified as engaging in this work.

In this guide, we present the findings from these three analyses to share what strategies are currently being used for the recruitment and retention of teachers of color. When reviewing these strategies, we urge readers to keep in mind that while this report may suggest strategies that are most commonly used, we lack the appropriate data to suggest if, when, and where these strategies are ultimately effective in recruiting and retaining teachers of color given this early stage analysis. More detail on the effectiveness of these strategies will come in future briefs as the appropriate data is collected. Additional information regarding the methodology for this data collection and analysis can be found in [Appendix A](#) and findings from the grant review and statewide survey can be found in [Appendix B](#).



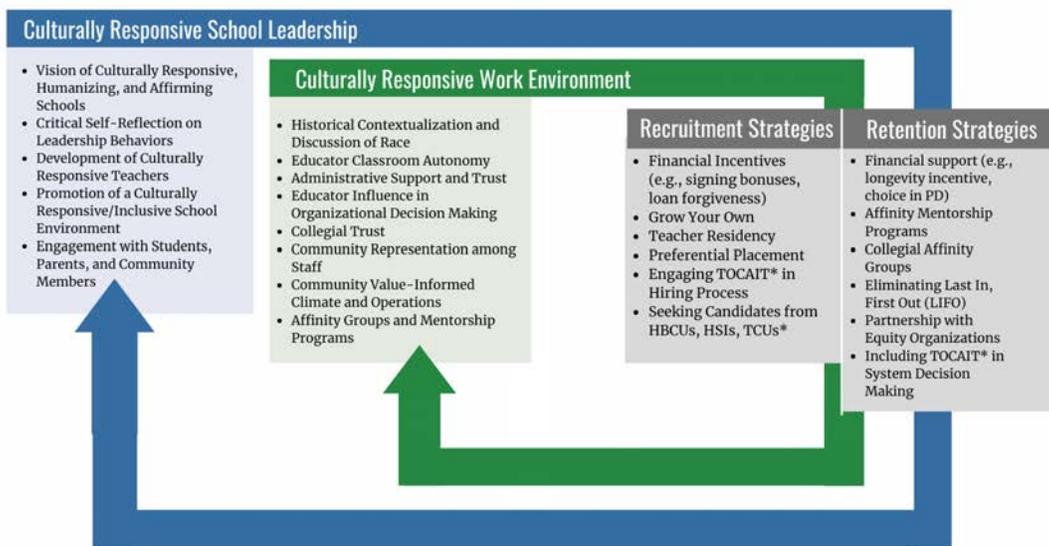
Theory of Action

To begin to work towards increasing the racial/ethnic diversity of the educator workforce, it is important for education leaders to interrogate mental models (i.e., ways of thinking) relating to race. This means acknowledging and understanding how we have all been socialized within the white-dominant racial hierarchy in the United States.²³ As a result, we are primed to think and act in ways that, whether we realize it or not, often get in the way of effectively expanding the racial/ethnic diversity of the educator workforce. For example, when hiring teachers of color and American Indian teachers, it is common for leaders to place these teachers in different schools across a district so that multiple schools have a teacher of color or American Indian teacher. However, this approach isolates teachers of color and American Indian teachers, placing a heavy burden on them to *be* the diversity in the school (i.e., tokenizing these teachers) and denying these teachers opportunities to be in community with others who share similar experiences given their minoritized identities. As leaders, it is important to understand mental models—such as whose perspectives are being prioritized—that inform decisions like those in this example. Leaders must reflect in ways that challenge them to be more responsive to and inclusive of teachers of color and American Indian teachers.

Accordingly, in our theory of action for Minnesota district and school leaders to racially/ethnically diversify the educator workforce, we position culturally responsive school leadership and culturally responsive work environments as necessary for the success of recruitment and retention strategies.

Theory of Action for Racially/Ethnically Diversifying the Educator Workforce

Diversification of the educator workforce is a continuous process that involves culturally responsive leadership and work environments that provide the foundation for successful TOCAIT recruitment and retention strategies, which in turn promote culturally responsive school leadership and work environments.*



*Note: TOCAIT = Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers, HBCUs = Historically Black Colleges and Universities, HSIs = Hispanic Serving Institutions, TCUs = Tribal Colleges and Universities

23. Bonilla-Silva (2018); Lipsitz (2018)



Culturally Responsive School Leadership

Our theory of action begins with the foundation that to diversify the educator workforce, districts and schools must have culturally responsive school leaders. Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL) stems from the scholarship of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy by Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings and Dr. Geneva Gay first published approximately 25 years ago to address the unique learning needs of minoritized students. With the shift of PK-12 students in public education represented by 51% non-white students, early research identified the lack of preparedness of leadership to address issues of racial/ethnic diversity and be able to “articulate meaningful discourse around diversity.”²⁴

The measuring of leadership preparedness is key in the implementation of cultural responsiveness as the literature demonstrates that to enact the necessary culturally responsive practices, or any education reform for that matter, leadership plays a pivotal role. Good leadership, research suggests, understands the necessity for culturally responsive measures in their schools as well as recruiting and retaining teachers that are equally committed to meeting the needs of minoritized students through CRSL. More detail about CRSL²⁵ can be located in [Diversifying Minnesota’s Educator Workforce: A Series of Research Briefs](#).

Culturally Responsive Work Environment

The next component of our theory of action addresses the work environment in districts and schools. Teacher attrition levels—particularly for teachers of color—are high, and research indicates it has much to do with work environments. Ingersoll and Connor (2009) expound on the impact of work environments, finding that a lack of teacher classroom autonomy, administrative support, and faculty influence in decision making increased attrition rates of teachers of color. Though there are additional factors that impact the working conditions of teachers of color, collectively these contribute to the likelihood they remain in a school, stay in the field, or exit the profession. We argue **it is necessary for districts and schools to acknowledge and contextualize the discussion of race in the educator profession in order to begin eliminating discriminatory practices toward teachers of color**, a primary reason for departure from the field, along with (re)professionalizing their roles in schools as capable and exemplary teachers—not simply disciplinarians.

The literature presents a myriad of real issues that contribute to toxic, oppressive, and ineffective workplace environments, resulting in teachers of color leaving schools and ultimately the workforce. In response to their workplace conditions, the literature offers some suggestions as to how to improve the work environment for teachers of color through professional development, affinity groups, and representation. This list is not exhaustive; however, we understand that this must be addressed on a case-by-case basis as for some it could be a simple building or district policy change, while for others, larger systemic state and departmental policy may need to be addressed.

24. B.L. Young et al. (2010) as cited in Khalifa et al. (2016)

25. Khalifa, M. (2018)



Recruitment & Retention Strategies

The last two components of our theory of action are recruitment and retention. Though we share the importance of diversifying the workforce earlier, it is important to revisit when discussing the recruitment and retention of teachers of color. For example, teachers of color are more inclined to include culturally responsive pedagogies into everyday classrooms. They also have higher expectations for students of color, which lead to improved academic outcomes for marginalized populations. Additionally, they provide a unique empathy and connection of experience with students of color in and outside of the school building. It is also important to understand that increasing teachers of color benefits all students—not just students of color—as white students benefit from learning through different perspectives represented in diversified curriculum and lived experience.

Though each district, school, and educational space will have different educator needs, we argue that there are evidence-based practices that lead to recruiting educators of color that should be used. Many times districts use the “see what sticks” approach by adapting a model from another district and school or attempting to create a model unaware of what strategies exist. We provide strategies at the state and local levels offered by research that can be nuanced to fit the needs of a district and school to recruit teachers of color.

Retaining teachers of color is a task many districts and schools may overlook. Once teachers of color are recruited, some believe that work ends there; however, we argue that retention is equally important to recruitment. We offer research-driven recommendations through a conceptual framework developed by Dr. Conra Gist that highlights “the need to attend to human investments with the same urgency as technological investments” to retain teachers of color. These strategies speak to cultivating the culturally responsive work environment that we include in our theory of action.



Strategies Towards Success

Given that racially/ethnically diversifying the educator workforce is essential to providing a quality and equitable education for each and every student in Minnesota, the purpose of this section is to offer practical insights regarding diversification strategies currently being used to guide Minnesota educators who are seeking to diversify the teacher workforce in their own local context. We provide an overview of five diversification strategies we've aligned with the [TeachMN2020](#) teacher development journey: EXPLORE the teaching profession, BECOME a teacher through preparation, GROW as a beginner teacher, and THRIVE as an experienced teacher or educator. Within these categories, we will discuss Grow Your Own, multiple pathways to licensure, affinity groups and mentoring, financial incentives, and contract changes.

TeachMN2020 teacher development journey:



the teaching profession.



a teacher through preparation.



as a beginner teacher.



as an experienced teacher or educator.

Sourced from: <https://imprintu.org/thejourney/>



Explore & Become

Strategy No. 1: Grow Your Own

Student and adult Grow Your Own (GYO) programs stem from the need to staff high-need schools that experience high teacher turnover. The modern design is generally credited to a Latinx community—the Logan Square Neighborhood Association—in Chicago that in the late 90’s desired to enter into their community schools as teachers. As the school lacked teachers that looked like the students and could connect on a cultural level, parents in the community knew they could ensure a cultural match as well as long term invested teachers. With little to no access to affordable higher education options, they partnered with a faculty member from Chicago State University to secure funding and create Nueva Generación, the predecessor to the modern GYO.²⁶ Research tends to situate GYO in grassroots and social justice framing as a way to increase teachers of color in classrooms and uplift the cultural community wealth.²⁷

GYO programs generally have three formats or pools of candidates from which they select.²⁸ The first is middle school and high school programs that generally focus on exploration of teaching as a career as well as providing academic credit towards a traditional teaching certificate. Here, following social learning theory—*If I can see it, I can be it*—GYO programs introduce students of color to the idea of becoming a teacher. The second group involves traditional teaching certification students at a four year college or university. Examples, like the Meyerhoff scholars program at University of Maryland-Baltimore County, recruit qualified students to teach in STEM and provide the necessary support to ensure student success in obtaining their teaching certification.²⁹ Lastly, the paraprofessional or community member model provides alternative pathways for those who do not have access to or have been pushed out of traditional certification programs.

Current research in teacher education at a national level indicates that teachers of color who come from GYO programs are less likely to be recruited than those who come from traditional teacher education programs. However, GYO graduates are more likely to stay in schools that possess structural challenges (e.g., economic exclusion, standardized testing, and racially-biased teacher quality) and relational challenges (e.g., nature of relationship amongst teachers, leaders, paraprofessionals, and students) challenges compared to those recruited from traditional teacher preparation programs.³⁰

Implementation Considerations: Barriers and Recommendations

Barrier No.1 to Successful Implementation: Economic Considerations

Identified in both interviews and the literature, is concern regarding how to remove economic barriers for those participating in GYO programs.

26. Bartow, J. et al. (2014)

27. Gist, C. et al. (2019)

28. Ibid.

29. Hrabowski III, F. A., & Sanders, M. G. (2015)

30. Gist, C. et al. (2019)



This speaks to how to ensure those who are most committed and interested in the work can participate, as many committed candidates are community or family caretakers, existing paraprofessionals, or have other financial responsibilities that make seeking a teaching certification inaccessible.

Recommendations

Many GYO programs are built around mechanisms that assist in alleviating the financial burden of becoming a classroom teacher, particularly around tuition by offering academic scholarships and tuition forgiveness when working with teacher education partners.

In addition to academic or learning costs for GYO participants, are test preparation and exam costs that stand tall in the process of achieving teaching certification. Building in additional dollars, or at the least providing access to outside opportunities for funding, testing and test preparation should be considered when creating a GYO program. This can also be mitigated by enrolling smaller cohort sizes to ensure each participant has full funding for each financial check point in the process.

Another economic concern unearthed through interviews and research is: how do participants secure teaching certificates while working part-time or in their current employment or care situation? Paid practicums or some sort of continued monetary support is advised during the student teaching and certification period as many GYO participants already have some type of employment while pursuing their teaching certification. Unlike traditional teacher candidates that have access to student loans, scholarships, or other university funds, many GYO participants are caretakers, parents, or the primary household provider. This requires child care, living subsidies, and other needs. These costs for adult GYO programming tend to be viewed as additional, extra, and unnecessary to move forward with GYO; however, in traditional teaching programs, participants have access to these opportunities through federally funded university programs.

Barrier No. 2 to Successful Implementation: Standardized Tests

Standardized test and teacher quality metrics are some structural exclusions that contribute to a leak in the GYO pipeline from participant to certified teacher.

Recommendations

Embedding additional supports to combat the structural exclusion of candidates served by GYO programs is necessary as they can be pushed or counseled out of obtaining their teacher licensure. Certification exams should be accompanied with workshops for participants. Additionally, the pertinence of the certification exams have also been questioned by program directors interviewed and should be confronted at the State level. Many educators and educational leaders are concerned that not only test biases, but a lack of culturally responsive competencies are missing from the exam.



In tandem with the need to address the relevance of the certification exams, biases in teacher quality metrics need to be addressed at the state, district, and local level. Some district and school level teacher quality metrics, for instance, provide additional or higher point values to those who received a traditional teacher certification versus those who seek alternative pathways. This approach was identified as problematic during our interviews as some interviewees highlighted the contradictory nature of bringing culturally reflective teachers in through alternative pathways, but then possibly forcing them out through poor evaluations based on their pathway to teaching.

Additional Considerations

District/School leaders and universities need to be mindful that partnerships are only as successful as the planning involved. One place where GYO programs fail is the disconnect between partnership schools or districts that do not hire teachers from the GYO pathway. This is true in middle school and high school GYO programs as well. Support often was not offered to the middle school and high school students to assist in combating and overcoming the structural and economic barriers like scholarships for four-year colleges or universities.

Promising Practices in Minnesota

- Paid practicum that covers paraprofessional salary while engaged in student teaching.
- Exploratory classes and GYO programs for middle and high school students

Program Spotlight

Osseo schools partnered with Metropolitan State University to provide college credits for paraprofessionals seeking teacher licensure. Included as a part of the program is a paid practicum that allows GYO participants to continue to receive their paraprofessional salary during the student teaching portion of their program. Additionally, upon completion of the licensure program, Osseo provides seniority in the hiring process for open positions based on collective employment years in the district versus licensed time.

Strategy No. 2: Multiple Pathways to Licensure

Defined by the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB), multiple pathways to licensure—also known as alternative licensure or alternative preparation programs—are “state-approved courses of study, the completion of which signifies that an enrollee has met all the state’s educational or training requirements for initial certification or licensure to teach in the state’s elementary or secondary schools.”³¹ This includes, but is not limited to, teacher residencies, portfolios, Grow Your Own, and other programs.

³¹ Department of Education, (2016, p. 6)



The lack of teachers of color and American Indian teachers is, in part, the result of racial disparities among high school graduates and undergraduate students.³² This ultimately leads to the lack of teachers of color and American Indian teachers coming from traditional four or five year degree programs, indicating a serious and urgent need for alternative pathways to address inequitable access to higher education. Alternative pathways provide routes for teacher candidates of color and American Indian candidates to access the required certification to engage in and lead classrooms. It is particularly important to highlight the non-traditional pathways to becoming a teacher in Minnesota as it has some of the lowest numbers of teachers of color and American Indian teachers in the classroom and this absence has detrimental impacts on the educational outcomes for students of color and American Indian students.

Implementation Considerations: Barriers and Recommendations

Barrier No. 1 to Successful Implementation: Education of Alternative Pathways to Teaching

A significant barrier highlighted by interview participants was the limited access to or knowledge about alternative pathways to teaching. Leaders of the alternative preparation programs found it difficult to recruit, while at the same time, current educators voiced how they felt there was little to no communication about alternative opportunities in their communities.

Recommendations

Provide accessible communication that is clear and concise for those who are interested in joining the teaching workforce. For example, the Minnesota Education Equity Partnership’s ImprintU.org initiative called Tiers without Fear is a simple resource to help those interested in teaching in Minnesota navigate the licensure system. More tools need to be developed to further de-mystify the complex system of teacher licensure.

Additional Considerations

A recurring element of alternative licensure that surfaced throughout the interviews is the transparency of cost. Though alternative pathways are an evidence-based practice to increase the quantity of teachers of color in the classroom, some programs are not upfront about the additional costs to successfully complete the program. This can come in the form of test preparation, travel, child care, etc.

Promising Practice in Minnesota

- Collaborating with university partners to provide teacher residency opportunities

Program Spotlight

Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) Urban Teacher Residency (SUTR) program is a unique partnership between SPPS and the University of St. Thomas. District staff and others who are interested in pursuing a teaching career now have a new, accelerated pathway.

This program aims to recruit, prepare and retain highly qualified teachers who share similar life experiences as our diverse student population in SPPS. SUTR provides an affordable, accelerated program to earn a Minnesota teaching license and master’s degree in 15 months from the University of St. Thomas.

32. Boser, U. (2014)



 **Grow & Thrive** 

Strategy No. 3: Affinity Groups & Mentoring

Gist identifies both affinity groups and mentoring together as they play key roles in “the need to create and invest in support structures for teachers of color to thrive and perform.” We offer them together as well as highlight how districts and schools are navigating affinity groups and mentorship in efforts to recruit and retain teachers of color.

Affinity Groups

Affinity groups are defined as meetings where people of the same social identity gather to discuss similar personal and/or professional experiences.³³ Often, this is conceptualized as an intra-school or intra-district meeting, but others have expanded the scope of this to include cross-district collaboration.

Several scholars³⁴ discuss the historical exclusion of teachers of color in U.S. schools to highlight the continued exclusionary and hostile climate experienced by teachers of color. They argue that to retain teachers of color recruited into the workforce, modification of existing or development of non-existing structures is needed to allow space for teachers of color to discuss and navigate the discrimination and racial disparities that persist in the teacher workforce. This is often accomplished through affinity groups.

Mentoring

Mentor teachers are leaders who help new teachers navigate the teaching profession. They provide new teachers with an overview of the content of their departmental area of expertise and help connect course experiences with classroom practices. This can span from a single one-on-one meeting to intricately designed frequent touch points between mentor and mentee. The intended purpose of the mentorship relationships is to provide growth and guidance for new teachers. However, it is important to be aware that others can be used to screen teachers and remove those who are not perceived to be effective or capable. This form of gatekeeping disproportionately impacts candidates of color and American Indian candidates.

Research indicates mentor teachers are found to have the most significant role in preservice and early career teacher learning.³⁵ Mentorship in the teaching profession serves three major purposes: to provide new teachers with guidance and support, promote professional development, and retain new teachers.³⁶ The duration of these programs also have an impact as research tends to indicate that the longer a new teacher has access to a well-matched mentor, the longer the new teacher’s tenure tends to be. Additionally, though teacher mentorship is not the only factor for increasing retention, research does state that first year teachers with mentors outlast their peers that do not experience mentorship.³⁷

33. Douglas, P.H. (2008)

34. Gist, C.D. (2018); Kholi (2016)

35. Orland-Barak, L. (2021)

36. Odell, S.J. (1990)

37. Odell, S.J., & Ferraro, D.P. (1992) as cited in Guarino, C., Santibañez, L., & Daley, G. (2006)



Implementation Considerations: Barriers and Recommendations

Barrier No. 1 to Successful Implementation of Affinity Groups: Staffing Issues

Identified through interview data, both participants and program leaders alike agreed that staffing white educators to lead affinity groups or mentoring opportunities for educators of color presents challenges. Yet, this often happens as white educators tend to be in positions of authority. Additionally, where there are few educators or leaders of color, affinity group members often feel isolated within their district or school. Many times these educators of color share affinity spaces with all educators, not only those who they identify with ethnically or racially, which fundamentally shifts the dynamics of the space.

Recommendations

Districts that do not have an educator of color to lead affinity groups can lean on university partnerships to staff affinity groups or help districts identify a candidate. Based on interviewee data, educators in districts with a limited number of candidates of color to lead an affinity group enjoyed partnerships with entities, such as universities, that allowed relationship building with an educator who has or is experiencing similar challenges.

Other isolated educators of color enjoyed connecting with affinity group members across schools or districts to access educator communities with similar teaching experiences. Though this may not provide direct insight into individual districts, it allowed educators to connect and discuss the challenges and hurdles of being an educator of color in Minnesota.

Lastly, it is important to properly compensate affinity group leaders. Expressed through research and interview data, affinity group leaders who were teachers of color were often tokenized and positioned to lead as there were not many options or the district expressed difficulty in finding someone interested in executing the work. We found that a systemic shift needs to occur. Many districts did not have any or had little funding to properly incentivize someone to take on the work, nor did they have a plan to provide the affinity group leader with professional development or support. This is necessary to develop a professional title or role that provides policy and practice recommendations and contributes at a leadership level. This shifts districts from viewing affinity group leaders as extracurricular to required or necessary. It also facilitates the transition of an educator doing this work into more leadership roles.

Barrier No. 2 to Successful Implementation of Mentoring: Lack of Formal Structure

Interviewees revealed barriers around mentorship in Minnesota, including funding, time, and formalized structure. In some districts, there is no formal mentor-mentee structure and it is more an informal act of a senior teacher providing advice to a novice teacher in an ad hoc manner. This is problematic for new teachers as without a formal structure, they were unclear who they were supposed to reach out to for mentorship or community. Additionally, there was concern about not having access to a mentor for more than one year as well as a mentor experienced in their content area.



Recommendations

Both interview data and research emphasize the importance of obtaining secure funding for mentoring programs from the state, district, and school levels. Mentoring programs are identified as the most effective method of converting incoming teachers' training to praxis, as well as accessing systemic knowledge to navigate districts. Many districts, even those with established mentoring programs, have difficulty securing guaranteed funding, in turn, impeding their ability to plan and create mentorship programs or secure mentors.

Extending mentorship is another recommendation based on our interview findings. There are undoubtedly benefits expressed from educators interviewed, as well as captured in research that suggests having a mentor through the first year of teaching is linked to lower attrition rates from incoming teachers. However, interview data also suggests that teachers in Minnesota are more effective and more likely to remain in the profession when they are provided more than one year of mentoring.

Another point of focus of mentorship programs is mentorship training. No mentorship template can be overlaid onto all disciplines or teaching styles. Recent research identifies four main approaches to teacher mentoring (i.e., personal growth, situated learning, core practice, and critical transformative) and the effective mentorship comes from an integrated approach drawing from the four identified practices. This is important to avoid creating “mentoring mismatch” in which a mentor imposes “their way” as the only way and does not provide flexibility or is not adaptive to traversing practice types/styles.³⁸

Promising Practices in Minnesota

- Affinity groups led by educators of color through university partnerships
- Affinity groups predominantly identified by Minnesota educators as positive space for teachers of color to discuss discriminatory behavior and other challenges
- Providing content area matching mentors to new teachers
- Extending the mentorship period from only one year to a multiyear endeavor

Program Spotlight

Saint Paul Public Schools provided the Navigating Partners program, a mentor-mentee program that serves new teachers. The Mentor-Mentee Program is individualized, differentiated, and flexible to meet professional growth goals for educators just entering the field of education and those coming to Saint Paul Public Schools with previous experience. Probationary educators under the St. Paul Federation of Education bargaining contract participate in the Mentor Mentee Program in their first year of employment if they are not working with a Peer Assistance and Review educator, another St. Paul mentoring program aimed at supporting tenured track teachers. Building principals or supervisors work very hard to find a mentor educator within the same grade level or content/professional area for each mentee.

38. Orland-Barak, L., & Wang, J. (2021).



Program Spotlight

Owatonna Public School District partners with Minnesota State University Mankato and Dr. Natalie Rasmussen to offer an affinity group to all educators, not just those identified as teachers. The district also looks to this group to provide feedback on district policy such as hiring practices, recruitment, and student discipline.

This year, they [Owatonna] offered an affinity group led by a professor from Mankato, so that was something new and very exciting and I know that was beneficial for me... the fact that it was a professor of color, I really enjoyed that...because she had experiences that you know that I don't hear from and she had experiences as admin and as a teacher and that's something that we don't really get to hear much.

- Participant of an Owatonna affinity group

Strategy No. 4: Financial Incentives

Financial incentives for teachers continue to be discussed to address the increased rate of teacher attrition, especially in hard-to-staff and under-resourced schools. Currently, most financial incentives rely on teacher educational attainment and tenure;³⁹ however, some districts are attempting to move away from that and focus both on understanding how to approach merit based incentives to address teacher retention, as well as, using financial incentives to attract new quality teachers to the field. Aside from stand-alone bonuses—signing, performance-based, and retention—one mode of highly discussed financial incentives is loan forgiveness which exists at both the federal and local levels. Other alternative forms of incentives include relocation and housing assistance, child care assistance, and other supplemental monetary support.

Several studies⁴⁰ corroborate that increased compensation leads to decreased attrition rates for teachers. Increasing teachers' base salaries by around \$1,000 dollars annually proved to decrease voluntary teacher departures by anywhere from three to six percent.⁴¹

However, the research on alternative compensation for teachers is less clear on its impact on teacher retention especially for teachers of color. This, in part, is due to the lack of programs existing to provide alternative compensation for teachers of color.

This is important to highlight as contract language established by unions may restrict this form of reward or compensation for teachers of color who—according to extensive research—take on more responsibilities inside and outside their classroom than their white peers as they tend to work in under-resourced “hard-to-staff” schools to support students of color.

39. Dee, T., & Wyckoff, J. (2015)

40. Fulbeck, E. (2014)

41. Kirby et. al (1999) as cited in Fulbeck (2014)



Additionally, for teachers of color who are able to access the traditional licensure route through a four year university, these teachers incur more student debt than their white peers—on average \$25,000 more⁴²—making alternative compensation options like loan forgiveness a top priority for adjusting and addressing equity within compensation.

Implementation Considerations: Barriers and Recommendations

Barrier No. 1 to Successful Implementation: Financial Incentives

Many financial incentives are attached to local teacher evaluation metrics that exhibit bias in the scoring or point systems, giving more credence to those who have traditional or advanced degrees and relying heavily on student test scores.

Recommendation

Scholars like Gist⁴³ and others propose the use of incentive programs for performance and length of time serving in under-resourced and underfunded schools for teachers of color. Denver Public Schools uses what many acknowledge as the most progressive or at least comprehensive approach to incentivizing teachers called the Professional Compensation System for Teachers (ProComp). Created by local teachers unions and districts, ProComp allows for a range of incentives from a \$376 incentive for meeting annual student growth numbers to upwards of \$3,379 for acquiring a specialty license. Additionally, this model allows for targeted retention incentives for teachers, predominantly teachers of color at “hard-to-staff” schools. Fulbeck found that Denver’s ProComp model was connected to a significant decrease in the possibility of teacher departure. Though, aligning with our theory of action, working conditions were more important than compensation overall.⁴⁴

Minnesota’s alternative teacher professional pay system (ATPPS), more commonly known as Qcomp, presents a similar opportunity. Though as of today, Qcomp is not functionally tied to a formal teacher evaluation system and acts more as an automatic pay increase for teachers that achieve an agreed upon building, teacher, or classroom metric(s). However, Qcomp could provide Minnesota with a tool to incentivize teachers of color and others that serve in under-resourced schools, meet teacher quality standards (differing from teacher effectiveness standards), or measurably contribute more time and effort to improving the experience and outcomes of marginalized students.

Barrier No. 2 to Successful Implementation: Financial Burdens

Teachers of color face many financial burdens when seeking to enter or remain in the teaching field that several white teachers do not, such as housing, child care, and student loans. The existing systems of financial incentives fail to address these burdens as they are aimed at rewarding practicing teachers for their performance or new teachers by acknowledging credentials or education. Financial incentives are generally positioned as reward-based, insofar that an educator has to “earn” financial incentives via hiring or teaching—both based on biased metrics.

42. Scott-Clayton, J., & Li, J. (2016)

43. Gist, C. D. (2018)

44. Fulbeck, E. (2014)



Recommendation

Shift the use of incentives from tools used to motivate or encourage those who meet a goal or threshold by expanding school and district definitions of incentives that “stimulate greater output or investment”. Implementing programs that provide child care, housing assistance or stipends, and student loan forgiveness (in part or whole)—similar to higher education—can provide incentives for teachers of color to pursue and remain in the teaching workforce.

Strategy No. 5: Contract Changes

Teacher contracts are most widely discussed as collective bargaining agreements (CBA) that are negotiated between a school board (often referred to as the “district”) and the exclusive representative of teachers (often referred to as the “local union”). Teacher contracts are often narrowly and infrequently adjusted; however, their perceived and/or measured impact varies from state to state even when federal/state regulations are similar across the board. This is to say that CBAs are used as economic and political tools to create or curb power of teachers and teachers unions. In most states, CBAs are supported by teachers unions as only roughly half of states have some right-to-work agreement that allows teachers to work unaffiliated with a union or professional organization.

Research conducted on CBAs in reference to teachers suggests that even in the face of changing education policy both at the federal and state levels, teacher contracts react to changes slowly if at all. For example, changes around salary, dismissal, transfers, and evaluation were often not adjusted to reflect policy changes. One interesting finding from a study examining CBAs in Kentucky and Ohio was that teacher seniority rights diminished over time, with the exception of dismiss or last in, first out (LIFO) considerations.⁴⁵ Reduction in force (RIF) decisions continue to lean on LIFO, though some districts have moved to allowing teacher quality to trump LIFO and only using it when comparing two teachers of the same quality for dismissal.⁴⁶

Implementation Considerations: Barriers and Recommendations

Barrier No. 1 to Successful Implementation: Removal of LIFO Requirement

Many districts continue to rely on LIFO or unrequested leaves of absence (ULA’s) when a reduction in force is executed; however, the Minnesota Legislature removed the LIFO requirement from law in 2017 allowing local districts to do the same through their renegotiations of their collective bargaining agreements. To date, we found no contracts in Minnesota reflecting this. How can districts and unions collaborate to amend CBAs to approach reduction of force or teacher dismissal more equitably?

Recommendations

While approximately 12 states—that employ roughly 40% of teachers in the U.S.—lean explicitly on LIFO laws, many states have removed seniority as the primary factor. In some cases, it is the only factor when considering a RIF or some type of teacher dismissal. One recommendation is to resort to credit for years of service. This provides new teacher candidates coming from an alternative licensure program or less traditional route credit for the time they already invested in the district as a paraprofessional, protecting them from LIFO practices.

⁴⁵ Ingle, W., & Wisman, R. (2018)

⁴⁶ Ibid.



Recommendations

Additionally, carved-out language offered by the state union, Education Minnesota, increases the retention of teachers of color or protections from LIFO practices by including language that allows students “access to effective teachers who are members of populations underrepresented among the licensed teachers in the district or school and who reflect the racial/ethnic diversity of enrolled students.”⁴⁷

Program Spotlight

Like many school districts that have yet to overcome removing LIFO practices and language from their CBAs, Osseo Public Schools has more or less circumvented a significant aspect that disproportionately impacts teachers of color’s seniority. While coming through the ranks from a paraprofessional, be it from their grow your own program or via traditional certification, Osseo provides their newly transitioned paras up to two years of seniority credit on the teacher contract as acknowledgement of their time as paraprofessionals. This does not interfere with tenure laws, as these teachers remain untenured until the traditional three year period has passed and the teacher is awarded a fourth contract. This alleviates teachers of color being released as they are generally the last to be brought into a district and the first to go with budget cuts. Many districts lose quality teachers of color from classrooms not based on evaluation or quality, but on time served.

⁴⁷ Education Minnesota (2021)



Conclusion

Drawing on insights from educators across the state of Minnesota, this report provides an overview of strategies for the racial/ethnic diversification of the educator workforce. It is necessary to ground this work in an understanding of the history of racial exclusion and harm that kept teachers of color and American Indian teachers out of United States public schools so that such historical legacies can be disrupted. As part of this approach, we emphasize the need for culturally responsive school leadership and work environments to reduce harm and support the success of strategies to recruit and retain teachers of color and American Indian teachers. Ultimately, both teachers and students across the state will benefit greatly if the strategies in this report are used to quicken the pace of educator diversification across the state.



References

- Anderson, J. (1988). *The education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (UPCC book collections on Project MUSE). University of North Carolina Press.
- Bandura, A. (1971). *Social learning theory*. General Learning Press.
- Bartow, J., Gillette, M., Hallett, A., Johnson, K., Madda, C. L., Salazar, I., & Valle, V. M. (2014). Growing your own teachers in Illinois: Promising practice for urban and rural high-need schools. In *Diversifying the teacher workforce* (pp. 109-120). Routledge.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2018). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America* (5th ed.). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Boser, U. (2014). *Teacher Diversity Revisited: A New State-by-State Analysis*. Center for American Progress, Center for American Progress, 2014-05.
- Carter Andrews, D., Castro, E., Cho, C., 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.
- Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). *Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color*. Learning Policy Institute, Learning Policy Institute, 2018-04.
- Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota (2021). *Legislation: Increase Teachers of Color Act: Coalition Increase TOCAIT MN. Coalition TOCAIT MN*. Retrieved from <https://www.tocaimn.com/legislation>
- Dee, T., & Wyckoff, J. (2015). Incentives, selection, and teacher performance: Evidence from IMPACT. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 34(2), 267-297.
- Douglas, P. H. (2008). Affinity groups: Catalyst for inclusive organizations. *Employment Relations Today*, 34(4), 11-18.
- Fulbeck, E. (2014). Teacher mobility and financial incentives: A descriptive analysis of Denver's ProComp. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 36(1), 69.
- Education Minnesota (2021). *Equity Checklist for Collective Bargaining Agreements. Bargaining/negotiations guidance*. Retrieved from <https://www.educationminnesota.org/members-only/bargaining/guidance/>
- 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.



- Gist, C., 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.
- Guarino, C., Santibañez, L., & Daley, G. (2006). Teacher recruitment and retention: A review of the recent empirical literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 76(2), 173-208.
- Hrabowski, F. A., & Sanders, M. G. (2015). Increasing racial diversity in the teacher workforce: One university's approach. *Thought & Action*, 101-116.
- Ingle, W., & Wisman, R. (2018). Extending the work of Cowen and Fowles: A historical analysis of Kentucky teacher contracts. *Educational Policy (Los Altos, Calif.)*, 32(2), 313-333.
- Ingersoll, R.M. and May, H. (2011). *Recruitment, Retention and the Minority Teacher Shortage*. Consortium for Policy Research in Education. CPRE Research Report #RR-69.
- Ingersoll, R., Merrill, E., Stuckey, D., & Collins, G. (2018). *Seven Trends: The Transformation of the Teaching Force*. Updated October 2018. CPRE Research Report # RR 2018-2. Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 2018-11-01.
- Khalifa, M., Gooden, M., & Davis, J. (2016). Culturally responsive school leadership: A synthesis of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 86(4), 1272-1311.
- Khalifa, M. (2018). *Culturally responsive school leadership (Race and education series)*. Harvard Education Press.
- Lipsitz, G. (2018). *The possessive investment in whiteness: How white people profit from identity politics*. Temple University Press.
- Minnesota Department of Education (2021). *Vision: Every student benefits from excellent and diverse educators. Equitable access to excellent and diverse educators*. Retrieved from <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/equitdiv/>
- Odell, S. (1990). *Mentor Teacher Programs. What Research Says to the Teacher*. National Education Association.
- Orland-Barak, L., & Wang, J. (2021). Teacher mentoring in service of preservice teachers' learning to teach: Conceptual bases, characteristics, and challenges for teacher education reform. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 72(1), 86-99.
- Scott-Clayton, J., & Li, J. (2016). *Black-white disparity in student loan debt more than triples after graduation*. The Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/black-white-disparity-in-student-loan-debt-more-than-triples-after-graduation/>



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

Walker, V. (1996). *Their highest potential : An African American school community in the segregated South*. University of North Carolina Press.

Wilder Research. (2019). 2019 Biennial Minnesota Teacher Supply and Demand.
https://mn.gov/pelsb/assets/2019_Supply_and_Demand_Report_tcm1113-370206.pdf