equity institute

Policy Brief November 2019

Recruiting and Retaining Educators of Color:

An approach to improving student performance and strengthening the teaching profession

In the fall of 2014, the overall number of students of color surpassed the number of white students for the first time.[1] Despite this demographic shift, the United States teaching force remains largely white.[2] Students often look to their teachers as mentors and view them as an example of what they may be able to achieve in the future.

Like many states across the United States, Rhode Island is committed to increasing educator diversity in education but has been unable to make significant gains. In 2003-2004, Rhode Island students of color made up approximately 30% of the total student population. Since then, the number of students of color has increased by over 10%, whereas the number of teachers of color has seen no significant increase within that same time span.[3] As a result of these circumstances, many of our students rarely see an educator that reflects their identity. The 2017 Annie Casey Foundation's Kids Count report found that Rhode Island ranked last of all states in its Equity Index, an amalgam of indicators that, in sum, represent the state's capacity to educate and support Latinx students.[4] A contributing factor to this outcome is likely the few numbers of Latinx educators in the state, who would be able to understand the language, culture, background, and experiences of Latinx students.

In Providence, the largest urban district and most populated city in Rhode Island, there are 1,624 white teachers and only 382 teachers who identify as Black/African-American, Asian, Hispanic/Latinx, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or two or more races. However, student demographics within the district show that there are 2,161 white students and 21,913 students of color, with the largest groups being Hispanic/Latinx students (15,550) and Black or African-American students (4,000). Within the district, four-year graduation rates across racial groups range from 66.7% for students who

[1] Maxwell, L. A. (2014). U.S. School Enrollment Hits Majority-Minority Milestone - Education Week. Education Week. Retrieved from https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/08/20/01demographics.h34.html
[2] King, Jr, J. B. (2016). The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service, The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce, Washington, D.C., 42
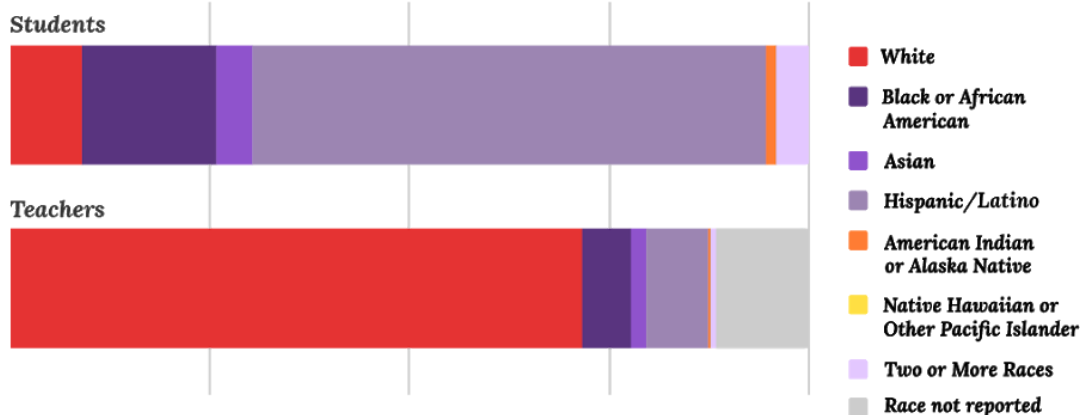[3] Latino Policy Institute at Roger Williams University. "Teacher diversity in Rhode Island" (2016), available at https://www.rwu.edu/sites/default/files/downloads/lpi/f01lpi_tchrdvrstybfld.pdf
[4] Annie E. Casey Foundation. "Race for Results: Kids Count 2017." (2017), available at http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2017raceforresults-2017.pdf.

are two or more races to 81.3% for Black or African-American students, with an average

four-year graduation rate of 75% for students of all races.[5]

Student-Teacher Demographic Comparison in PPSD
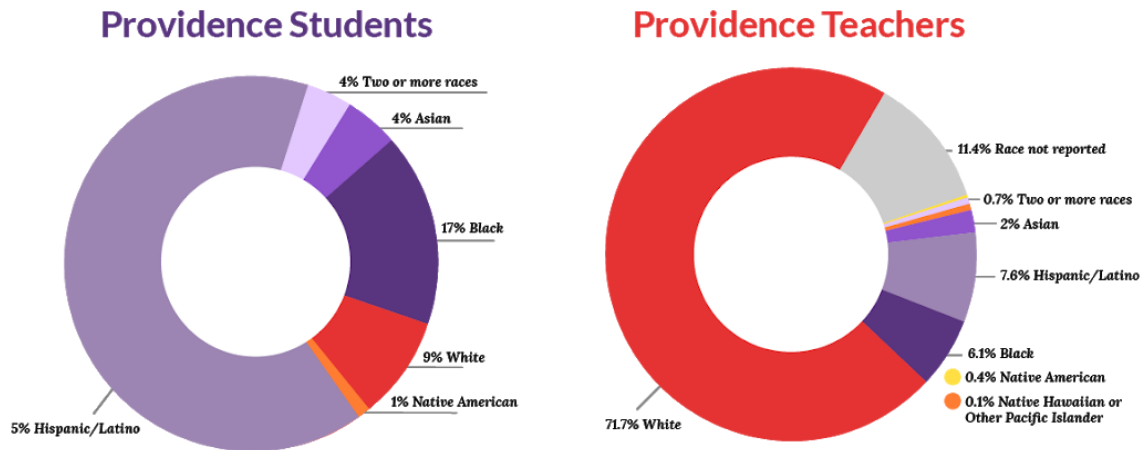
Student-Teacher Demographic Comparison in PPSD

Students

Teachers

- 🟥 White
- 🟪 Black or African American
- 🟪 Asian
- 🟪 Hispanic/Latino
- 🟧 American Indian or Alaska Native
- 🟨 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- 🟪 Two or More Races
- ⬜ Race not reported

Adjusted for "race not reported"

Students

Teachers

In the Providence Public School District, 71.7% of teachers are white, 11.4% did not report their race, 7.6% are Hispanic, 6.1% are Black or African American, 2.0% are Asian, 0.7% are two or more races, 0.4% are American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.1% are Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. According to the 2017-2018 RIDE Report Card, "approximately 65% of [PPSD] students are Hispanic/Latino, 16% Black, 9% White, 5% Asian, 4% Multi-racial and 1% Native American."

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[5] Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. "2017-18 | RIDE Report Card." (2019), available at https://reportcard.ride.ri.gov/

Student-Teacher Demographic Comparison in PPSD

Providence Students

4% Two or more races
4% Asian
17% Black
9% White
1% Native American
5% Hispanic/Latino

Providence Teachers

11.4% Race not reported
0.7% Two or more races
2% Asian
7.6% Hispanic/Latino
6.1% Black
0.4% Native American
0.1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
71.7% White

Benefits

A broad base of research links teacher diversity to social-emotional benefits. Some authors argue that a racial mismatch between students and teachers negatively affects students' future career decisions, thus contributing to social and economic inequities.[6] Emerging research confirms that students of color who experience being taught by teachers of color are more likely to be academically successful than their peers who do not experience being taught by an educator who looks like them.[7]

A comprehensive set of literature reviews showed that teachers of color benefit students of color in many ways, such as: developing rapport and creating geniune relationships; providing a culturally responsive education; setting high expectations for students; and becoming an advocate for students of color as well as teaching them how to advocate for themselves and their own needs. These pracctices have demonstrated to increase students' outcomes in various areas of education, including but not limited to, higher academic achievement, an increase in attendance rates, and higher college completion rates.[8]

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[6] Gershenson, S., Holt, S. B., & Papageorge, N. W. (2016). Who believes in me? The effect of the student-teacher demographic match on teacher expectations. Economics of Education Review, 52(1), 209–224. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2016.03.002
[7] Anna J. Egalite, Brian Kisida, and Marcus A. Winters, "Representation in the classroom: The effect of own-race teachers on student achievement," Economics of Education Review, 45 (2015): 44–52; Katherine W. Phillips, "How Diversity Makes Us Smarter," Scientific American, October 1, 2014, available at http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter/.
[8] Ana Maria Villegas and Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, "Diversifying the Teaching Force: An Examination of Major Arguments," The Urban Review 42 (3) (2010): 175.

> *When taught by a teacher of color, students of color experience higher reading and math test scores, higher graduation rates, decreased dropout and discipline rates and increased enrollment in advanced courses. Ultimately, a more diverse teacher workforce has positive benefits for students and educators alike.*[9]

While there is, as of yet, little research confirming a correlation between students of color success and administrators of color, it could be extrapolated that this research finding may also apply to students of color interacting with school leaders of color. Students of color who attend school with a leader of color may be more apt to feel a sense of belonging as well as have higher expectations and aspirations than their peers who attend school with a white school leader. Undoubtedly, all students benefit from experiencing a diversity set of educators across race and ethnicity.

Barriers

Educator Demographic Data

- The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) published a Report Card available to the public that includes all district demographic data.
- Providing demographic data is voluntary, which stymies Rhode Island's continuous efforts to diversify the teaching workforce and renders it difficult to keep track of the entire state's progress.
- Incomplete or inaccurate teacher demographic data may disregard a vital indicator of access and barriers to educational opportunities for students of color.

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[9] MA Department of Education. (n.d.). Recruitment & Retention: Educators of color.

- Districts can use this data to inform decision-making and policy-making to ensure they are working towards achieving its strategic plan's goals.

Teacher Certification

- Entering the profession remains contingent on passing teacher licensure exams. These exams can be costly and include questions that lack cultural relevance for non-white test takers.
- Prospective Black and Latinx teachers are far more likely to fail these standardized exams than other groups.
- No conclusive evidence exists demonstrating that these exams are an accurate predictor of teacher effectiveness; however, we continue to use them as a basis of preparedness.
- Teachers of color disproportionately enter the profession through alternative certification routes. While there is variation in the quality and structure of these programs, participants take fewer courses on average and have less student teaching experience than their peers.

Education Leadership

- Greater diversity in education leadership (e.g. principals, superintendents, executive directors, etc.) can help improve efforts to recruit and retain a more diverse teaching force.
- The education sector shows a persistent racial leadership gap.   .
- The presence of a leader of color provides an organization with diverse perspectives, additional credibility, and value to the community.
- Due to the underrepresentation of people of color in leadership roles, they face heightened visibility, which makes them more vulnerable to criticism. This can often lead to feeling as though they are being looked at through a magnifying glass, adding pressure to assimilate to the dominant culture of the organization.

Recommendations

- Develop incentives that will encourage teachers to provide their race/ethnicity.
- Ensure that all data collected from districts is accurate and accessible to the public.
- Implement data monitoring policies that score teacher preparation programs in part on the number of program completers who are people of color, and require that the state reports this data.
- Advocate the Office of Civil Rights for the inclusion of teacher demographics on their detailed list of CRDC survey data elements and provide public access to that data.
- Support school districts in developing and expanding recruitment programs, as well as teacher preparation programs to ensure that they are successful at recruiting, mentoring and supporting teachers of color.
- Create an accountability system that includes measures of how recruitment and hiring practices affect teacher diversity (including teacher retention and attrition).
- Change licensure requirements to allow candidates to show their qualifications through a broader array of performance assessments to avoid the racial disparity associated with traditional exams.
- Increase support for culturally-responsive and equitable pedagogical practices for teachers.
- Implement hiring and promotion policies and practices that address issues of implicit bias.
- Strengthen and develop organizations that support people of color in leadership roles.
- Establish a teacher diversity advisory council that includes stakeholders from RIDE, school districts, teacher preparation programs, and community organizations who can work together to identify potential areas for collaboration to support minority candidates in entering and completing teacher preparation programs.
- Partner with local colleges and universities to create a pathway for Rhode Island students to pursue teacher certification.

Acknowledgments