



America's Leaky Pipeline for Teachers of Color

Getting More Teachers of Color into the Classroom

By Farah Z. Ahmad and Ulrich Boser

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Introduction and summary

If you spend time in almost any major school district in America today, you will notice that the students often do not look much like the teachers. In fact, in some areas, the students don't look anything like their teachers. There is a significant demographic gap in the largely white teaching profession and an increasingly diverse student population.

To prepare American students for lives of high achievement, America's schools need a teaching corps that is not only highly effective but also racially and ethnically diverse. Progress has been made in recent decades in attracting people of color to the teaching profession. But major barriers—including a scarcity of high-quality, teacher-training programs targeted at teachers of color; the educational debt students of color must shoulder; and the general lack of esteem in our society for teaching—stand in the way of producing an optimal pool of teachers. Without vigorous policy innovations and public investment, the demographic gap will only widen to the detriment of children's education.

This report will describe how the shortcomings of today's education system and the underachievement of many of today's students of color shrink the future supply of teachers of color. Furthermore, it will offer policy recommendations through which federal and state education agencies and local school districts can address this critical problem.

As the most rapidly growing segment of the American population, communities of color can and should be one of our greatest assets in the 21st century economy. There is an opportunity to energize and infuse our teacher workforce with new cohorts of talented educators who are rigorously prepared and well supported in their careers.

In this report, we examine the critical points in the education pipeline that affect who does and does not become a teacher and we suggest interventions that can improve the flow toward a successful teaching career —particularly of highly qualified candidates of color.

Our aim is to begin a dialogue about how to diversify the teacher workforce to include highly effective teachers of all racial and ethnic backgrounds in elevating the achievement and attainment of the most rapidly growing segment of the American population—children of color. Specifically we find:

- There is a large demographic mismatch between students and teachers of color. This matters because students of color need teachers who not only set rigorous standards for them but teachers who also can provide models of professional success. Teachers of color have demonstrated success in increasing the academic achievement of students of similar backgrounds.
- Fundamental constraints limit the potential supply of highly effective teachers of color. Students of color have significantly lower college enrollment rates than do white students. Plus, a relatively small number of students of color enroll in teacher education programs each year. Finally, teacher trainees who are members of communities of color score lower on licensure exams that serve as passports to teaching careers.
- Teachers of color leave the profession at much higher rates than their white peers. Those who leave mention a perceived lack of respect for teaching as a profession, lagging salary levels, and difficult working conditions.

These findings are disturbing. Given an ever-diversifying student body, we need to do far more to diversity our teacher workforce. This leads us to some pressing policy recommendations:

For the federal government

- Create a national teacher corps similar to the public-private partnership model used by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Its goal would be to simultaneously improve educational outcomes for young people in disadvantaged communities and to provide paid opportunities for college graduates to receive high-quality teacher training.
- Fund the congressionally authorized Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence Program for competitive grants to teacher-preparation programs at minority-serving institutions to make such programs more rigorous—including raising entry and exit standards for the programs; at the same time, students would receive help in meeting those standards.

- Establish incentives for academically strong students of color to enter careers in teaching through scholarships such as the Presidential Teaching Fellows programs¹—a revised version of the TEACH grant program²—which provides scholarships to potential teachers in high-need fields and schools that serve students from low-income families.

For states and districts

- Provide generous scholarship support to future teachers that are tied to the effectiveness of the training program and of the teacher candidate, especially those in five-year programs. Improve articulation relationships between two-year and four-year post-secondary institutions, given the number of students of color at two-year schools.
- Attract the brightest, most resilient people of color into the teaching profession by changing the compensation packages so that teachers of color are paid comparable to other professions requiring similar knowledge, skills, and responsibilities.
- Support and encourage local and state efforts to attract and place effective teachers of color. For example, Call Me Mister—or Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models—is a statewide initiative in South Carolina designed to increase the pool of teachers with more diverse backgrounds among the state’s lowest-performing elementary schools.³

Background

Occupational barriers for communities of color have always existed, but they have looked differently throughout American history. In the late 19th century in the South, for example, African American public schools were primarily and sometimes exclusively staffed with African American teachers. In many areas of the country and not only in the South, this practice continued for decades well into the 20th century with African American teachers predominately teaching African American children.⁴

When school segregation was declared unconstitutional with the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954 and integration slowly began to take hold, many African American schools were simply closed and their students were bussed to white schools. This meant that in many instances, African American teachers lost their positions to white teachers. In the decade following *Brown*, many African American teachers were pushed out of the profession through demotions, firings, and forced resignations—so much so that by 1970, more than 38,000 African American educators lost their jobs.⁵ Around the same time, more professional opportunities for African American people—particularly women—began to open up, allowing African Americans to choose from a much wider selection of occupations.⁶

The results of these trends are clear, and over the past 50 years, teaching has become a predominately white profession. Eighty-two percent of public school teachers are white.⁷ At the same time, however, the nation's students have become increasingly diverse, and within three decades—by as early as 2043—people of color will make up more than half of the American population. The transition to a K-12 system that is majority students of color will come even sooner: Today, students of color make up nearly half of the nation's public school population.⁸ In 2011, 52 percent of the 50 million students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools were white.⁹ In some of our most populous states, including California and Texas, the transition to the majority of student populations consisting students of color has already occurred.¹⁰

But the makeup of the teacher workforce force has not kept up with the changing student demographics. Teachers of color—that is, those outside the non-Hispanic white category—make up only 18 percent of the public school teaching force.¹¹ As a result, almost every state has a large teacher-student diversity gap. For instance, students of color represent 73 percent of California’s student enrollment but only 29 percent of the state’s teachers are of color.¹² The differences can be even larger at the school-district level. In California’s Santa Ana Unified School District, for example, 93 percent of students are Hispanic, while just around 26 percent of teachers are Hispanic—a 67 percent point gap.¹³ These concerns are more pressing than ever as many students of color are failing to attain high levels of quality education.

Why teacher diversity is beneficial to students

Many children of color lag far behind their white counterparts on a variety of critical measures, from readiness to enter kindergarten to high school graduation. While many policy and programmatic interventions are needed to increase success rates for children of color, one vital component is building a population of teachers that is both diverse and effective. Indeed, studies have shown that diversity reinforces teacher effectiveness; it is not simply an add-on.¹⁴

Students of color can benefit from having high-achieving teachers with cultural backgrounds similar to their own because such teachers provide real-life models of career success and academic engagement.¹⁵ On a more personal level, students who have a teacher to whom they can relate become more engaged, which engenders effort, interest, and confidence—benefits that can enhance student performance.¹⁶

Academically, teachers of color have demonstrated success in increasing the test scores of students with backgrounds similar to theirs.¹⁷ The research on this is robust. Consider the finding from the National Bureau of Economic Research’s evaluation of the test scores from Tennessee’s Project STAR class-size experiment, which randomly assigned teachers and students.¹⁸ This research showed that when students were matched with a teacher of their own race, it increased student math and reading scores by 3 to 4 percentage points. The researchers argued that it appeared that students of color benefited by having positive role models and receiving more support.

A 2010 expansive literature review showed that overall, teachers of color engage in the following practices: having high expectations of students of color; providing culturally relevant teaching; developing trusting relationships with students; confronting issues of racism through teaching; and serving as advocates and cultural brokers. These practices have been shown to improve outcomes for students of color, not only when it comes to test scores but also in K-12 attendance, high school completion, and college attendance rates.¹⁹

Historical and emerging research supports the observation that on average low-income and children of color receive less-effective teaching than do their white and more advantaged peers.²⁰ Unfortunately, disparities in teaching effectiveness build at a compound rate over months and years, exacerbating the differentials in academic achievement across ethnic populations that are discussed in this report.²¹ These findings speak to the importance of consistently having a well-prepared, effective teacher in every grade and subject, every year, which is the only way the education gap that students of color face can be closed. Teachers of color are an important part of that solution.

So why don't we have more teachers of color? What can we do to build a better pipeline into the profession? We will look at these questions next.

The leaky pipeline for teachers

There are many steps to becoming a public school teacher in the United States. We describe the traditional pathway to becoming a teacher below, along with some popular alternatives. At each of these steps, there is room for intervention by policymakers that will make it more likely that students of color will succeed.

Elementary and secondary education

Education deficiencies manifest themselves very early and if unaddressed, are compounded in the middle grades and into high school. The result is noticeable gaps in academic achievement across racial and ethnic groups. While differences on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP,²² between African American students and whites and between Hispanic students and whites have narrowed since 1971, significant differences remain at all grade levels. In 2012, the average NAEP reading score for African American 9-year olds was 206 while white 9-year olds averaged 229, a 23-point difference.²³ Hispanics lagged behind whites by 21 points.

In some areas, the gaps have been stalled at those levels for more than a decade.²⁴ Similar trends exist for 8th graders and 12th graders in both reading and mathematics. Even the most high-achieving African American and Latino students—the top 25 percent—fail to get the support they need in order to reach their potential. A recent study found that such students were far less likely than their white peers to take advanced math and science courses and are less likely to pass advance placement, or AP, tests when they take them.²⁵

The path to becoming a public school educator

While the path to becoming an educator is, for the most part, linear and relatively standardized, some alternatives exist, and states have slightly different credentialing requirements.

Step 1: Obtain a high school degree.

Step 2: Obtain a bachelor's degree.

- Pass a teacher credential exam testing for basic skills to get into a teacher education program.

Step 3: Complete a teacher education program either during college or after obtaining a bachelor's degree; take courses on prescribed education topics and successfully complete a student teaching or practicum program.

- Alternatively for those who were not education majors or enrolled in a teacher education program but have a bachelor's degree, complete an alternative certification program that can sometimes include a master's degree in education.
- Additionally, in a few states, obtain a master's degree in education.

Step 4: Successfully complete teacher-credentialing exams, evidencing specific subject knowledge and teaching skills.

Step 5: Complete state specific requirements.

There are also stark differences in high school graduation rates along racial and ethnic lines. For the 2011-12 school year, the average freshman graduation rate—for those who complete high school within four years—was highest for Asians Americans and Pacific Islanders, or AAPIs,²⁶ at 93 percent; AAPIs are subsequently followed by whites at 85 percent; Hispanics at 76 percent; American Indian and Alaskan Natives, or AIANs, at 68 percent; and African Americans at 68 percent.²⁷ Needless to say, students who fail to graduate from high school are unlikely to become teachers.

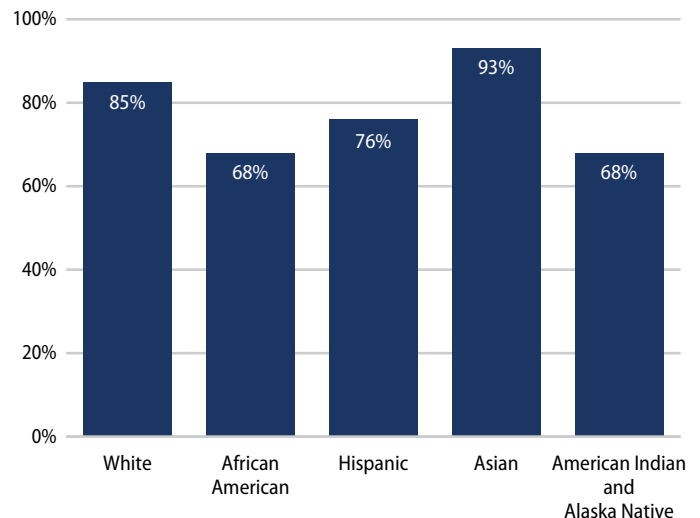
College: From enrollment to graduation

College entrance exams such as the American College Testing, or ACT, and the Scholastic Aptitude Test, or the SAT, represent another key juncture in the educational pipeline and therefore an important juncture in the teacher-supply pipeline as well. Student performance on these tests is often limited by poor general academic preparation, which is a cumulative problem. But even high-performing students of color suffer from a lack of guidance and institutional support—including a lack of encouragement to take the most challenging courses available and encouragement to take college-admissions tests.

This dynamic needs to change. Students of color in the top quartile of academic performance are twice as likely as whites in that category to forgo taking the SAT or ACT, for example.²⁸ For students of color who do take the tests, a substantial body of evidence suggests that poor performance can be attributed not just to poor preparation but also to the pressure of knowing that they are not *expected* to do well, the phenomenon known as stereotype threat.²⁹

FIGURE 1
High school graduation rate, 2011–12

Estimate of the percentage of public high school students who graduate on time—that is, four years after starting ninth grade—with a regular diploma



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, "Annual diploma counts and the Averaged Freshmen Graduation Rate (AFGR) in the United States by race/ethnicity: School years 2007-08 through 2011-12," available at <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/AFGR0812.asp> (last accessed April 2014).

Where college admissions tests are concerned, cost can be a further hurdle. Although test fees are often waived for low-income students, expenses related to test preparation—which can soar to more than \$1,000 in the case of for-profit tutoring³⁰—can be prohibitive.³¹ The effectiveness of test-prep courses is hotly debated, but students often feel that they are essential. A recently announced move by Khan Academy to offer free online preparation for the SAT, in cooperation with the College Board, is a welcome development.³²

Test scores on the SAT and ACT reflect the challenges that we face in creating a pool of students of color who are positioned to excel in college and, in turn, to become potential teachers, as illustrated by Figure 2.³³

Given the levels of high school completion previously noted and the scores on college entrance exams, it should be no surprise that college enrollment rates vary by race and ethnicity too. For those students who obtained a high school degree in 2012, the college enrollment rate was the highest for Asians at 83.6 percent. It was 68.5 for Hispanics, 67 percent for whites, and 62.1 percent for African Americans.³⁴ Enrollment rates, however, are not the whole story: While Hispanics have higher rates of college enrollment than whites, their low rates of high school completion mean that a proportionally smaller Hispanic cohort actually attends college.

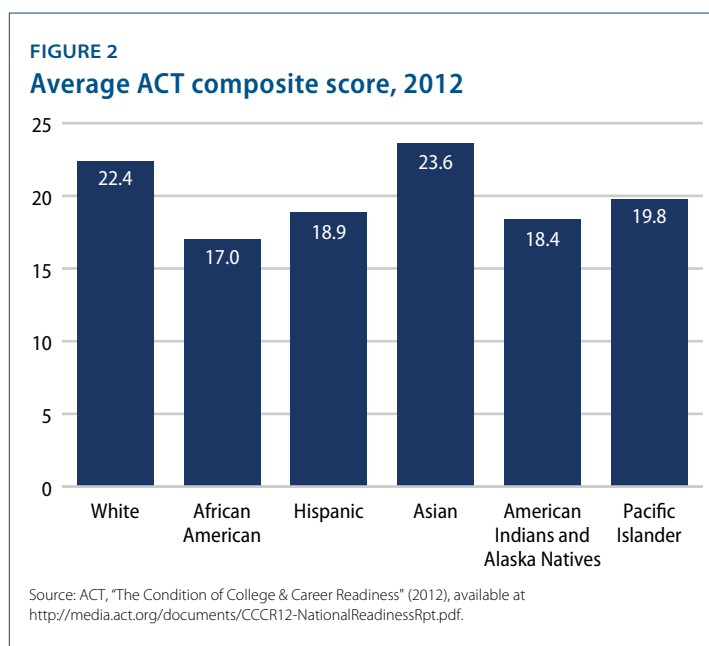
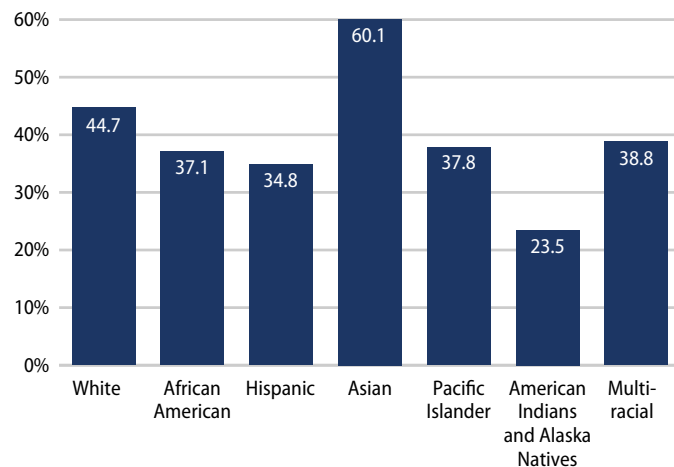


Figure 3 illuminates the problem in a different way by highlighting a wider-lens view that looks at college-aged students ages 18 to 24 years old and that includes both those who completed high school and those who did not. In 2011, only 34.8 percent of Hispanics in this group were enrolled in a degree-granting program. For whites, the number was 44.7 percent, and it was 37.1 percent for African Americans.³⁵

As discussed earlier, there are many avenues into the teaching profession, but completing high school and then attaining a college degree in education is the traditional route; and racial and ethnic differences exist along this traditional pathway. Only 10.6 percent of college students in the United States are education majors.³⁶ While people of color pursue careers in teaching at higher rates than their white counterparts, they are enrolled in post-secondary education institutions at a disproportionately low rate.³⁷ This means that the overall number of college students of color who major in education is relatively small. Figure 4 shows that among those students who major in teacher education, 82 percent are white, 7 percent are African American, 7 percent are Hispanic, 3 percent are Asian, and 1 percent is designated as “other.”³⁸

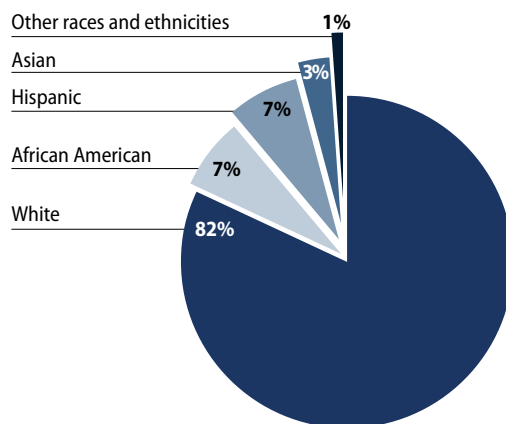
FIGURE 3
College enrollment rate, 2011

18–24 year olds in degree-granting institutions



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, “Enrollment rates of 18- to 24-year-olds in degree-granting institutions, by level of institution and sex and race/ethnicity of student: 1967 through 2011,” available at http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_239.asp (last accessed April 2014).

FIGURE 4
Share of education majors, 2009



Source: Anthony P. Carnevale, Jeff Strohl, and Michelle Melton, “What’s it Worth? The Economic Value of College Majors” (Washington: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2011), available at <https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/5bgczqc0nefsx68bj4u4>.

Community colleges:

More students of color, more barriers to teaching

The cost of higher education and the relatively limited financial resources of students of color shape where students attend college. In 2011, 44 percent of students enrolled in a community college were students of color, a significantly higher proportion than at four-year public universities, where they make up 38 percent of the student body.³⁹ The share of African American students is higher among community colleges—16 percent—than at four-year public universities—12.7 percent.⁴⁰ The same pattern holds for Hispanics, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans—but not whites, as Figure 5 indicates below. Given that community colleges cost roughly half what four-year, public, post-secondary institutions cost, the distribution of students reflects, in part, the financial resources of each group.⁴¹

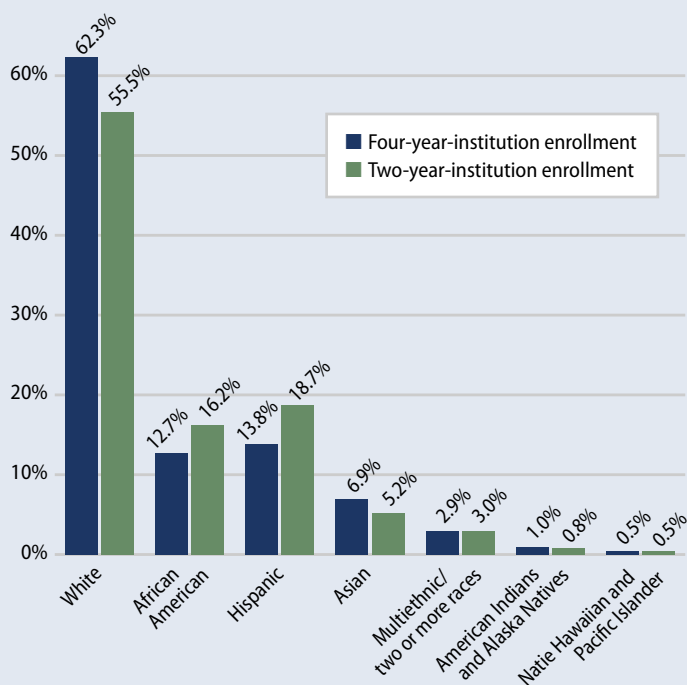
If there were a smooth pathway from community college to four-year colleges, this might not matter as much as it currently does. But transfer rates from community colleges to four-year colleges and universities are lower for students of color than for whites. In the 2003-04 academic year—the most recent year for which national level data are available—26.8 percent of Hispanics and 21.4 percent of African Americans transferred to public, four-year, degree-granting institutions,⁴² compared to 27.6 percent of whites.⁴³ Because communities of color disproportionately enroll in community college and are less likely than whites to transfer to four-year institutions, students of color have reduced chances of earning a bachelor's degree in teaching.

In one survey, only two-thirds of responding institutions reported that they have teacher education or an early childhood associate's degree program, which is a two-year program that transfers to a

four-year institution within their state. The one-third of institutions that do not have such articulation agreements are doing a disservice to their students by providing an additional barrier to potential educators attending community colleges.⁴⁴

FIGURE 5
Enrollment in a public institute of higher education, 2011

By institution type: four-year institution vs. two-year institution



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2011-12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (U.S. Department of Education, 2012), available at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/npsas/>.

Differences across racial and ethnic groups persist when it comes to students completing college on time.⁴⁵ Of white students among all four-year universities who began college in 2005, 41.9 percent graduated on time, or in four years. Asian American students fared best at 45.5 percent, Pacific Islanders graduated at a 27.7 percent rate, Latinos at 28.6 percent, and African Americans at 20.8 percent.⁴⁶ Native Americans had a college completion rate of 22.5 percent and multiracial people at 44.1 percent.⁴⁷ When the graduation measure is extended to six years instead of four—a common metric—the proportion of graduates rises across the board but the intergroup gaps persist. After six years, whites graduate at a 62.1 percent rate, Asians at 69.6 percent, Pacific Islanders at 48.5 percent, Latinos at 51 percent, African Americans at 39.9 percent, Native Americans at 39.8 percent, and multiracial students at 64.3 percent.⁴⁸

These figures, of course, shape the potential pool of future teachers.

The teacher licensing issue

In college and afterwards, another hurdle for prospective teachers comes in the form of the teacher certification exam. Most states use the Praxis I and Praxis II exams as a means of licensing teachers, although some states have additional or alternative exams. Let's explore how different groups fare on the Praxis exams.⁴⁹

Praxis I

This exam measures basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics and is designed to evaluate whether an individual has the academic skills needed to enter a teacher education program.⁵⁰

An Educational Testing Service, or ETS, study of first-time teacher certification test takers from 2005 to 2009 found that Praxis I pass rates were about twice as high for whites as for African Americans in reading, writing, and math—81.5 percent compared to 40.7 percent for reading; 79.5 percent compared to 44.2 percent for writing; and 78.2 percent compared to 36.8 percent for math.⁵¹

An analysis of the ETS study found that even when controlling for grade point average, or GPA, household income, parents' educational attainment, and other variables, there was still a 7 percentage point disparity in math scores between African American and white test takers.⁵²

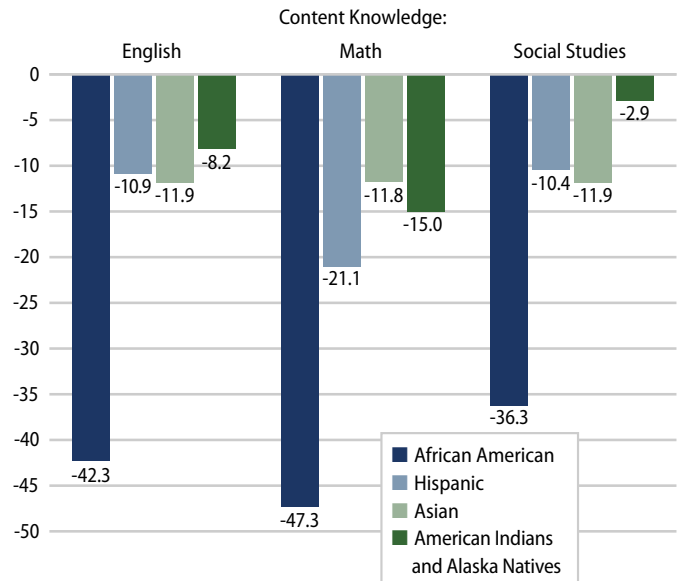
Praxis II

This exam measures knowledge of specific subjects that elementary and secondary educators will teach, as well as general and subject-specific teaching skills and knowledge. They are used to ensure that graduates of teaching programs are in fact prepared to enter the profession and are skilled in the subject matter they will be teaching.

For the Praxis II subject exams, the difference between pass rates of whites and the pass rates of people of color are wide, particularly for African Americans. Data from the 2007-08 academic year by the ETS show that for the Praxis II English content exam, the pass-rate gap between African American and white test-takers was 42.3 percent.⁵³ For the math content exam, the pass-rate gap was 47.3 percentage points as Figure 6 indicates.⁵⁴ Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Native Americans fare slightly better, but whites still outperform other groups on almost every subject area.⁵⁵

FIGURE 6
Praxis II pass rate gap with whites, 2007–08

Percent difference between each group and whites in pass rates



Source: Linda Tyler and others, "Toward Increasing Teacher Diversity" (Washington: Educational Testing Service and National Education Association, 2011), available at <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED517750.pdf>.

The high cost of giving back

Pursuing teaching in California

What does it take to get people of color into teaching? That question was at the center of A.Y. Ramirez’s 2010 study of the teacher pipeline at a Hispanic-serving institution, or HSI.⁵⁶ The findings, which were released in the article “Why teach? Ethnic minority college students’ views on teaching” for the *Multicultural Education Journal*—provide insight on the perceived benefits and drawbacks of a teaching career, as well as recommendations for reducing barriers to entering the profession. The concerns of most students led them to reach the same conclusion: The significant financial barriers to teaching frequently outweigh the benefits.

One student remarked that the salary one receives as a teacher necessitates a Peace Corps mentality—an understanding that the pay would never match the time and effort one would need to put in to be effective.⁵⁷ Moreover, the students also thought teachers’ salaries were commensurate with the value our society places on the profession.⁵⁸ That is to say, very low.

Before entering a teaching-credentialing program, students must pass three state-administered tests all while they are in school or

student teaching. California state requirements usually add a fifth year of study for those in credentialing programs. That fifth year demands an additional year of tuition without a salary to offset the cost. Finally, to obtain the credential, students must complete a two-year induction program through the state’s Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment, or BTSA, program. Multiple students pointed out that in the time it takes to clear a credential, they could have obtained a master’s degree in their content area.⁵⁹ And although the Assumption Program of Loans for Education, or APLE⁶⁰—a state program providing loan assistance—was available at the time of the Ramirez study,⁶¹ its provisions mandated that if a student was unable to find a job teaching, she or he was still responsible for paying back the loans.

Still, many of the students hoped to pursue teaching as a way to give back to their communities.⁶² To make such service more feasible, the students surveyed recommended scholarships for the fifth year of study and low-percentage home loans, plus increased salaries for teachers working in low-income communities.⁶³

Retaining teachers of color

Some analysts of the so-called mismatch problem argue that it has less to do with the pipeline into the profession than with the working conditions of teachers upon arrival. These problems can be especially severe in underperforming schools where, to their credit, many teachers of color serve.

The low regard in which teaching is held—both among some students of color and in society as a whole—makes some potential teachers wonder why they should put up with the profession’s frustrations. A survey of high-achieving African American male high school students revealed a particularly strong aversion to teaching as a career based upon prior negative experience with teachers.⁶⁴

Although students of color are pursuing careers in teaching at higher rates than their white counterparts, they also leave the profession at much higher rates. In the

2008-09 school year, more than 19 percent of teachers of color changed schools or left the profession, compared to 15.6 percent of white teachers.⁶⁵ A study revealed that among the 56,244 teachers of color who left the profession during the 2004-05 school year, 30,000 left to pursue another career or because of job dissatisfaction.⁶⁶ A 2012 the American Federation of Teachers survey of new teacher found that one in five teachers says he or she is likely to leave the profession within five years. And it is disproportionately teachers of color who express this view. The survey indicated that the primary reason teachers leave is lack of help and support.⁶⁷ Additionally, men of color were found to be more likely to leave the teacher workforce than women of color, further reducing the already scarce population.⁶⁸ Some research indicates that African American male teachers were less likely to leave their current school if there were other male teachers of color, preferring to be part to a group of African American male teachers within the same school.⁶⁹

Educational return on investment

Students of color who pursue higher education often find themselves in more debt than others. A 2010 College Board Advocacy & Policy Center study found that 27 percent of African American bachelor's degree recipients had student-debt levels of \$30,500 or more, compared with 16 percent of white students.⁷⁰

Efforts to increase the number of teachers of color in education should include increased financial aid for teacher preparation. The debt problem is magnified, of course, by the fact that teacher pay—especially starting salaries—is low relative to the earnings of other college graduates; it only improves marginally with experience and graduate education.⁶⁹

Most teachers face financial sacrifices, but teachers of color are more likely to teach in public schools in urban, high-poverty communities, which often receive less than their fair share of financing.⁷¹ The National Center for Education Statistics' Schools and Staffing Survey, or SASS, data of the 2011-12 school year show that teacher salaries in high-poverty districts lag behind those of teachers in low-poverty districts.⁷² In some cases, those differences are as much as \$16,000 a year.⁷²

For these and other reasons, teachers of color are less likely to be satisfied with their salary. An analysis of SASS data found that only 37 percent of African American teachers and 46 percent of Hispanic teachers were satisfied with their pay compared with 52 percent of white teachers.⁷³

Although wages matter, research suggests that salary only modestly affects a teacher's decision to leave a school or the profession, while improved working conditions—such as less challenging students, working closer to home, or the lure of less-arduous jobs—largely drive teacher movement.⁷⁴ This makes the case that schools have many cost-effective interventions within their grasp to help improve the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers.

Teacher effectiveness

Efforts to diversify the teaching pool must be pursued in tandem with the new push for teacher effectiveness. The notion of effectiveness—a term of art in the educational world—is a relatively new lens for viewing teacher performance and is determined through measures of student learning, observations of instruction practice, and other factors.⁷⁵ Many of the traditional measures of teacher quality discussed earlier in this report—such as educational attainment, certification status, and experience beyond the first few years—only weakly relate to teacher performance.⁷⁶

Effectiveness is an important measure in light of findings that the most direct in-school pathway to improving student achievement is to provide students with well-prepared and effective teachers. An effective teacher is one who is successful with students of all achievement and income levels and who offers the strongest benefits to students at the lowest-achievement levels.⁷⁷

Despite more than a decade of national efforts to ensure equitable access to high-quality teachers, poor students and students of color are still less likely to have effective teachers than their white and more advantaged peers. Schools with large populations of poor children and children of color are more likely to be staffed with novice teachers or by experienced teachers who are not rated effective.⁷⁸

Student access to effective teaching is often a matter of school ZIP code; that is to say, local policies unintentionally or intentionally steer effective teachers away from schools that serve large numbers of poor students and students of color.⁷⁹

The availability of more rigorous approaches to assessing teacher performance called for in changes in federal education policy focused efforts on supports to improve the quality of teaching in all schools.⁸⁰ Reforms call for improvements in the quality of teacher preparation and accountability for the performance of graduates once they begin their careers.

Reforms also call for the need for better clinical field experiences for teacher candidates and for supervised, year-long teacher residencies to provide the critical supports that novice teachers need. Professional development for teachers already in the classroom should be aligned to the needs identified in teacher evaluation, directly support improvements in student achievement, and happen over an extended period of time in high-value forms such as coaching or teacher collaborations.⁸¹

These reforms in teacher preparation and support to current teachers must be executed in tandem with efforts to increase the supply of teachers of color, given that diversity can itself contribute to effectiveness.

Recommendations

Despite the barriers in the educator pipeline, there is a great opportunity ahead: Targeted outreach to high-performing students of color with an interest in teaching opens the door to a more diverse teaching workforce—and a more effective one as well.

Local communities, federal and state governments, and critical stakeholders must develop an agenda to better align the racial and ethnic diversity of teachers in our public school teaching force with the demographics of our public school student population. And these must be *effective* teachers who display mastery of subject matter, as well as best practices in improving student achievement and classroom management.

Policymakers and other interested parties must examine the factors that determine whether an individual joins the teaching profession, and whether he or she remains in it—some of which have been outlined in this report. They must also work with critical partners to eliminate barriers to the preparation, development, retention, and compensation of high-quality educators of color.

We offer a number of policy recommendations below for the federal government and for states and local school districts.

For the federal government

- Create a national teacher corps similar to the public-private partnership model used by the Corporation for National and Community Service. The goal of such a teacher corps would be to simultaneously improve educational outcomes for young people in disadvantaged communities and to provide opportunities for college graduates to receive high-quality teacher training. Students participating in the program would receive stipends during their training.

- Fund the congressionally authorized Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence Program for competitive grants to teacher preparation programs at minority-serving institutions to make such programs more rigorous—including raising entry and exit standards for the programs. At the same time, students would receive help in meeting those new, more rigorous standards. Such efforts might include partnerships with nonprofit organizations or school districts that have a track record of demonstrated effectiveness in preparing and placing high-quality candidates.⁸²
- Establish incentives for academically strong students of color to enter careers in teaching through scholarships such as the Presidential Teaching Fellows programs.⁸³ The proposed program, a revision of the existing TEACH grant program, requires states that receive funding to strengthen the rigor of licensure systems and measure the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs⁸⁴ and provides scholarships to potential teachers in high-need fields and schools that serve students from low-income families. The Presidential Teaching Fellows would provide up to \$10,000 to students in their final year of teacher-training programs; the program would be targeted at high-achievement students enrolled in top-tier teacher-training programs, whether traditional or alternative.

For states and districts

- Provide generous scholarship support to future teachers of color that are tied to the effectiveness of the training program and the performance of the teacher candidates, especially those in five-year programs. Improve articulation relationships between two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions given the number of students of color at two-year schools. Also provide incentives to expand the number of high-quality, supervised, clinical-field experiences and paid residencies for novice teachers in districts and schools with large numbers of poor students and students of color.
- Improve compensation packages to attract the brightest, most resilient people of color into the teaching profession with the aim of ensuring that teachers of color are paid comparable to other jobs with similar knowledge, skills, and responsibilities. Make sure that the most effective teachers are paid the most; that pay increases are based on increases in student performance; that salaries are reflective of areas of subject shortage or need—such as in science, mathematics, and special education; and that the toughest, most challenging schools offer highly competitive salaries.

- Support and encourage local and state efforts to attract and place effective teachers of color. For example, Call Me Mister, or Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models, is a statewide initiative in South Carolina designed to increase the pool of teachers with more diverse backgrounds among the state’s lowest-performing elementary schools.⁸⁵ The city of Oakland, California, has implemented Teach Tomorrow in Oakland,⁸⁶ a grow-your-own model that works in partnership with Bay-area universities and draws on culturally diverse residents of the community with college degrees—and some without degrees—who can be molded into effective teachers. The “Ready to Teach” program at Howard University in Washington, D.C., focuses on recruitment, preparation, and retention of underrepresented populations from urban communities, particularly African American males, and has been widely praised.⁸⁷

Conclusion

Enlarging the pool of talented, well-educated teachers of color who are effective in improving student achievement in our schools will require aggressive and targeted recruitment and appropriate support. It will demand a steadfast determination to remove the barriers in the educator pipeline that limit and discourage strong candidates for the teaching profession. At the same time, policies must be in place to offer clear and meaningful monetary incentives, support, and professional development to ensure that the best and brightest students of color enter into teaching and succeed once in the profession.

While there are many barriers for teachers of color, the upside is that we now know what those barriers are and where to intervene. In particular, we need to start early and provide students of color with quality teachers of color who are well prepared and effective. Other improvements to the teacher of color pipeline include better clinical-field experiences and teacher residencies for teacher candidates. For teachers already in the classroom, aligned professional development and helpful supports have been proven to be crucial. But perhaps most importantly, we have to realize that the teacher of color pipeline is a virtuous circle; in other words, when we have more teachers of color in the classroom, they will encourage students of color to aspire to be educators and help them to realize that they too can become teachers of color.

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Glenda Partee, Maryam Adamu, and Quantasia Islam for providing valuable input and content in the report.

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