

Diversifying New York State's Teacher Workforce



Looking at the Issue of Teacher Diversity

Currently teachers of color and those from underrepresented groups make up less than 25% of the teaching workforce in New York State while students from the same groups comprise up to 53% of the state's student population. And the latter number is set to continue increasing.

According to census projections the current white majority population will fall just below 50% by 2045 (Brookings, 2018).

Thus the state's teaching workforce does not currently reflect the diverse population of New York or our nation as a whole.

The most recent data showed that nationwide, 14.4% of K-12 students were black but only 6.4% of the teachers were black; and there were 21% Hispanic students yet only 7.5% of the teachers were Hispanic (Ingersoll, 2016; Shanker Institute) demonstrating that the teacher shortage within historically underrepresented groups is a national issue.

In response to the current and projected shifts in the country's ethnic and racial profile, many colleges of education, school districts and others concerned have launched initiatives aimed at boosting the number of diverse teachers in our ranks and have developed policies to address culturally responsive teaching.

National organizations focused on teacher preparation have also been involved in creating support for diversity. In 2008 The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) called attention to the subject of teaching diverse students by introducing a standard focused on preparing teacher candidates to understand how to teach using culturally responsive pedagogy.

By 2013 the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) issued new standards requiring every educator preparation program [seeking CAEP accreditation] to develop a documented plan for recruiting a more diverse pool of teacher candidates.

Many efforts to recruit more diverse teachers have been successful and the percentage of the underrepresented individuals in the teaching force has experienced modest but steady growth of up to 17% beginning in the late 80's through 2012 (Ingersoll, 2016; Shanker Institute). But we lose more of those underrepresented teachers through attrition or burnout than we do white teachers with close to 20% of the total departing for other jobs. This makes the need for strong teacher mentoring and induction programs more important than ever.

Diversifying the teaching workforce is important

Teachers are powerful role models. A diverse teaching workforce benefits all students and can increase cultural competence helping students to value and to grow more comfortable with cultural, linguistic and racial differences. Teachers from different races and ethnicities provide exposure and experience with role models who more accurately depict the fabric of our country and the increasingly diverse culture that K-12 students are growing into. More balanced racial and cultural representation in our teaching force may help to reduce stereotypes and to close cultural gaps.

A diverse teaching workforce may benefit students of color and those from historically underrepresented groups. Some studies suggest that same-race teachers may influence student attendance, social and academic outcomes as well as graduation rates. Same race teachers may be more sensitive to certain issues that exist for students of color and can provide important experience and support (Gist, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Working towards solutions

- *Take a Look at Teaching*

While the number of NY teachers eligible for retirement grows, our colleges experienced a 49% decrease in enrollment in teacher education programs between 2012-2017. NYSUT is developing its *Take a Look at Teaching Initiative* to encourage more students and career changers to enter the teaching profession and aims to tackle the lack of diversity in education and to elevate the profession as a whole. NYSUT's campaign is focused on overcoming hurdles to the profession and identifying inspiring, young teachers from diverse backgrounds who may serve as inspirations to aspiring teachers everywhere (<https://www.nysut.org/takealookatteaching>).

- *Grow Your Own Programs and P-20 Partnerships*

Grow your own refers to locally driven programs that work to enlist new and aspiring teachers at various stages in the teacher pipeline. These efforts may enable local communities to target diverse candidates who better reflect the student populations they serve.

Often built through P-20 partnerships, *Grow Your Own* programs may include collaboration with higher education, unions and community groups. Examples of how such programs operate include: outreach to high schoolers and community college students, college articulation agreements that make it easier for community college students to transfer into four year programs, teacher residency programs, future teacher clubs, shadowing programs and K-12 mentoring programs.

- *Mentoring and Induction*

Research suggests that better mentoring and induction programs are needed to retain new teachers. New York State requires one year of mentoring for all new teachers. Other states are experimenting with new teacher academies or more intensive efforts to support new teachers and to prevent new teacher burnout.

- Teaching Opportunity Corps

The Teaching Opportunity Corps was enacted in 1987 “to increase the participation rate of historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged individuals in teaching careers.” Grants are administered to colleges of education with those serving communities with large numbers of at-risk students given priority.

- Student Loan Forgiveness

-The NYS Get on Your Feet Loan Forgiveness Program provides up to 24 months of federal student loan debt relief. Recent NYS college graduates are eligible if they earn less than \$50,000 annually and sign on to a federal income-based repayment plan.

-The federal teacher loan forgiveness program is available to classroom teachers who serve for five consecutive years in a designated low income school or educational service agency.

- Policy Initiatives and Advocacy

To lend support throughout the teacher recruitment pipeline, unions and other advocacy groups are working to reduce barriers to entry in teacher education programs and to develop policies that support better recruitment of diverse candidates. Advocacy efforts also work to challenge policies that potentially limit the number of candidates eligible for teaching certification.