

A Look at Teacher Diversity

BY THE ALBERT SHANKER INSTITUTE

More than 60 years after the ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* was handed down, its promise remains unfulfilled. In many respects, America's public schools continue to be "separate and unequal." Indeed, the growing resegregation of American schools by race and ethnicity, compounded by economic class segregation, has become the dominant trend in American education.

Recent research documenting this growing school segregation has received some public attention (though arguably less than such a weighty matter should command).¹ Comparatively little attention has been paid to an important related issue, however—the state of racial and ethnic diversity in America's teaching force. For the general public, basic facts about teacher diversity are difficult to understand or inaccessible.

The Albert Shanker Institute, working with Richard Ingersoll of the University of Pennsylvania, undertook the challenge of pulling together what research there is, and conducting original research where data were lacking, in order to provide a factual basis for public discussion and further research.

In September 2015, the institute published *The State of Teacher Diversity in American Education*, a major report (summarized here) that found teacher diversity in the United States to be an area of concern. The teacher workforce has become less ethnically and racially diverse and more female over time, a development that has adversely affected students, particularly males of color.

Based on Ingersoll's national analysis of data, limited progress toward greater diversity is being made, but not nearly enough to meet the need for more teachers of color.

The Albert Shanker Institute is committed to four fundamental principles: vibrant democracy, quality public education, a voice for working people in decisions affecting their jobs and their lives, and free and open debate about all of these issues. This article is excerpted from The State of Teacher Diversity in American Education, which the institute published in 2015. Richard M. Ingersoll, a professor of education and sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, contributed to this report. To read the full report, see www.shankerinstitute.org/resource/teacherdiversity.

Research Supports Teacher Diversity as Crucial for Student Success

Existing research makes a compelling case for the benefits of a diverse teacher workforce, in which "minority" racial and ethnic groups—African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asians, and Pacific Islanders—would be much more robustly represented. While there is reason to

stereotypes, attenuate unconscious implicit biases, and promote cross-cultural social bonding.⁵

- All students benefit from being educated by teachers from a variety of different backgrounds, races, and ethnic groups, as this experience better prepares them to succeed in an increasingly diverse society.⁶

Teachers of color remain significantly underrepresented relative to the students they serve.

believe that students of color would be the greatest beneficiaries of a diverse teaching force, evidence suggests that all students—and our democracy at large—would benefit from a teaching force that reflects the full diversity of the U.S. population. The research finds that:

- Teachers of color can be more motivated to work with disadvantaged minority students in high-poverty, racially and ethnically segregated schools, a factor that may help reduce rates of teacher attrition in hard-to-staff schools.²
- Teachers of color tend to have higher academic expectations for minority students, which can result in increased academic and social growth among students.³
- Students of color profit from having individuals from their own racial and ethnic group, who can serve as academically successful role models and who can have greater knowledge

of their heritage culture, among their teachers.⁴

- Positive exposure to individuals from a variety of races and ethnic groups, especially in childhood, can help reduce

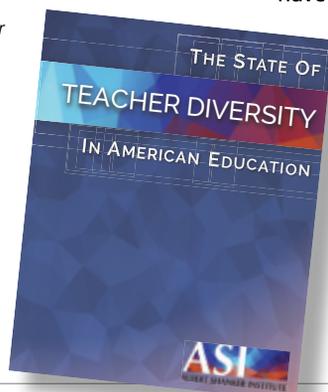
Teacher Diversity: The National Picture

Nationally, progress is being made toward a more diverse teaching force, but at a relatively modest pace. Over the 25-year period from 1987 to 2012, the minority share of the American teaching force—including African American, Latino, Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander, and multiracial teachers—has grown from 12 percent to 17 percent.⁷ The minority share of the American student population also grew during these 25 years, albeit not at the same tempo as increases among minority teachers. Students of color now account for more than half of all public school students.

As a consequence of this growing student population, however, progress toward reducing the substantial representation gaps between teachers of color and students of color has been limited. Teachers of color remain significantly underrepresented relative to the students they serve.

The most significant impediment to increasing the diversity of the teacher workforce is not found in the recruitment and hiring of teachers of color: nationally, they are being hired at a higher proportional rate than other teachers. Rather, the problem lies in attrition: *teachers of color are leaving the profession at a higher rate than other teachers.*

Moreover, teachers of color are not



evenly distributed across schools. They tend to be concentrated in urban schools serving high-poverty, minority communities. But analyses of survey data show that they are not leaving the profession at a higher rate because of the poverty or the race and ethnicity of their students. Instead, *they are leaving because of the working conditions in their schools*. Their strongest complaints relate to a lack of collective voice in educational decisions and a lack of professional autonomy in the classroom.

Teacher Diversity in Nine Cities

As part of the larger study, the Albert Shanker Institute selected nine cities—Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.—to examine the state of racial and ethnic diversity in their teaching workforces. These nine cities followed the national patterns of teacher diversity in their broadest strokes. As a general rule, teachers of color—especially males—are underrepresented in these urban workforces, with substantial representation gaps between minority teachers and minority students.⁸ These patterns are generally more manifest for African American and Latino teachers than for Asians, and more pronounced in charter schools than in district schools.

When examining teacher diversity trends over the course of the 10 years in our study—from 2002 to 2012—a number of disquieting trends become evident. In all nine cities studied, the African American share of the teacher workforce declined, at rates from the very small to the quite large—from roughly 1 percent in Boston’s charter sector and Cleveland’s district sector, to more than 24 percent in New Orleans and nearly 28 percent in Washington, D.C. (combined sectors—i.e., district schools and charter schools combined). Losses in the number of African American teachers were even greater, ranging from a low of 15 percent in New York City to a high of 62 percent in New Orleans.⁹ The available evidence suggests that seniority-based layoffs played little or no role in these declines.

In the nine cities we studied, trends for Latino teachers were more positive than those for African American teachers but still well short of the need. Over the course of the 10 years in our study, the Latino shares of the teacher workforces were basically stable or showed modest growth. The one exception was Los Angeles, where the Latino share of the teacher population

grew markedly in both the district and charter sectors. In contrast to African American teachers, the actual numbers of Latino teachers in the cities also grew during these years, with Cleveland being the lone exception. However, given that Latinos currently represent the fastest-growing share of the American student population, substantial additional growth of the Latino teaching force would be required to narrow the representation gap with Latino students.

While the analysis of the national data points to high attrition rates as the main obstacle to improving the diversity of the teaching force, the underrepresentation of African American and Latino teachers among new hires also appears to be a serious problem. Approaches to improving teacher diversity in these cities will need to address teacher recruitment, hiring, and retention.

Across our nine cities, teachers of all races and ethnicities tended to teach in schools with high concentrations of low-income students of color. As a general rule, African American and Latino teachers taught in schools with at least modestly higher concentrations of low-income and minority students.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are aimed at federal-, state-, and district-level policymakers, working collaboratively with local teachers unions and communities:

- *Address the serious problem of a lack of accurate data:* As part of its Civil Rights Data Collection, the U.S. Department of Education should collect and report data on the race and ethnicity of the teaching force in all public schools, district and charters alike.
- *Review education-related legislation and policy for their impact on teacher diversity,* and amend or modify them to promote diversification and avoid the unintended consequence of diminishing diversity.
- *Invest in high-quality teacher education programs* at the nation’s historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and public colleges and universities serving large numbers of minority students.
- *Incentivize close partnerships* between colleges of education and school districts/charter networks to provide

mentoring, support, and training in culturally responsive practices to all novice teachers.

- *Support the development and expansion of evidence-based programs* to help recruit, mentor, support, and retain minority teachers, including “grow your own” teacher preparation programs.*
- *Use contract negotiations as a vehicle for increasing teaching diversity,* incorporating programs and features, such as paraprofessional career ladders, that serve to increase teacher diversity.
- *Incorporate recruitment and hiring practices into accountability systems* for the leadership and staff of school districts and charter networks.

(Endnotes on page 43)

*See Section V of the full report for descriptions of such programs. One of these eight programs profiled is Today’s Students Tomorrow’s Teachers, a “grow your own” model described on page 12.



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Endnotes

1. Of particular note in this regard is the important work on school segregation by the Civil Rights Project at UCLA (www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu).
2. Don Kauchak and Mary D. Burbank, "Voices in the Classroom: Case Studies of Minority Teacher Candidates," *Action in Teacher Education* 25, no. 1 (2003): 63–75; Rebecca Newcom Belcher, "Predictive Factors for the Enrollment of African American Students in Special Education Preservice Programs," in *Growing Partnerships for Rural Special Education—2001 Conference Proceedings* (San Diego, CA: American Council on Rural Special Education, 2001), 213–217; Richard Ingersoll and Henry May, *Recruitment, Retention, and the Minority Teacher Shortage* (Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 2011); and Jacqueline Jordan Irvine and Leslie T. Fenwick, "Teachers and Teaching for the New Millennium: The Role of HBCUs," *Journal of Negro Education* 80 (2011): 197–208.
3. Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Landing on the Wrong Note: The Price We Paid for Brown," *Educational Researcher* 33, no. 7 (2004): 3–13; Franita Ware, "Warm Demander Pedagogy: Culturally Responsive Teaching That Supports a Culture of Achievement for African American Students," *Urban Education* 41 (2006): 427–456; Elizabeth Bondy and Dorene D. Ross, "The Teacher as Warm Demander," *Educational Leadership* 66, no. 1 (2008): 54–58; Amy Carpenter Ford and Kelly Sassi, "Authority in Cross-Racial Teaching and Learning (Re)considering the Transferability of Warm Demander Approaches," *Urban Education* 49 (2014): 39–74; Thomas S. Dee, "Teachers, Race, and Student Achievement in a Randomized Experiment," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 86 (2004): 195–210; Eric A. Hanushek, John F. Kain, Daniel M. O'Brien, and Steven G. Rivkin, *The Market for Teacher Quality* (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2005); and Beatriz Chu Clewell and Michael J. Puma, "Does It Matter If My Teacher Looks Like Me? Same-Race Teachers and Student Achievement" (paper presentation, Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, April 14, 2005).
4. Michele Foster, *Black Teachers on Teaching* (New York: New Press, 1997); Gloria Ladson-Billings, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994); Theresa Perry, Claude Steele, and Asa Hilliard III, *Young, Gifted, and Black: Promoting High Achievement among African-American Students* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004); and Pedro A. Noguera, *The Trouble with Black Boys: ...And Other Reflections on Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008).
5. Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, "A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90 (2006): 751–783; Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact* (New York: Psychology Press, 2011); and Jasmin Cloutier, Tianyi Li, and Joshua Correll, "The Impact of Childhood Experience on Amygdala Response to Perceptually Familiar Black and White Faces," *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 26 (2014): 1992–2004.
6. Patricia G. Devine, Patrick S. Forscher, Anthony J. Austin, and William T. L. Cox, "Long-Term Reduction in Implicit Race Bias: A Prejudice Habit-Breaking Intervention," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 48 (2012): 1267–1278.
7. This is drawn from an updated earlier study undertaken with Henry May that analyzed two decades of national data from the late 1980s to 2009 on minority teacher recruitment, retention, and shortages. See Ingersoll and May, *Recruitment, Retention, and the Minority Teacher Shortage*; and Richard M. Ingersoll and Henry May, "The Minority Teacher Shortage: Fact or Fable?," *Phi Delta Kappan* 93, no. 1 (September 2011): 62–65. The data analyzed came from the nationally representative Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and its longitudinal supplement, the Teacher Follow-Up Survey, both administered by the National Center for Education Statistics in the U.S. Department of Education.
8. The report used data obtained through freedom of information requests for the 10-year period from 2002 to 2012, as well as data that had already been published. Although state and city educational agencies for five of the nine cities were compliant with the law and provided the requested data for at least a portion of the years requested, problems arose with educational agencies for the other four cities. Consequently, there are gaps in the data available for the study, especially for charter schools.
9. The research team was unable to obtain the data to calculate the black teacher population loss in Washington, D.C. As Washington, D.C., had the largest loss of the share of black teachers, it might very well also have the largest decline in the population of black teachers.

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