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Addressing the Importance of Recruitment and Retention of Black and Latinx Teachers:

Strategies Designed to Diversify the Teacher Pipeline

National College of Education
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Abstract

The United States student demographic has shifted significantly, with minorities, particularly Black and Latinx students, now constituting almost half. However, the diversity of the teaching profession, historically led by White females, lags behind, with Black and Latinx teachers comprising less than 30%. This lack of representation poses challenges for students without culturally similar educators. My research explores the impact of teacher diversity on Black and Latinx students' success, revealing positive outcomes. Yet, attracting and retaining minority teachers faces obstacles, including feelings of isolation and financial concerns.

Recommendations include educational pathways, scholarships, mentoring programs, salary incentives, and professional learning communities to foster a more inclusive and diverse teaching environment.

Preface

Someone once said, “When you know your why, your what becomes more impactful, and your vision becomes clearer. This is because you are walking towards your purpose.” My why for this project was for my Black and Latinx teachers and students. It is my personal and professional goal to make sure all teachers feel valued and included. Our students should be able to come to work and see people who look like them in a professional position. Growing up, I can only remember having a few Black teachers, and it was these teachers who would pull me to the side to encourage me to go and be better than my environment. Those teachers took the time to check in on me long after I had left their classrooms. Having memories like this should be offered to all of our students. Making connections changed my life.

The research process has imparted numerous lessons to me. When I initially embarked on writing this piece, I held certain assumptions about how the narrative would unfold. I initially believed that financial resources would serve as a panacea for all issues. However, I was uncertain if all educators shared the sentiment that they could benefit from culturally relevant training. The findings from this research have unequivocally enlightened me about teachers' desires extending beyond monetary considerations. It has become apparent that all teachers, including Black and Latinx educators, are mindful of the training they will benefit from when instructing students from diverse backgrounds. Understanding that teachers seek support not only from financial aspects but also from their administration and colleagues has heightened my awareness as a leader. I am now more attuned to the needs and wants of the staff.

I aspire for a future where every student of color is afforded the opportunity to experience the positive impact of having multiple Black and Latinx teachers who play a significant role in

shaping their lives. My vision encompasses the idea that the presence of these diverse educators will inspire these students, fostering within them a desire to pursue a career in teaching.

In this envisioned future, I envision high school students having access to specialized clubs dedicated to nurturing future educators. These clubs would serve as platforms for students to delve into the field of education, allowing them to begin their journey toward a teaching degree as early as their senior year. This early exposure and engagement would not only empower students to explore their passion for teaching but also equip them with the necessary resources and guidance to embark on a meaningful educational path. Ultimately, my hope is that this future framework will contribute to a more diverse and inclusive landscape in the field of education.

Acknowledgments

I express gratitude to the staff and students of National Louis University. I want to acknowledge my dissertation chair, Dr. Harrington Gibson, for providing crucial feedback and support, guiding me to stay focused to the very end. Thanks to my classmates, David Lewis and Gerrie Aulisa, for their encouragement.

I extend heartfelt appreciation to all the women and men in my life, personally and professionally. To the women who mentor me, Myoshi Knox and Dr. Tanisha Cannon, thank you for supporting and aiding me in reaching my goals. I also thank you for exemplifying successful Black womanhood.

A special acknowledgment goes to my godmother, Valois Vaughn Lewis, whose consistent support has shown me that while life can be challenging, nothing is impossible.

To my sister Barbara and cousin Dutchess, you are my support system. Your attentive listening and reminders of my value were crucial in achieving this significant milestone. I couldn't have completed it without your encouragement, expressed through both words and actions. I cherish and love you both.

To my special friend,” James Earl Jones,” you kept me from giving up when work got hectic and life became almost unbearable. In your own little way, you would give me that much-needed nudge to let me know to keep going. Even when life was happening to me, you would still check in to ensure I did not stop what I started. For that, I will forever be grateful.

Dedication

In honor of successfully completing another academic milestone in my educational journey, I would like to dedicate this paper to my family and future educators.

To my daughter Evan, knowing that I had you on the sidelines cheering me on and watching when things got rough gave me the strength and courage I needed to continue to the end. I dedicate this paper to you in hopes that you see we all may have the same destination, but the journey for each of us will be different. Choose your path, enjoy the trip, and keep sight of the destination. My successful completion of this intimidating dissertation confirms and proves two things I always tell you: perseverance always wins, and all things are possible if you do not give up. Also, in my little girl Evan's voice, I beat YOU in becoming Dr. Pittman. I can not wait for you to join me.

To my parents, Janice Collier and Jb Baker, you raised me to be strong and intelligent and never to settle. Momma, you always encouraged me to do better so that I could have and live a better life than you did. Daddy, you always made me feel like I was the smartest person in the world when you constantly bragged (over 20 years later) about my high school ranking to your friends. Now you can brag and tell them your “witch daughter” has her doctorate. In your own words, “Not too bad for a project kid.” Thank you both for always telling me how proud you are and making me think I can achieve the unachievable.

Finally, this dissertation is devoted to all present and future Black and Latinx educators. Your presence is essential and eagerly welcomed in the realm of education. Your wealth of knowledge and experiences play a pivotal role in shaping our students and aiding them in realizing their full potential.

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Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

Conner District 22 is characterized as a district in a continuous cycle of positive change for the benefit of students. They aim to adapt to students' academic and social-emotional needs, ensuring ongoing improvements. The district is dedicated to educating teachers on standards and fostering equity proficiency in teaching. Emphasizing awareness of racial and gender issues students may encounter outside the classroom; the goal is to meet students where they are. With an average student attendance rate of 92%, students find joy in attending school, engaging in learning and forming meaningful relationships with their teachers.

As one of Illinois's largest K-8 elementary districts, Conner District 22 is 100% free and reduced lunch. The district serves over twenty-six (26) square miles of the area and has 1.3 million square feet of facilities, which include:

- 15 Elementary Schools
- 4 Junior High Schools
- 1 Early Childhood Center
- 1 Alternative School

Conner School District 22 has over ten thousand (10,000) students with the following ethnicity breakdown:

- 65% Latinx
- 22% African-American
- 9% Caucasian
- 4% Multi

The student-to-teacher ratio average is 19:1. The total employee count for the district is 1,404; out of that, over half (769) are teachers. Teachers' ethnicity is the opposite of the student population they serve. The breakdown is 76% White, 13% Latinx, and 8% Black. Over 60% of the teachers hold a Master's Degree or higher. The district's retention rate is 84%, which falls below the state retention rate.

The district superintendent has set goals for equity and student achievement. Found on District 22's strategic dashboard, published by ECRISS (n.d.), are the district's five strategic goals that align with all schools' visions:

1. Cultural Proficiency: All District Members will engage in training and support in the development and implementation of an equity framework supporting the increase of cultural proficiency to ensure all students are successful.
2. Early Literacy: All District Primary Students will be provided with the instruction and support needed to achieve academic success for at least 90% of students to be at expected growth for grade-level targets.
3. Mastery by Grade Three: All District Students will be provided the necessary instruction, support, and enrichment to ensure at least 95% of students are at mastery of grade-level content by the end of the school year.
4. Mastery by Grade Eight: All District Students will be provided the necessary instruction, support, and enrichment to ensure at least 95% of students are at mastery of grade-level content by the end of the school year in preparation for success in high school.
5. Digital Citizenship: All District Staff and Students will be provided the necessary

instruction, support, and enrichment to increase their knowledge and skills in the utilization of digital tools and resources.

The program I have decided to evaluate is recruiting and retaining Black and Latinx teachers. Despite the district's commitment to a cultural and proficiency journey, there has been a shortfall in producing a diverse staff that resonates culturally with the student population.

Purpose

Examining discipline data is one of my responsibilities as a principal. Nine students made up over 20% of our student discipline referrals one year. Breaking the data down further, I learned those nine students were all Black and Latinx students. All were male except for one female. As part of my plan to decrease the number of referrals, I created a boy's group and provided a mentor. I broke the eight students up according to their race and decided I would get a mentor for the two groups, and that is where my problem started.

Talking to the students, I asked them if they felt connected with someone in the building, and they all said no. I wondered if a teacher had previously made them feel like they understood them, and again, that answer was no. I mentally went down the list of teachers in the building to throw out a name, and unfortunately, I could not come up with any Latinx teachers in the building and only came up with one Black teacher. That was a day of awakening for me. Three years ago, I realized that we needed to diversify our staff in the building, and from further examination, I learned it was that way across our entire district. A district comprised primarily of Black and Latinx students (87%) has 76% White teachers teaching staff. Only 21% is made up of Black and Latinx teachers.

My purpose for analyzing the recruitment and retention of Black and Latinx teachers in the district is to formulate a strategy aligning the staff with the student population. The goals include developing a plan to enhance the representation of minority teachers, promoting awareness of the benefits for both students and staff in fostering a diverse workforce, and identifying strategies to support the longevity of minority teachers.

Rationale

I have always been passionate about teaching students who look like me, Black students. Making myself available to mentor those labeled “troubled” has always been my priority. My entire career has focused on teaching in areas consisting primarily of minority students in low-income neighborhoods. As I continued my career as a teacher, I noticed that when sharing my story of my “why,” I was in a room that did not have many other people who looked like the students or me we were serving. The room consisted of mostly non-minority teachers, and when they would tell their why, it differed vastly from those who were Black. When they would speak, it was never about serving the black population because they believed in them, but instead because they felt sorry for them. Often, my non-minority peers seemed to have a hero complex. The belief is that they will “save” those underprivileged Black students. This ‘white savior mentality’ increased my desire to go into administration, hoping to have some control over who came into my building to teach. I planned to hire teachers of minorities. However, that was easier said than done.

In my first administration role, I learned that our district did not plan to recruit any teachers, let alone teachers of color. As I would scroll through the pool of applicants, it would be one teacher of color for every ten teachers who were not. When asked why we had so few Black

teachers applying, I was told, “Teachers of color just don’t want to work in this district.” I had a hard time accepting this answer. Why would a teacher not want to work with students who look like them? I felt the response was just an excuse for our district not having a plan for recruiting teachers that mirrored our student population. As I dug around and talked to more people, I learned we had no recruitment plan. We posted jobs on our website and ISBE. Failing to recruit teachers of Black and Latinx race is our district failing to provide our students the opportunity to connect with people who look like them in the classroom. We also missed the chance to help close the achievement gap by having teachers of the same racial background.

According to Johns Hopkins,

Having at least one black teacher in third through fifth grades reduced a black student’s probability of dropping out of school by 29 percent, the study found.

The results for very low-income black boys are even greater – their chance of dropping out fell 39 percent.

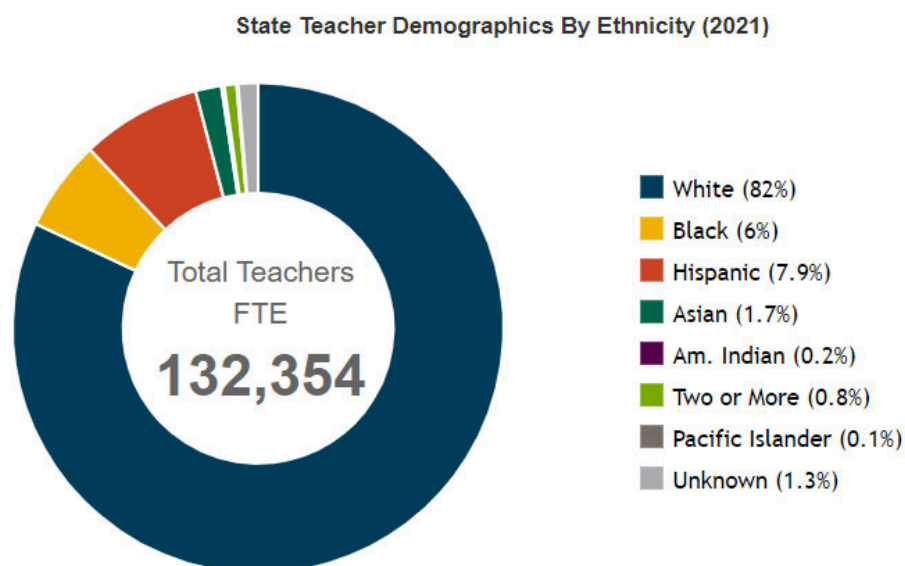
Looking at the data within our district and surrounding areas and examining the entire state of Illinois, we can make a massive difference in our student population by attracting people of color to teach our students.

Goals

The goal of examining the recruitment and retention of Black and Latinx teachers is threefold. First and foremost, the goal is to increase the number of certified staff members in the current district. I want to create a plan using research-based strategies that shows how to actively recruit teachers of color and implement strategies that help teachers of color grow in their craft and remain in the district. My next goal is to close the achievement gap among our

students of color. According to Hines (2020), students feel that teachers of color hold them to higher expectations and are more culturally sensitive, thus making them more successful than those taught by White teachers. Having a teacher of color also exemplifies what the middle class looks like for our students. My last goal is to devise a plan that can be used in Illinois to attract more teachers of color to the education field, primarily in our K-8 school districts. According to the state website, Figure 1 below shows the discrepancy between minority and non-minority teachers. Failing to close this gap is a missed opportunity to close the achievement gap across the state.

Figure 1



Note. Reprinted from *Illinois Report Card*, by the Illinois School Board of Education (www.illinoisreportcard.com).

Research Questions

As I gather data on the importance of recruiting and retaining Black and Latinx teachers, my focus will be to provide an answer to the following questions:

Primary Research Questions

1. How does teacher diversity impact or influence Black and Latinx educational success?
2. How can we attract and retain Black and Latinx teachers to the field?

Secondary Research Questions

1. How do teachers describe the benefits of a culturally relevant curriculum and the support they need to address students' academic needs?
2. How do district leaders reflect on opportunity gaps that impede student achievement using insight gleaned from professional development efforts and teacher feedback?
3. How can district leadership enact policies that support building leaders' and teachers' efforts to implement culturally responsive programs and structures?

By researching and answering the above questions, I will show the importance of recruiting and retaining Black and Latinx teachers.

Conclusion

The condition of the American academic system consistently draws attention from parents, community members, policymakers, and various stakeholders. Examining education reveals a notable shift in student demographics over the past decade. While the student population is swiftly diversifying, the demographics of teachers have not undergone a similar

change. Education remains predominantly a profession of White females. As the student body becomes mainly Black and Latinx, having a teaching staff that reflects this diversity is imperative. This research aims to underscore the significance of achieving this parity. The recruitment and retention of Black and Latinx teachers are essential, providing academic, disciplinary, and social benefits for all students.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

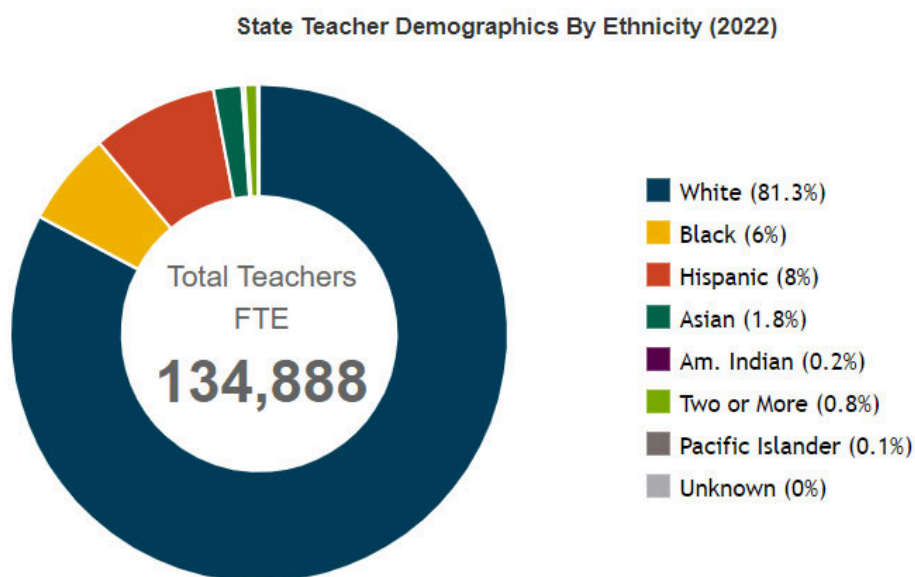
As I began to research my topic, Addressing the Importance of Retaining and Recruiting Black and Latinx Teachers, I quickly learned that it was a topic with many avenues to address the human resource component that went back over three decades. My research also found a plethora of information and data to address the importance of having our students of color with access to teachers of color. This chapter will discuss the invaluable data and research I learned from other practitioners who have delved into a component of my topic. The different components of my topic ranged from recruiting/retention, teacher diversity, teacher shortage, and, of course, the benefits, which included more current data than the previous. Through a plethora of qualitative and quantitative research, I decided to focus on three themes that many authors touched upon, and these three will allow me to dive deeper into my topic. I focused on the diversity in the teaching fields, the benefits as they relate to the achievement, opportunity, and discipline gaps of Black and Latinx students when they have a Black and Latinx teacher, and recruiting and retaining Black and Latinx teachers. With an up close and personal look into these themes, I will be able to answer and find solutions to my research questions:

- What is the impact on Black and Latinx students when exposed to a teacher of the same background?
- What are universities doing to prepare Black and Latinx teachers?
- How can we attract more Black and Latinx teachers to the field?
- How can we increase the retention of Black and Latinx teachers?

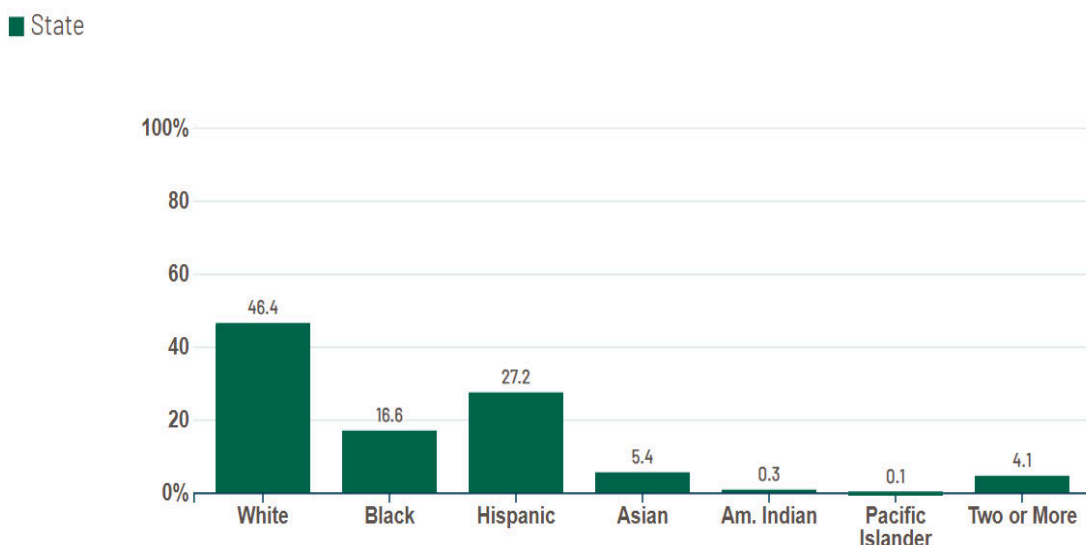
Theme 1: Teacher Diversity

The lack of teacher diversity can be identified throughout history. While it has been an age-old problem, the need for Black and Latinx has never been more prevalent than it is today. Today, in Illinois, Black and Latinx students comprise over 40% of the student population, while the teaching pool consists of less than 15% of Black and Latinx teachers, see figures 2 and 3 below. This section of the literature review will examine what scholars have found regarding the importance of diversification, what caused and is causing the lack of Black and Latinx teachers, and solutions that can contribute to increasing the number of Black and Latinx teachers.

Figure 2



Note. Reprinted from *Illinois Report Card*, by the Illinois School Board of Education (www.illinoisreportcard.com).

Figure 3*Student Racial/Ethnic Diversity*

Note. Reprinted from *Illinois Report Card*, by the Illinois School Board of Education (www.illinoisreportcard.com).

In a literature review based on historical trends, Tia Madkins shared some background for the lack of diversity. According to Madkins (2011), “desegregation marked the beginning of a long period of loss of Black teachers within the profession” (p. 417). Prior to the landmark Supreme Court case, *Brown vs. Board of Education Topeka, Kansas (1954)*, Black teachers were responsible for educating Black students. Even with the lack of resources and inadequate salary compared to their White peers, Black teachers had successfully taught over 2 million Black students. By 1950, approximately half of all Black professionals working in the U.S. were employed as teachers (Madkin, 2011, p. 419).

Regarding the shortage of Latinx teachers, one study identifies the barriers that Latinx teachers face as “formidable barriers.” As stated by Irizarry & Donaldson (2012), “The most

significant barrier was access to information and courses that would allow them to gain access to college” (p.176).

While the desegregation set the stage for the decline of Black teachers, and the lack of college accessibility played a role in limiting Latinx students from becoming teachers, there are several contemporary issues that we currently face today, that have a significant influence on the shortage of Blacks and Latinx teachers. Inadequate college preparation for students, increased opportunities in other fields, and requirements for teacher licensures have all been identified as barriers to the increasing rate of Black and Latinx teachers (Madkin, 2011; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012).

In what is described as an attempt to raise teachers' standards and pressure higher institutions to take more responsibility for producing a better quality of teachers, the state required a passing score on the teacher licensure exam. This exam created a problem for students of color, specifically Latinx and Black students. “Like other standardized measures of achievement, including the ACT and SAT, Latina/o and African Americans have consistently received lower scores on teacher tests” (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012, p.180). In one state, the data shows Latinx teacher candidates were three times more likely to fail the teacher licensure exam than their White peers, and the gap between Black and White candidates was considered to be a “growing effect” size (Andrews et al., 2018).

Toxic and hostile building climates were also among the barriers and causes for the lack of Black and Latinx teachers. Many authors shared interviews with teachers of color, stating how they felt they were treated differently than their White peers. Interviewees spoke about feeling left out due to the few minority teachers in the building. School climates for Black and

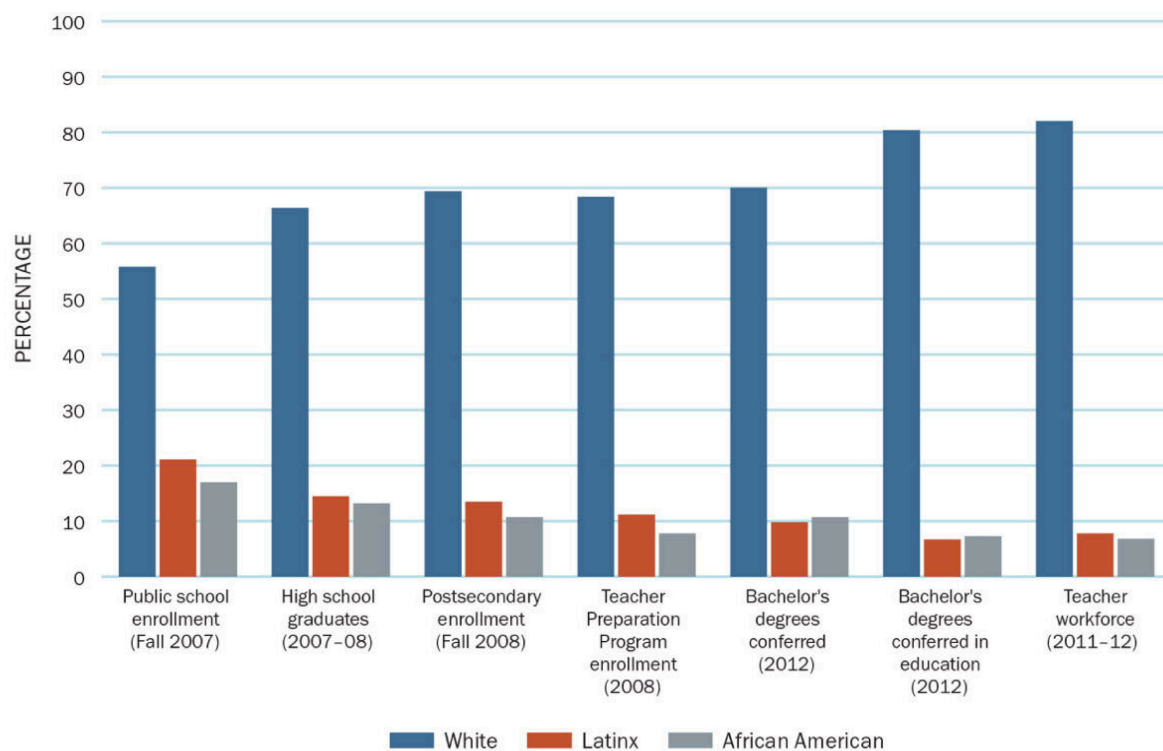
Latinx teachers include their reports of being asked to serve as the racial expert and experiencing racial microaggressions and bias (Jackson & Watson, 2021). A study conducted by The Education Trust disclosed that Black and Latinx teachers described feeling disrespected and deprofessionalized in their jobs. “These teachers sometimes feel like they have to prove their worth as educators, noting being looked over for job advancements, reduced to disciplinarian roles, and not being respected as subject area experts”(Andrews et al., 2018, p.8).

A qualitative study done by Carver-Thomas (2018) through a literature review and analysis of national data explained the importance of diversity and the reason it exists, specifically the lack of Black and Latinx teachers. As the teacher population increases, the number of Black and Latinx teachers is dwindling along the teacher pipeline (see Figure 4). The gap between Latinx teachers and Latinx students is the largest of any racial group. In 2014, the Latinx student population was more than 25%, and less than 9% of teachers were Latinx in 2015. However, it is essential to note that while the gap is the largest in the Latinx population, the growth of Latinx teachers has also been the greatest (Carver-Thomas, 2018).

Unlike the increasing growth of Latinx teachers, studies in the report show that Black teachers made up more than 8% of teachers in 1987, and in 2015, that number had fallen to 6.7%. An estimated 90% of teacher demand is driven by teachers who leave the profession. Teachers of color move schools or leave the profession at a higher annual rate than White teachers (19% versus 15%). While teachers of color and White teachers leave the workforce at similar rates over time, mover rates (transferring from one school to another) are much higher for teachers of color (see Figure 5).

Figure 4

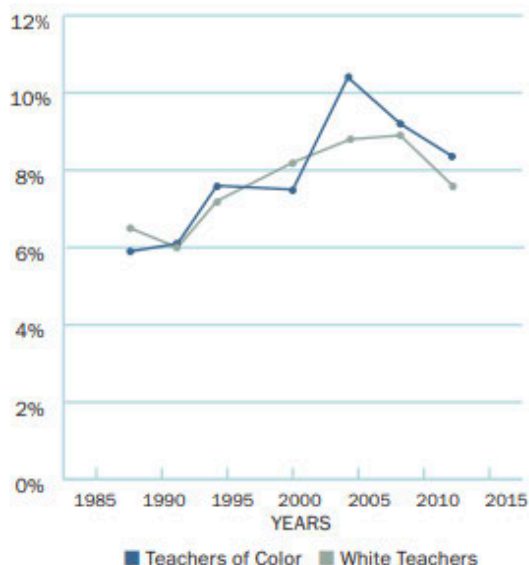
The Pool of Potential African American and Latinx Teachers Dwindles Along the Teacher Pipeline



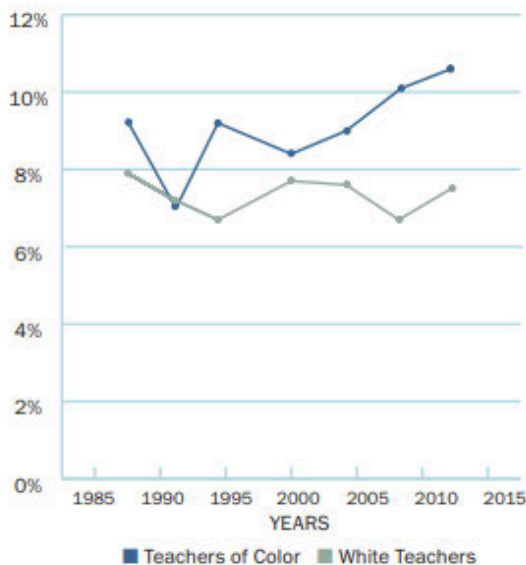
Note: Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). *Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color.*

Figure 5

**Teacher Leaving Rates,
1988-89 to 2012-13**



**Teacher Moving Rates,
1988-89 to 2012-13**



Note: Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017).

Teachers of color face barriers to entry and continuing in teaching, from preservice to veteran teaching status. The financial barrier that comes with attending a reputable traditional program and the cost of taking state requirements assessments are at the top of the list when it comes to barriers. Many teachers of color who successfully enter the field find themselves working in low-performing school communities under poor leadership, resulting in teacher burnout and their often leaving the field. This situation adds to the high turnover rate and negatively impacts school communities. This article shared possible solutions to these barriers, which include the following: Ongoing mentoring support, federal government loan forgiveness, school district investing in teachers early at the paraprofessional level, and possibly paying for some or all of the education to obtain their teaching license (Carver-Thomas, 2018).

Taking the proper steps to attract teachers of color and invest in them so they can remain in the field will significantly impact students in the classrooms. According to Carver-Thomas

(2018), teachers of color provide benefits to students such as:

- Social-emotional benefits, students of color feel more cared about and more academically challenged
- Academic boost in the performance of students of color in both reading and math
- Increase in student attendance
- Increase in student graduation rate and aspirations for college.

Wallace and Gagen (2019) identify two factors that currently highlight the high need and priority of diversifying the education field; the growing diversity of the student population and the continuous academic gap among Black and Latinx students. Addressing the need for diversification will serve to increase conversations about diversity that exist within the classrooms. Increasing teacher diversity increases understanding and decreases stereotypical images of students of color.

Theme 2: Achievement/Opportunity/Discipline Gap(Student Benefits)

Through extensive research, I have learned that the benefits of giving our students of color access to teachers of color will assist in closing not only the achievement/opportunity gap but also the discipline gap. In this first theme, I examined the definition and the impact of all those gaps. Let us start by exploring the academic and opportunity gap, understanding its definition, and the factors influencing it.

Many educators have constantly heard the word achievement gap. Researchers have discussed the achievement gap for the past five decades. When hearing this word, those who were associated with education and some who were not understood this to be the difference between students of color and their White peers. In fact, as a point of clarity and consistency,

when speaking about the achievement gap within this literature review, I am using the term as defined by Teach For America, “Achievement gap is a term that refers to the disparity in academic outcomes between lower-income students—who often are people of color, non-native English speakers, and those living in rural communities—and their affluent peers.” According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Achievement gaps occur when one group of students (e.g., students grouped by race/ethnicity, gender) outperforms another group, and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant (i.e., larger than the margin of error). “The achievement gap is as big today as it was for children born in 1954, with disadvantaged students three to four years behind their more affluent peers”, said researchers Eric A. Hanushek of Stanford University and Paul E. Peterson, director of Harvard’s Program on Education Policy and Governance.

As stated in the article by David Elliott (2020), progress is being made, and the average Black and Latinx students are years ahead of where their parents were in reading and math. While the trend shows progress, it also shows that progress has been slow and uneven. Using analytical data from a Stanford University study, Elliott explains that the scores represent gaps in educational opportunity, which can be traced back to a child’s early experiences. Experiences started within the child's home and continued through preschool.

Higher-income families are more likely to be able to provide these opportunities to their children, so a family’s socioeconomic resources are strongly related to educational outcomes. In the US, Black and Latinx parents typically have lower incomes and levels of educational attainment compared to White parents. (Elliott, 2020, p.6)

In their literature review, Bristol and Martin (2019) presented findings from multiple

qualitative and quantitative studies that provide evidence supporting the idea that Black teachers positively impact the socio-emotional development of Black students. The significant influence of Black educators on Black students was further substantiated by the 1966 Coleman Report, which revealed that schools with a higher representation of Black teachers experienced more significant improvements in test scores among Black students.

Researcher Thomas Dee (2004) conducted an empirical study that included approximately 11,600 students. The participating schools included inner-city and suburban schools from larger metropolitan areas and rural and urban schools from smaller towns. The study produced the following results:

- Test scores indicated among both Black and White students were higher for those who were assigned to an own-race teacher
- Black students are substantially less likely to have an own-race teacher
- There were significant gains in math scores of Black females when they were assigned to a teacher receiving merit pay or a teacher with a graduate degree
- Exposure to more experienced teachers led to statistically higher increases in achievement for White students
- When Black male students were purposefully assigned to a White teacher the probability of attrition increased significantly
- There is a constant effect associated with a year's exposure to an own-race teacher regardless of the student's cumulative exposure.

Based on Dee (2004) research, it has been found that there is a significant achievement gain for Black students and students who were assigned a teacher of their race. However, the author acknowledges that while race may have contributed to the increase, considering other

factors, such as teacher quality, is essential. His research indicated that data supporting the claim that students benefit academically from having a teacher of their race has been limited. However, this study, which spanned four years, presented data consistently demonstrating a substantial educational benefit.

While the study supports the idea that having a teacher of the same race can positively impact academic achievement, it is essential to consider the broader context and continue examining other variables that contribute to student success. Ongoing research and analysis can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing educational outcomes for students from diverse backgrounds.

In an effort to find out more about the academic and behavioral benefits of Black students who have Black teachers, Christopher Redding (2019) conducted a quantitative study. Through this study, he was able to delve into the results of the positive educational impact of students of color assigned to teachers of color. According to Redding (2019), assigning students to teachers of the same race is linked to receiving more favorable teacher ratings. Strong evidence suggests that Black students score higher on achievement tests when assigned to Black teachers. Based on this study, Redding found:

- Black students are rated as being less frequently disruptive in class when assigned to a Black teacher
- Black students' math scores increase by an average of 3 to 5 percentile points and 3 to 6 percentile points in reading
- Black male students' reading achievement was over 6 points higher than those Black students without a Black teacher, and Black female students' reading achievement was

over 4 points higher than those who did not have a Black teacher. These differences account for a 20% to 25% reduction in the achievement gap for Black female and Black male students.

Researchers in North Carolina found similar results. In a study published by the Institute of Labor Economics, researchers and university economists found that low-income black male students in North Carolina who have just one black teacher in third, fourth, or fifth grade are less likely to drop out of high school and more likely to consider attending college. In fact, the study estimates that instruction from one black teacher in elementary school cuts high school dropout rates by 39 percent among black boys from low-income backgrounds. These same students were 29 percent more likely to desire a four-year college degree than their peers who had never been taught by a black teacher (Partelow et al., 2017).

As previously defined by the NAEP, the academic gap centers on comparing test scores and graduation rates. However, Carpenter et al. (2006) argue, based on a prior study, that this singular definition falls short of capturing the multifaceted nature of achievement differences. Rather than a single gap, there exist multiple gaps. This realization prompted me to investigate the current opportunity gap, which could potentially be mitigated through a more diverse teaching workforce.

The achievement gap has focused solely on a gap based on state assessments. According to other researchers, it is also used when describing the graduation rate of students of color compared to their White peers. The opportunity gap encompasses more layers to a very relevant situation. It requires one to ask, is the gap due to the lack of academia, or is it due to the lack of an opportunity?

According to Teach For America (TFA), the ‘opportunity gap’ refers to the fact that the arbitrary circumstances in which people are born—such as their race, ethnicity, ZIP code, and socioeconomic status—determine their opportunities in life, rather than all people having the chance to achieve to the best of their potential. Teach for America explains that the concept of the ‘opportunity gap’ directs focus toward the circumstances and hindrances that young students confront throughout their educational paths. It accurately places accountability on an unequal system that does not adequately offer the necessary opportunities for every child to flourish and prosper. TFA says, “Scores actually represent gaps in educational opportunity, which can be traced back to a child’s early experiences. These experiences are formed at home, in childcare and preschool, and in communities – and they provide opportunities to develop socioemotional and academic capacities.”

Elliott (2020) says data suggests that the scores serve as indicators of disparities in educational opportunities stemming from a child's initial encounters. In agreement with TFA, he shares that these early experiences are shaped within households, childcare settings, preschools, and communities, and they offer avenues for nurturing socioemotional and academic skills. Elliott explains that the data from Stanford University shows that families with more significant financial means are often better equipped to offer these opportunities to their children.

Consequently, the socioeconomic resources within a family significantly influence educational achievements. Unfortunately, within the United States, Black and Hispanic children tend to come from families with lower incomes and educational achievements compared to those of White children.

The final gap that plays a role in the academic and opportunity gap is the discipline gap.

Based on an article written by DeMatthews et al. (2017)

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights reported that Black students were three times more likely to be suspended or expelled than White students despite any evidence that suggested Black students were more likely to misbehave. A joint letter from the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education (2014) concluded as follows:

. . . significant and unexplained racial disparities in student discipline give rise to concerns that schools may be engaging in racial discrimination that violates the Federal civil rights laws . . . in our investigations, we have found cases where African-American students were disciplined more harshly and more frequently because of their race than similarly situated White students. In short, racial discrimination in school discipline is a real problem. (p. 4)

Gregory et al. (2010) provide us with evidence that over the past 30 years, national and state data consistently show a recurring trend of Black students being disproportionately affected by school discipline, specifically in the areas of suspension, expulsion, and office discipline referrals. A nationally representative study based on parent reports in 2003 found that Black students were significantly more likely to face suspension compared to White or Asian students. The study revealed that nearly 1 in 5 Black students (19.6%) experienced suspension, whereas the rate was less than 1 in 10 for White students (8.8%) and Asian and Pacific Islanders.

Disparities in school discipline have also been observed among Latino and American Indian students, but the research findings on these discrepancies have been inconsistent.

According to national data from 1999 parent surveys, 20% of Latino students in grades 7 through 12 had encountered suspension or expulsion, which was statistically significantly lower than the rate for Black students (35%) and statistically significantly higher than the rate for White students (Gregory et al., 2010).

The racial discipline gap has often been attributed to certain demographic characteristics more prevalent among specific racial and ethnic groups. Students from low-income backgrounds, with histories of low achievement, and residing in high-crime or high-poverty neighborhoods may face a higher risk of engaging in behaviors leading to disciplinary actions such as office referrals and suspensions. Existing literature suggests that these characteristics may account for a portion of the gap in disciplinary outcomes between groups. However, it is essential to note that demographic factors alone are insufficient to explain the gap entirely, and attention should be given to teacher and school-related factors that may contribute to the overrepresentation and over-punishment of Black and Latinx students (Gregory et al., 2010).

Furthermore, it is plausible that other variables, such as educational disadvantage, influence the relationship between achievement and discipline gaps. Ladson-Billings (2006) argues that what is commonly perceived as an achievement gap between White and Black students could be better described as an "education debt" since educational opportunities in the United States have historically been unequal across different groups.

Another author, McLloyd (1998), points out that family or community risk factors do not solely determine the effects of poverty on students but are also influenced by inadequate school conditions in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Students of color from low-income backgrounds are more likely to attend schools with higher teacher turnover rates and a lower percentage of highly

qualified teachers. Discrepancies in resource quality between affluent and impoverished districts are well-documented, highlighting the need for policy research to address resource disparities and positively impact achievement and discipline gaps.

Skiba et al. (2002) explain that the unequal disciplinary treatment of African-American students has been extensively documented, but the factors contributing to these disparities are not fully understood. A study analyzed disciplinary data from 19 middle schools in an urban district for one year to explore potential explanations. The analysis revealed a notable difference in the reasons for referring White and Black students. Referrals for White students were more often attributed to objectively observable causes such as smoking, vandalism, leaving without permission, and obscene language. On the other hand, referrals for Black students were more likely to be a response to behaviors such as loitering, disrespect, threat, and excessive noise, which appear to be more subjective.

Consistent findings of disproportionality in office referrals suggest that racial disparities in discipline begin at the classroom level. The study revealed a differential treatment pattern at the classroom level, where African-American students were more likely to be referred to the office for subjective infractions. The findings highlight the need for teacher training and structural reforms to address these disparities effectively.

Cultural mismatch, implicit bias, and negative expectations in classrooms and schools are factors that have influenced the over-selection of Black and Latinx students when it comes to having discipline problems. Townsend (2000) describes the hypothesis of a cultural mismatch as the classroom culture or teacher's culture being at odds with the culture of ethnic minority students. Studies have found that classroom activities often reflect Western European-based

individualism and competitiveness, which may not align with the communal values of minority students from Black and Latinx backgrounds (Boykin et al., 2005).

Having characterized the communication style of Black culture as animated and interpersonal versus that of White culture, which is described as more impersonal and dispassionate, authors have identified that communicative tension can arise through these differences (Gay, 2015; Gregory et al., 2010). Differences in communication styles may lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, or ineffective communication, potentially exacerbating disciplinary issues.

As reported through numerous literature studies, Black and Latinx students have been more likely to be suspended than their White peers despite any evidence suggesting they are more likely to misbehave. Some authors claim this builds upon critical race theory and culturally responsive teaching. Studies have shown that frequent suspensions significantly increase the risk of academic underperformance.

Theme 3: Recruitment and Retention

Many factors account for the under-representation of people of color in teaching. Now more than ever, academically talented students of color have broader opportunities and incentives to enter fields other than education, reducing the pool of minority teacher applicants. These high-achieving students are often encouraged by members of their communities to avoid the teaching profession, partly because it was traditionally one of the only career options open to people of color (Gordon, 2000). However, policymakers, higher educational institutions, and school districts have all agreed that it is a challenge that needs solutions.

Recruitment and retention of teachers, with a heavy focus on attracting Black and Latinx

teachers, has been an issue of national importance and continues today to be just as important. As our student population continues to become more diverse, research has shown that these students are positively impacted by having access to Black and Latinx teachers. Therefore, attracting and keeping minority students in teaching has become a high priority.

“The U.S. Department of Education has provided several reports on the shortage of minority teachers. Recommendations for increasing the minority teacher pool have included various pre-service and in-service programs and funding for teacher education programs designed to recruit and retain more minorities” (Sims, 2010, p. 26). Research within this area has found the following to be four major factors when addressing recruitment and retention: compensation, preparation, mentoring and induction, and teaching conditions (Sutcher et al., 2016).

The research shows that improving teacher recruitment begins with high-quality teacher preparation. However, research also shows that teachers of color will likely begin without completing a comprehensive preparation program. Many come to the teaching profession through a non-traditional route due to the high cost of a traditional teacher preparation program. To address this issue, specifically for our teachers of color, Carver-Thomas (2018) suggests underwriting the cost of completing a high-quality teacher preparation program. Doing so will provide minority students an opportunity to pursue teaching and do so through high-retention pathways, which better prepare teachers of color for successful, long-term teaching careers. According to Sutcher et al. (2016), offering forgivable loans and service scholarships that will cover training costs in high-quality undergraduate or graduate preparation for those who will teach in a high-need field or location for a required amount of time will assist with attracting

minority students to the fields. Creating career pathways such as “Grow Your Own” programs will increase the number of students in the teaching pipeline.

“Grow Your Own (GYO)” programs have been cited in recent policy briefs as viable pathways for addressing shortages and increasing the racial/ethnic diversity of teachers. These programs partner with school districts, community-based organizations, and colleges to recruit community members to teach in local pre-k-12 schools. Depending on the district and state, support personnel such as teacher paraprofessionals are targeted through this program, with some GYO programs focusing on introducing high school students to the teaching workforce (Gist et al., 2019). These programs provide financial, mentoring, and counseling support to those interested in obtaining their teaching licensure.

Nearly every state has at least one GYO program, except for North Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming. However, only 15 states provide direct funding for GYO program development, implementation, and sustainability. In Illinois, two-thirds of Grow Your Own Illinois candidates are minorities. Recruiting this particular way assists the goal of having the teacher demographics mirror the student demographics within the district. While the programs have addressed the financial barrier, the researchers have identified that the barrier of exams is still an issue that needs to be addressed. Students enrolled in the programs are finding themselves facing difficulties in completing the program due to the requirements of state teaching exams (Gist et al., 2019; Gist et al., 2022).

Under the umbrella of a GYO program, one educator developed the Pathways2Teaching program. This program specifically addresses the urgent need for minority teachers by encouraging high school students of color to consider becoming teachers or other related

education professionals. Through the collaboration between school districts and teacher preparation programs, high school students are provided weekly classroom field experience at local schools. After successful completion of the programs, which require three courses (9 credit hours), high school students receive a Pathways2Teaching Paraprofessional certificate (Bianco & Marin-Paris, 2019).

Nonprofit organizations like Teach For America (TFA) play a role in supporting recruitment efforts. Their mission involves recruiting a diverse pool of students and providing training to enable them to teach in low-income schools across the nation. The founder of the organization, Wendy Kopp, stated,

My own belief and conviction is that we are not going to be successful if we weren't diverse...My conviction in this grew over time as I saw firsthand the added value that people who shared the background of their students could bring—in the classroom, in grounding our staff discussions, in inspiring the confidence and trust in our communities.

One of their primary goals is to recruit high-quality and diverse teachers. In 2015-16, people of color comprised 50% of their members. Kopp feels that to address the challenges that minority students face, their teachers must represent a range of perspectives and experiences. Two of TFA's most essential recruitment tools are visiting campuses with a high population of students of color (including Historically Black Colleges and Universities -HBCUs) and having their current member voice.

While recruitment attention is necessary, keeping teachers is just as important. Research shows that the gap among our teachers of color is not due to the lack of recruitment strategies but teacher attrition. Between the 1980s and 2013, spanning two and a half decades, the annual rate

of teacher turnover saw a general increase despite occasional fluctuations. Additionally, the data from this period suggest that minority teachers experienced higher turnover rates than their nonminority counterparts (Ingersoll et al., 2019). According to Sutchter et al.(2016), “In recent years, it[teacher attrition] has accounted for more than 95% of demand, and in the years to come, attrition will continue to account for at least 85% of annual demand, if it remains at the current levels”(p.4) The authors continue to explain, pre-retirement attrition accounts for the largest share of turnover. As a preventive method, mentoring has been found to have a valuable outcome on teacher retention.

A national nonprofit organization, New Teacher Center, has focused on strengthening the practice of retention. In 2019, the organization released data from a study of a high-intensity mentor support program for new teachers. The study found that teacher retention rates were up by 11% after just one year for those who participated in the mentoring program. The study also found a financial benefit to investing in a mentoring program versus the cost of recruiting new teachers. According to the study, the mentor program costs \$9,223 per teacher, and the average cost of hiring a new teacher was \$17,872 (George, 2023). Sutchter et al. (2016) explain that a “well-designed” mentoring program improves retention rates for new teachers and their attitudes, feelings of efficacy, and instructional skills. When mentors receive formal training and are provided with fewer classroom duties and more one-on-one observation and coaching, their teaching practice is enhanced.

Jackson & Watson (2021) share that added to the significance of continued support, such as mentoring for all new teachers, is the need to provide specialized professional development for teachers of color. “Studies of critical professional development and culturally responsive

communities of practices for early career teachers of color demonstrate the positive impact of these approaches” (p.4). Author Pour-Khorshid echoed this same thought. There is value in having professional development, especially racial affinity professional development, to support teachers of color. The affinity groups allow spaces for teachers of color to engage in critical dialogue and affirm in community their sociocultural consciousness of the school (Pour-Khorshid, 2018).

While mentoring and professional development were consistent suggestions for retaining teachers of color, compensation was another critical factor. Compensation was a factor that impacted both attracting and retaining teachers. Studies show that teachers of color perceive their choice of profession to come with burdens that their White peers may not have to experience. Namely, teachers of color typically come from families that do not have the financial means to supplement the lack of pay for teaching (Dixon et al., 2019). When discussing compensation as a recruitment and retention strategy, authors focused on more than just the salary. The topic of compensation included loan forgiveness, service scholarships, and relocation incentives, just to name a few. Leading researcher Darling-Hammond (2007) explains that policymakers need to create competitive and equitable compensation packages that allow teachers to make a reasonable living. She suggests this be done through providing district incentives, which include mortgage guarantees, down payment assistance, and other housing supports; policymakers can also increase statewide salary schedules.

Conclusion

Research on recruiting and retaining teachers of color highlights the numerous benefits

for students when the teaching field is diversified. Studies reveal that having teachers of color positively impacts academic growth, fosters stronger student-teacher bonds, and improves discipline outcomes.

The lack of Black and Latinx teachers can be traced back to factors like Supreme Court decisions unintentionally leading to the loss of Black teachers. Additionally, current challenges include limited college preparation for students of color, barriers posed by teaching licensure exams, increased career opportunities outside of education, and unfavorable school climates.

Researchers offer strategies to increase diversity in education to address the underrepresentation of Black and Latinx teachers. These strategies include targeting high school students as potential future teachers, raising salaries to attract and retain teachers of color, improving teacher preparation programs, and providing mentoring support for minority educators. By implementing these suggestions, the education system can take significant steps towards creating a more diverse workforce, ultimately benefiting students and teachers of color. As we transition to the next chapter on methodology, I will delve into the practical steps and approaches employed to research the topic of diversification in the field of education effectively.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The demographic composition of public school students in the United States is undergoing rapid diversification. According to studies and research, it is projected that within less than three decades, a majority of children will likely belong to a race-ethnic minority. In contrast, teacher candidates must catch up with this swiftly increasing student diversity. This statistic, coupled with my personal experiences detailed in Chapter One, is the driving force behind my decision to investigate the significance of recruiting and retaining Black and Latinx teachers. This chapter delineates the process and steps to thoroughly research, evaluate, and assess the importance of recruiting and retaining Black and Latinx teachers.

Research Design Overview

Patton (2008) defines utilization-focused evaluation as evaluation done for and with specific intended primary users for specific intended uses. In examining this issue, I was able to shed some light on the benefits of having a teacher of color for students of color, specifically Blacks and Latinx. I also examined current programs and suggested attracting more teachers of color to the teaching field and retaining them in their positions.

Patton states that evaluation can focus on implementation, and my goal was to examine the current trends or programs in place and create or recommend my own to help create a more diverse teacher pool. To achieve this goal, I used a qualitative research method and included some quantitative data to help frame the impact of having students with a teacher of the same race. According to Patton (2008), qualitative and quantitative data can contribute to all trends as a group.

Through a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews, I was able to tell the stories and the impact of those who have experienced teachers of their race and those who have felt a void in connecting with their teacher due to racial differences. Interviews with students, teachers, and administrators allowed me to exploit the importance of this relationship. Engaging with universities and district human resource professionals, I observed and contrasted current practices with historical approaches. Conducting interviews with various administrative levels enabled me to provide suggestions for promoting diversity in the teaching profession.

Participants

Through purposeful sampling, as prescribed by Patton (2008), specific criteria were developed to identify the participants of this study. It was vital for me to include all stakeholders who played a role in recruiting and retaining teachers and impacting students' academic achievement. From this, I decided to interview four groups of participants: building and district administration, administration at higher learning institutions, teachers, and students.

I interviewed principals and building administrators who identified as Black (B), Latinx (L), and White (W). There were six principals/assistant principals with over 40 years of administration experience. The district-level administrators I interviewed all identified as Black and had over 20 years of experience in education and over 10 years at the district level. The teachers I interviewed mirrored the administration's race: Black, Latinx, and White. The student population consisted of students who identified as Black and Latinx and one who identified as biracial (Black father and White mother). These students were all currently enrolled in a higher learning institution. Their age ranged from 19 - 23. The higher learning administrators I

interviewed were both from a public four-year university. See the tables below for background information for each participant within each group.

Table 1

Interview Participant Information-Student Group

Participant	Race	Home State	Middle School Demographic	# of B/L Middle School Teachers	High School Demographic	# of B/L High School Teachers
Student 1	B	IL	Majority Black	2 - Black	Majority White	None
Student 2	B	GA	Majority White	3 - Black	Majority White	2 - Black
Student 3	B	DC	Majority Black	1 - Black	Black and Latinx	3 - Black
Student 4	B	NC	Majority White	1 - Black	Majority White	1 - Black
Student 5	L	IL	Majority White	None	Black and Latinx	1 - Black
Student 6	L	IL	All White	None	All White	1 - Black
Student 7	L	IL	Majority White	None	Black and Latinx	None
Student 8	B/W	NC	Majority White	None	Majority White	none
Student 9	B	NC	Unknown	1- Black	Majority White	1 - Black
Student 10	B	NC	Majority Black	1 - Black	Majority Black	2- Black

Table 2*Interview Participant Information - Teacher Group*

Participant	Race	Years in Classroom	Subject/Grade
Teacher 1	B	6 years	Special Education 8th Grade
Teacher 2	B	2 years	Special Education Science 6th - 8th Grade
Teacher 3	B	15 years	English 8th Grade
Teacher 4	B	18 years	English Language Arts
Teacher 5	L/W	14 years	6th and 7th Grade Math
Teacher 6	L	7 years	6th - 8th Grade Social Emotional Learning
Teacher 7	W	8 years	7th and 8th Grade Social Studies
Teacher 8	W	5 years	7th and 8th Grade English Language Arts
Teacher 9	W	15 years	8th Grade Math

Table 3*Interview Participant Information- Building Administration Group*

Participant	Race	Position	Years in Position
Building Admin 1	L	Principal	8 years
Building Admin 2	L	Principal	3 years
Building Admin 3	L	Multi-lingual Director	5 years
Building Admin 4	W	Assistant Principal	2 years
Building Admin 5	W	Assistant Principal	13 years
Building Admin 6	B	Principal	18 years
Building Admin 7	B	Principal	7 years
Building Admin 8	B	Principal	4 years

Table 4*Interview Participant Information- District Administration Group*

Participant	Role	Years in Role/Education	District Grade and Student Demographics	District Teacher Demographics
District Admin 1	Human Resource Director	2 years/25 years	Pre-K- 8 8% White 21% Black 68% Latinx	82% White 6% Black 8% Latinx
District Admin 2	Executive Director of Operations	3 years/20 years	Pre-K- 12 11% White 36% Black 47% Latinx	48% White 21% Black 23% Latinx
District Admin 3	Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	3 years/ 17 years	Pre-K- 12 50% White 11% Black 27% Latinx	94% White 2% Black 1% Latinx
District Admin 4	Asst. Supt. of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	2 years/ 27 years	Pre-K- 12 30% White 51% Black 5% Latinx	91% White 6% Black 1% Latinx

Table 5*Interview Participant Information- Higher Education Institution Administration*

Participant	Role	University Type
University 1	Chief Diversity Officer	Public - 4 year
University 2	Academic Advisor	Public HBCU - 4 year
University 3	Academic Counselor	Private - 4 year

Data Gathering Techniques

Semi-Structured Interviews

A semi-structured interview offers a nuanced and detailed exploration of the subject matter and provides the researchers with valuable insights. Mashuri et al. (2022) define the semi-structured interview as exploratory. The interviews I conducted were done via Zoom and recorded using Otter.ai. Each group had questions specific to their role within the research. For each participant within that group, the questions remained the same, except for any follow-up questions derived from their answers, which came from the predetermined questions. All interviews were saved and were only accessible to me. The interviews were transcribed, and each participant was given an anonymous and unidentifiable tag.

Publicly Available/Secondary Data

I gathered data from publicly available secondary sources, focusing on information from Historically Black Universities and Colleges (HBCUs), predominantly White institutions (PWI), as well as private and public universities. The analysis involved scrutinizing the enrollment figures of students of color and the enrollment in education programs across these institutions. Regarding student data, I examined local assessments from District 22, specifically the S.T.A.R (Situation, Task, Actions, Results) assessment, spanning the past three years. Additionally, I reviewed the district's IAR (Illinois Assessment of Readiness) data, comparing it with data from similar districts to Conner District 22, sourced from publicly available school report cards. Conducting this comparison facilitated an assessment and comparison of general performance trends among Black and Latinx students.

Data Analysis Techniques

Semi-Structured Interviews

I gathered qualitative data from Otter.ai and Zoom interviews. With participants' consent, I employed Otter.ai to record our conversations, enabling me to review interviews conveniently without the need to log onto a computer. After completing all interviews, the information was transcribed and coded using a Google spreadsheet. This systematic approach allowed me to categorize participants by groups and discern emerging trends and themes. Additionally, it facilitated a swift identification of outliers, acknowledging their significance and identifying common themes.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The quantitative data utilized in this study was sourced from publicly available school data provided by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). I compiled and organized the information through data retrieval, generating charts that allowed for a detailed data comparison across various districts. Student and teacher demographics, attendance, and academic gaps between student groups were all examined and compared.

Ethical Considerations

Ensuring the avoidance of harm throughout the interviewing process was both a priority and a responsibility. Given the research's focus on race, crafting a clear-cut research plan without potential racial bias became crucial. As James et al. (2008) articulated, preventing harm underscores the significance of appropriately handling research subject matter to safeguard individuals. Adhering to the Ethical Elements of Participatory Action Research (PAR) in interviews was instrumental in upholding this ethical standard. The following procedures were

implemented for all participants:

- Informed consent
- Purpose of study
- Confidentiality of information
- Valid research techniques

Limitations

Several limitations emerged as I assessed the district's efforts in recruiting and retaining Black and Latinx teachers. The initial constraint was the absence of representation from every building within the district. Acknowledging the distinct cultures within each building as a principal, I recognized that the atmosphere in one building might differ from that of the overall district. It was not feasible despite efforts to secure representation from each grade. Nevertheless, I succeeded in obtaining an administrator from each grade band.

Another limitation was the lack of teacher representatives from all buildings and grade levels. I ensured the inclusion of someone from the K-5 building and representation for the junior high buildings at the administration level. Focused solely on grades K-8, one may also identify this as a limitation. However, in the search for data about k-8, I was able to read several articles reflecting the high school. Those small samples showed that the high school faced the same issues as the K-8 grade band.

Conclusion

Exploring the significance of recruiting and retaining teachers of color is a crucial aspect that demands attention and investigation nationwide. Employing ethical research methodologies, including academic data analysis and interviews with teachers, students, and administrators, has

allowed me to discern the importance of fostering diversity in education. This research illuminates the academic and social advantages experienced by students of color when taught by teachers of the same race. By scrutinizing existing policies and programs, I aim to leverage insights to develop initiatives within my district that facilitate the attraction of more teachers of color. In light of these comprehensive investigations into the significance of recruiting and retaining teachers of color, Chapter Four presents the findings derived from the academic data analysis and interviews conducted with teachers, students, and administrators.

Chapter Four: Results

In just eleven years, the demographic landscape of students in the United States has significantly shifted. Previously dominated by white students, the majority now comprises Hispanics and Blacks. Between 2010 and 2021, Latinx students accounted for 28% of public school enrollment, while Black students constituted 15%. The white student population decreased from 52% to 45% (NCES, 2023).

Despite these changes in student demographics, the teaching workforce predominantly consists of Caucasians. Although there has been an increase in the number of Latinx and Black teachers, as depicted in the graph below, the growth is insufficient to match the rapidly expanding Latinx and Black student populations. This research delves into the reasons behind the shortage of Black and Latinx teachers, emphasizing the importance of diversity in the education field for Black and Latinx students and proposing strategies for recruiting and retaining such teachers.

This chapter presents insights from Black, Latinx, and White teachers and administrators. Numerous Black and Latinx students share their experiences, highlighting the positive impact of having a teacher with a similar background. Additionally, my research includes discussions with representatives from higher education institutions, both private and public.

Findings

Students - Social Emotional Impact

The findings came from a collection of interviews, anecdotes as a principal, and publicly available information from teacher preparatory programs and schools. The opportunity to conduct interviews extended to 10 college students, nine teachers, eight building-level

administrators, three district-level administrators, and two higher education administrators. By leveraging publicly accessible data, the study incorporated insights from higher education, encompassing private and public institutions from PWIs and HBCUs. The findings began with the insights gathered from student participants. Prioritizing student involvement in the study held significance, as I believed no other group could articulate the impact more effectively than the students themselves. Their perspectives were crucial in illustrating the significance of having a teacher of the same ethnicity and the differences it makes in the educational experience.

Every participant responded to a set of 14 questions. The initial questions gathered background information about the participants and created a comfortable atmosphere for the interview. The significance of these interviews stemmed from the remainder of the questions.

Out of the 10 students, six had the chance to be instructed by at least one teacher from a minority background during their K-12 education, sharing a similar ethnicity. All seven students expressed a sense of distinction in their experiences when they had a teacher who shared their cultural background. When asked whether they perceived a difference in teachers who resembled them and what disparities they observed, their responses were similar. Student 9 responded:

Yes, the Black teachers I had taught me about life, not just the academics. They connected and resonated with me. I feel they cared about my life, not just about the academics that they were teaching. When I had White teachers, they did not care about what was going on. They only cared about the grade.

Student 4 stated:

I do feel there was a difference, but not in the teaching style. I felt like Black teachers cared more than the White teachers I had. Because I knew that they cared, it made me want to do better, and I did. I always got better grades when I had Black teachers.

Student 10 shared:

I had one black teacher, my math teacher, and a few in high school. I feel like it all depends on the age of the teacher because I have more of a hard time with the older, like White caucasian teachers than the younger ones. With the Black teachers, I felt there was a difference because they were easier to talk to and friendlier. In middle school, my black Math teacher felt more like a mom. So, like, she knows how to discipline somebody. It just felt like your mom was telling you something.

Student 2 stated:

The curriculum was the same, but Black teachers taught us differently in ways we can understand. Instead of just giving us the curriculum and expecting us to memorize it they took their time to make sure we could understand, understand and comprehend what was happening instead of us just memorizing and speaking it back to us.

Student 1 explained:

I definitely think it is a difference, and I did not have that many Black teachers in elementary school, but I do remember the two I did. I think the way they use examples that are real life is better. They connect with us better. Going back to how they use real-life examples, they use examples that are meaningful and that we can relate to, and they use these examples to help us understand what they are teaching. This helps us, [Black students] comprehend better. I also feel that Black teachers are more personable.

They take more time to get to know their students, which goes to the point of them being more relatable. So that is the difference.

Student 3 replied,

Having teachers who were Black who understood about my background was a big difference for me. I felt those teachers who understood my background, having them made me feel better about coming to class and being there instead of not coming to school because I didn't think the teacher cared. I felt like Black teachers understand more of what we go through and are more lenient with things you may be going through. My White teachers didn't understand me.

The four participants who had not had the opportunity to be taught by a teacher of their same ethnicity were asked if they thought it would have been a difference. Unanimously, they all agreed that they think it would have been different. Out of the four who wished they could have experienced a teacher of the same ethnicity, two have chosen to go into education, and one of them decided to go into nursing because they felt it was another career that is underrepresented by minorities. Below are their responses.

Student 5 responded:

I think so. Especially during other subjects, it would have been nice to see somebody who looks like me who could have been teaching. Another difference is I think I would have had a bond with a teacher; I never really had that. I never felt comfortable with all my teachers. It was all very different, especially to see how they expected children to act or

upbringings. We lived in a predominantly White area. So it was just like I was treated special because I was a well-behaved Mexican.

Student 7 expressed:

Not having a teacher who was Mexican was the norm for me. During that time, I did not think about whether it would be different to have someone like me teach, but as I became an adult, I think there absolutely would have been a difference. It would have been so nice to have teachers I could speak Spanish with and share personal things about my life without explaining why things were the way they were. This is the very reason I have decided to go into education.

Student 6 said,

I think, honestly, it would have. The only Hispanic teacher I knew was my dad, and I always heard about his students. When I met them, they would always share the impact he had on them, and I wish I had that. I wish I could have seen someone with the same skin color and life experience as me teach me and help me grow as a Latina woman. Instead, I had teachers who would often get my name mixed up with the only other Mexican girl in the classrooms. Teachers, who I felt, singled me out because I was Latina.

At the end of the interview, all participants were asked if they cared to share anything regarding the topic, The Importance of Recruiting and Retaining Black and Latinx Teachers.

Four of them shared the following:

Student 2 shared:

Having Black teachers available for people who look like us is important. It can make a difference in a child's attitude towards liking to be in school. It can also make a difference in if a child passes or fails. This is very important. To sum it up, having a Black teacher can make a difference if a child succeeds in school or life in general.

Student 3 stated:

This topic is very important, and I hope more Black teachers are hired, and more students have access to them. Black teachers understand that even as kids, some of us are the head of the household. We are responsible for getting our siblings up for school and feeding them. They understand why we may come to school late or tired, and they do not make us feel bad. Having a Black teacher for a Black kid can be the difference between that kid coming to school or not.

Student 7 responded:

Representation is a big thing today, especially in advertising. It should also be emphasized in school, where children's minds are developing and where they spend most of their time outside of home. This further supports my reason for going into the field, in hopes of providing representation for others like myself, that didn't have.

Student 6 shared:

I think while having to reflect on the types of teachers I have had. All of them have helped me learn and to reach my greatest potential but I have never been able to see them as role models to me. I have never had a teacher able to connect to life experiences or be able to connect with my favorite Hispanic foods or traditions. My parents have always instilled in me the value of having an open mind and learning about the cultures of others,

and I feel like that was not always taught by some of my teachers and made me feel discarded by my classmates. For this reason, I think it is important to hire more Latina and Latino teachers.

Teachers - Relationship and Discipline Impact

Teachers were the second group of participants in which I interviewed. As with the students, the interviews started with questions that provided me with background information. All the teachers taught grades 6th through 8th, and the students they taught were Latinx and Black. When asked about the makeup of their student demographics, all participants shared that they have very few White students in their classrooms, except for three teachers who teach in a magnet program of their school.

When possible, teachers were asked to answer questions based on their overall educational tenure. Participants were asked if they saw or felt there was an academic difference between Black and Hispanic students compared to their White peers. The majority of the teachers shared that they felt there was a difference. Teacher 6 replied, “Honestly, we have so few Caucasian students, and the Caucasian students we have are mainly on the magnet side. So yes, there would be a difference in academic achievement level. Yes.”

Teacher 1 explained:

I think in my teaching career, I've had more black and Hispanic students in special education. I just feel like based on resources, I feel like our communities don't have the resources to meet the needs of our students. And then it creates that gap. And then, you know, it becomes really evident when we have students in seventh grade who can't read, but they were never given the services they needed in their early years.

Based on Teacher 1's answer, I asked her if she was willing to explain what she meant by resources, and she did. She stated:

I think the pandemic definitely showed the lack of resources, especially in technology. I was teaching in Chicago, and our students had no access to Chromebooks or anything. And so, when you think about how much we use technology and then thinking about the difference in education, when you have students that have access to technology with no issues and then we have students who don't even have Wi-Fi at home, and no access to computers and things like that. It definitely hurts our community.

Teacher 4 shared:

In terms of the achievement of my students who were Black. I would say that I see that they're most often in the mid-range when it comes to like a standardized test like STAR. Whereas you might see White students who were higher performing on the STAR.

Teacher 8 said:

I have not had the opportunity to teach many White students, so I do not think I can honestly answer this question. The few White students I did have were foster students who were being raised in Black households.

While the majority of the participants shared that they saw a difference academically, they could not say that they provided different instructional strategies for their students. When asked if they provided any unique strategies for their students of color, they reported using resources that assisted multi-lingual learners, and that was it. One teacher talked about how he uses building relationships as a strategy. He stated, "I build relationships with my students and know their

needs. And when they express those needs, I can give extra time or allow an opportunity to make up or redo something.”

The other difference that I asked about was the difference in discipline or behavior of their Black and Hispanic students as compared to their White peers. Out of the eight teachers that were interviewed, all but one felt that there was a difference. One teacher shared that they saw a difference, but it was due to their lack of skills and felt the behavior was attention seeking or “disengaging types of behaviors”. The others described the difference as being defiant and more willing to be confrontational.

When the teachers were asked about the discipline, all of the Black teachers felt the behavior was different due to the lack of understanding coming from their White peers, which led to disciplinary action that was not needed. The teachers explained that they would meet their students' discipline needs by building relationships, having classroom structures, and being consistent. Teacher 5 shared, “You have to set boundaries for kids and you have to stay strong on it. You have to set down rules. You can't come in all willy nilly and be like, Okay, this is fine.”

Addressing the research question of the importance of having minority teachers for minority students, I asked the participants if they felt students of color would benefit from having teachers of color. They all agreed that it would be beneficial, except for one teacher who shared, “No, I do not believe there is an academic benefit; just because they share a common culture does not lead to anything academically. Good teaching should transcend racial differences .” The other teachers immediately said yes and began talking about the ways it can and does make a difference. Teacher 4 explained, “It also helps address systemic inequities and disciplinary

factors that are a part of systemic inequities, too. So I fully believe in supporting their research.”

Along the same line, another teacher stated:

When you go into a classroom, and you're perceived as being from a different background, there is no automatic sense of safety there. There actually might be an increased level of attention to a threat. Is this teacher going to be racist? Is the teacher going to target me? Is this teacher going to understand me and my family? All this stuff is running through their mind. This can be an additional barrier to forming that sense of safety and the relationship because you just have to navigate that. Whereas if students have teachers who look like them, they have more of an automatic sense of safety, I would say, in terms of the psychology behind it.

Teachers shared interesting opinions when it came to the question about professional development. An overwhelming majority of the teachers agreed that their professional development needs were not met. The responses ranged from no, the needs are not met, to the needs are met but not nearly enough, and the proper training is not offered. For almost every teacher who answered, I was able to ask a follow-up question, “What types of professional development do you feel is needed?” For every person I asked that question, their answers immediately tied into cultural competency.

Teacher 2 said,” I think professional development can be understanding the triggers, ACES training. Understanding what can cause the disruptions, whether behavioral or academic and knowing how to respond.” Another teacher took the opportunity to share that professional development is needed, especially for those unfamiliar with their students' backgrounds, but it will not be welcomed. Teacher 1 explained:

I think that those [cultural] conversations are necessary. However, I feel like a lot of Caucasian teachers will not put themselves in a position to be uncomfortable to actually grow and do what they should do for their students. It is necessary, and I do feel like it will help. But I do not feel like they would submerge themselves into a position where they have to be the minority, and they have to be the uncomfortable group.

According to another teacher, professional development is available; however, teachers exhibit reluctance to participate in the training. As a result, the district and classrooms do not witness the benefits of these sessions.

When questioned about strategies to attract and retain more minorities in the field of education, the teachers hesitated before responding. Each teacher conveyed that in the current era, it is challenging to attract individuals, not solely minorities, to the field. Under further inquiry, some suggested key factors: competitive pay, robust support systems like mentoring, emphasizing the rewards of becoming a teacher, and meaningful professional development.

Concluding the interviews, the teachers were allowed to share anything they chose. The majority concurred on the significance of addressing this issue for both students and their peers. Teacher 4 shared:

I feel like it would be beneficial to have a diverse teaching staff, and our school isn't like the worst of the worst when it comes to that but obviously, we do still have the majority of White teachers. I think everybody benefits from having teachers who are from different backgrounds, whether that's racially or culturally, whatever it is because then you can just develop more relationships with people and be in a place of understanding of different practices and ways of life and perspectives and seeing things.

Administration - Relationship and Discipline

The next group of participants I interviewed were all administrators. This group was split into two different groups, building level and district level. The questions were designed specifically for the role of the group. Building administrators all played the role of principals or assistant principals, and the district level consisted of HR personnel and those responsible for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within their district.

Common themes emerged from the interviews with the building administrators. They all shared the typical role they played in hiring and releasing teachers. Each administrator shared they have a choice regarding selecting someone after HR has vetted them. They are allowed to say no to applicants, except for internal involuntary applicants. The group removal process was all based on evaluations. No one was allowed to release anyone who did not have an abundance of documented information, including teachers who were in years 1-3.

The next commonality among the group was in the area of professional development. Professional development came from the district level. Principals can provide their staff with outside professional development on school improvement days, which are half days. All commented on how they wished they had more time to provide the needs of their building. Building Admin 4 shared,

I think, by allowing us to have more time to focus on the needs that we have in our buildings. We are given two school improvement days, but we have to work on things we are provided with at the district level.

The administrators felt it was important for all teachers to participate in culturally responsive professional development, as it would benefit the students and the parents. Building Admin 1 shared,

Yeah, I believe it's important. I think that when I think of the relationship piece, I know that a lot of students coming from different countries, you know, don't share the exact culture of the Spanish-speaking teacher. So there's certainly a need for them to learn and identify, you know, those needs, those unique needs for those students. It would be beneficial to really understand the parent's mindset and the parents' perspective because we can't always assume that their upbringing is exactly the same as the student's.

Building Admin 5 responded:

I feel it's very important for staff to engage in professional development related to cultural relevancy. I think people have a lot of implicit bias that they don't realize they have. When you are put in scenarios or listen to real-life stories that you sometimes get at, when you get some more culturally relevant professional development. It gives people an opportunity to reflect on their own implicit biases and look at ways to keep their biases in check when dealing with students from diverse backgrounds.

With the exception of one building administrator, there was a consensus among the administrators that the culturally relevant conversations had been introduced but not expounded upon. Outside of the mandatory state requirements for curriculums, many felt the district needed to prioritize cultural relevance and provide mandatory professional development. According to Administrator 7, the district he was in was doing what the other administrators hoped for. In his district, all of their professional development was culturally based. In his words,

All of our professional development is rooted in cultural relevancy, such as critical race theory. We influenced the Afro-centered culture in every aspect of our curriculum across all literacy, Social Studies, science, and mathematics. So, a cultural emphasis is made in all academic areas.

Principals were asked how district leadership can enact policies that support them as leaders to implement culturally responsive programs and structures. They all had their visions of how this should be handled.

Building Admin 3 shared:

I think it's still a matter of having better information for our teachers. If you look at our population being such a small population of Black and Hispanic teachers and so many of our students being Black and Hispanic, I think we, our teachers, need the discussion. The opportunity has to be forced; it can't be optional. So, somehow, we have to force people to participate in culturally responsive professional development.

Building Admin 1 stated:

I would love to see us expand our parent committee meetings. I know that they host monthly meetings, and I know that that is something that the coordinator feels really passionate about. So, I'd love just to see that rollout at each individual school. So we have to find a way to gather parents at each school, you know, that speak Spanish, gather those parents, and cast a vision for how they can support. That will definitely strengthen our schools.

Others went on to describe support as being as simple as providing additional time or allowing more autonomy and more funds for them to do what they feel their building needs based upon their student and teacher demographics.

The educational workforce is comprised of a majority of White teachers. With that being prior knowledge, upon considering what to ask, I felt it was important to ask if the building administrators had any suggestions or strategies for helping White teachers who teach Black and Latinx students. Building Admin 7 shared what he did for his teachers.

So my role as a school leader, when I was a principal, I worked at a school where it was a Title 3 school. We had a huge ELL population and an African American population: Half Latino and half black. So, I had Latino teachers, black teachers, and white teachers. To make sure that my staff understood the culture of who we taught. We spent lots of time going on community tours. I would always start my year off in professional development, joining the community, going into places in the community where our students came from churches, restaurants, and going to, you know, stores so we can get a feel for the culture of the kids that we taught. I have always engaged and infused community partners in my school. So, our school reflected where our kids came from. It was important for me that our teachers understood who they were teaching and where they came from.

Building Admin 6 explained:

I strongly believe Caucasian teachers need frequent, ongoing training. The training should get deeper into issues that keep some Caucasian teachers from truly connecting with their Black and Brown students. I believe this training should be mandatory in order to continue employment in the district, specifically, my district, where the vast majority

of students are Black or Brown. Pretending race isn't an issue or downplaying how widespread the issue is when Caucasian teachers are teaching Black and Brown is setting our students up for failure. Caucasian teachers need to get comfortable with being uncomfortable for this dynamic to change.

Leading researchers have shared that teachers, administrators, and students agree there is a benefit when having students of color access to teachers of color. My findings produced the same results. When asked about the benefits of having Black and Latinx teachers for Black and Latinx students, they all unanimously agreed. Here are some opinions from the small population sample I interviewed.

Building Admin 3 said:

Honestly, in some circumstances, I do believe so because, from the student perspective, I believe some students respond better. However, I also have cases where I feel like there's a lack of professionalism, maybe because they share the same race. Overall, I feel that it's beneficial. I believe, yes, it's absolutely important for students to be taught by or have more exposure to teachers of their race.

Building Admin 2 explained:

Absolutely. I definitely saw this in my role at a school where I had students who had more of a troubled past or had more high-level needs when it came to behavior or therapeutic social-emotional needs. When they have a model of a school teacher who looks like them and identifies with them, they perform much, much better.

Building Admin 5 said:

I feel like when it comes to discipline, the Black and Brown teachers have a better understanding of the cultural impact that students' actions have on what they're doing in class. Also, when the students get reprimanded by a Black or Brown teacher, they're[the students] less likely to give them [the teachers]an attitude. I also sometimes feel the teacher internalizes things and makes them bigger than the situation when it's a cultural thing and not necessarily directed at them.

Building Admin 6 explained:

I think teacher diversity is a major factor in student success. When students are taught by people who look like them, they can see themselves doing that as well. They can make connections with those teachers that they may not be able to make with other teachers.

Students may be more comfortable sharing their culture, ideals, and life experiences with others when they have some of those in common with their teacher.

The interviews continued, and each administrator echoed one of the others, but all in support of the benefit of having teachers of color for students of color.

The interviews were concluded by asking each administrator if they had any suggestions on recruiting and retaining Black and Latinx teachers. Their answers aligned closely with that of the teachers. They suggested a more attractive salary, making connections with students in high school, participating in GYO programs, and providing support and mentoring for new students.

I chose to interview district personnel because this topic was closely aligned with the responsibilities of Human Resources. My findings from this group were similar.

Everyone talked about the importance of active recruitment strategies. Two districts had just added a new staff to focus primarily on recruitment and retention. According to District Admin 2, their district suffered in this area due to diversity, equity, and inclusion concerns, which was the cause of the new staff person. The district is composed of a very small amount of Black teachers, and in just one year, they lost three. Hiring this new staff person is done to prevent losing more staff members.

There were other recruitment efforts that they also shared in common. These included attending job fairs, partnering with programs such as Golden Apple, teacher preparation programs, and being intentional about seeking out Black and Latinx teachers. District Admin 1 shared that they are trying all avenues, which include GYO, going to the high schools, and offering students who are interested in becoming teachers aid in getting their degree, with the commitment that they will return to teach with them. One district spoke about taking over its mentoring program and making changes to provide better support for new and current teachers.

When questioned about the reasons for the departure of teachers of color, none could explicitly state that their turnover rate among teachers of color was higher than that of White teachers. No one was able or willing to disclose specific numerical data. Instead, they discussed the challenges of retaining teachers within their district. District Admin 1 mentioned the loss of teachers due to a residency requirement, while District 2 explanation highlighted the significant strain imposed on their teachers by the COVID pandemic. She stated, “Many are not leaving for a different district but are leaving the field completely, and this includes White, Black, and Latinx teachers.”

All of the administrators felt that it was important to have Black and Latinx for their students. District Admin 2 shared:

It is paramount that when kids come into our schools, they see people who look like them. They need to know that they can connect. Not that they cannot connect with teachers of other races. However, they must have people they can go to who may be of the same race and have some of the same experiences. It is important for that nurturing, that connection, that collaboration, or that empathy. They just need to see that that's possible.

Interpretation

In this chapter section, I will offer interpretations of the findings. As per Patton (2008), interpretation extends beyond the data, providing context, establishing meaning, and extracting substantive significance. The interpretations are presented in two parts, each addressing the main questions of this research.

Research Question 1: How does teacher diversity impact or influence Black and Latinx educational success?

Based on the research that I have conducted, it has been found that teacher diversity has a positive impact on our Black and Latinx in a positive way. Black students score higher on achievement tests when assigned to Black teachers (Redding, 2019). According to Gershenson et al. (2022), Black students randomly assigned to at least one Black teacher in grades K–3 are nine percentage points (13%) more likely to graduate from high school and six percentage points (19%) more likely to enroll in college compared to their Black schoolmates who are not.

Researchers stated that there is an academic, discipline, and social benefit. My findings also aligned with this. Out of the mouths of babes, in this case, college students shared the

positive impact that having a Black and Latinx had on them for those who had them. Those who could not comment personally reflected on their desire to have one and the difference it would have made. Aligning with the research, the college student shared their stories of feeling more comfortable, motivated, and excited about school simply because they had a teacher who shared a common culture.

For those who did not have the opportunity they stated, had they been exposed, they would have felt more comfortable with having a teacher who looked like them. One of our Latinx students shared that she would always wonder what it would have been like having someone like her Dad teach her. She expressed how it made her feel to hear her father's students tell stories of how he changed their lives. Two of the Latinx students shared their beliefs on representation. Because the representation was not there for them and it was limited representation, they decided to go into the field of education. Griffin (2018) shared,

As role models, teachers of color believe they can motivate and inspire students and contribute to improvements in academic outcomes. Recent studies not only support their beliefs but document the benefits of having diverse teachers for all students. One study, for example, found that students of all races perceive teachers of color more favorably than they do their White teachers. (p. 6)

Echoing Griffin and the college participants are principals, teachers, and district-level administrators. Therefore, my findings align with those of other researchers; Black and Latinx students who are taught by Black and Latinx teachers thrive better academically and behaviorally.

Research Question 2: How can we attract and retain Black and Latinx teachers to the field?

This question is broken down into two categories: recruitment and retention. In order to retain teachers, districts must first recruit them; therefore, I will interpret my findings with recruitment first.

Building and district-level administrators agreed that the teacher shortage is real, especially lacking teachers of color. According to the NCES, higher percentages of schools are finding themselves with more open positions overall as compared to the past. Close to 40% of public schools hiring for open teaching positions in special education in 2020-21 reported having difficulties filling the opening, compared with 17% in 2011–12. This confirms what the participants shared during their interviews. The field of education lacks attraction, especially with minorities.

Finance was a common thread when researching the why. Researchers shared that the cost for minorities to obtain a teaching degree is higher than that of their White peers. The salary was the other factor. The profession is having to compete with other careers with a much more attractive salary. Based upon my findings when speaking to HR personnel and those participants associated with higher education institutions, programs such as GYO are being created to assist minorities who are paraprofessionals in obtaining a degree in teaching. Both participants who were associated with post-secondary institutions spoke about creating programs specifically for minorities. Through research, I had the opportunity to discover programs that are created specifically for minorities, such as Call Me Mister (a program created at the Univeristy of Illinois). These steps align with removing the financial barrier related to obtaining a teaching degree for minorities. The issue of the low salary has not had the success as cutting the cost has

had. Although school districts offer bonuses for teachers to come to their districts, it does not solve the “teacher salary penalty” concern. This was one issue that researchers did not resolve, as it will continue to be a topic of discussion as the teacher pool continues to decline.

Retention presented notable distinctions. It was unexpected to discover that, although salary was identified as a factor in retaining teachers, researchers like Aragon (2016) emphasized that working conditions, professional development, and state and district policies also influence educators' decisions to stay in the profession. According to my findings, teachers and administrators asserted that providing better support, professional development, and mentoring would positively impact retaining teachers in the field. My interpretations presented here align with the findings of prior researchers.

The suggestions that came from the findings also aligned with that of current research. This answers the second research question of how we can attract and retain Black and Latinx teachers to the field. Based on the findings, it is my interpretation that by providing minorities with scholarships and grants to become teachers, we are providing an opportunity to diversify the workforce. Once we have them within the workforce, we must invest in them by providing culturally related professional development and support through meaningful mentoring programs, both plausible solutions to retaining teachers of color.

Conclusion

My findings within this program evaluation aligned with those of leading researchers. It is important for our Black and Latinx teachers to be available for our Black and Latinx students. Districts are doing what they can in order to diversify the field by providing grants to assist financially. Based on this information, in the next chapter, I will provide a change plan using

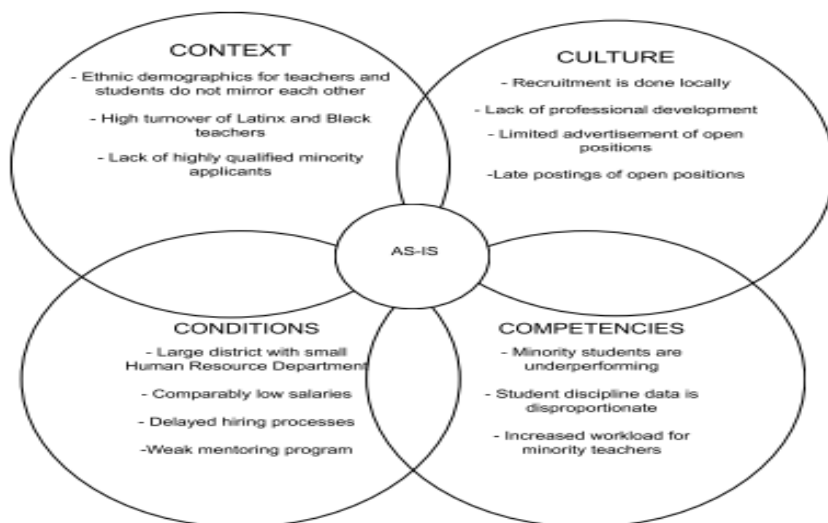
Wagner 4C's outlining the lack of diversity in the teaching field, how it looks currently, and the plans for the steps to take for how it should be.

Chapter Five: Change Plan

According to Wagner, a system is a whole whose elements “hang together” because they continually affect each other over time and operate towards a common purpose. Education is a system where several parts, including recruitment and retention, are part of the many pieces that impact the whole: academic achievement for our students. In order to bring about change to the system, Wagner offers an approach to thinking systematically about the obstacles and challenges that one's schools or district may face. He calls this thinking the 4Cs: competency, conditions, culture, and context. In this chapter, I will use this systematic thinking method to break down the challenges of recruiting and retaining Black and Latinx teachers. I will begin by analyzing the current status of the four C's from the district I examine. A chart (Table 6) has been provided below as a snapshot of the current “As-Is” status.

Figure 6

Four C's As-Is in Recruiting and Retaining Black and Latinx Teachers



The Current Status As-Is

Context

Wagner (2008) characterizes the context as encompassing the social, historical, and economic factors that influence all these endeavors. Inclusive of the extensive organizational systems within which we operate, with their associated demands and expectations, both formal and informal. The context of the district under my assessment comprises the following details:

- The student and teacher demographics do not align, 80% of the students are Black and Latinx, and over 75% of the teaching staff is White
- High turnover of Black and Latinx teachers
- Lack of Black and Latinx applicants

The state of Illinois and the district in which I evaluated share the common challenge of facing a shortage of teachers, a widespread issue across the nation. However, the specific need for minority students to have access to teachers from similar backgrounds remains unfulfilled. Both previous educational research and my current investigation, as outlined in "Chapter 2: Review of the Literature" and "Chapter Four: Results," indicate a perceived positive impact when students are taught by educators who share their cultural or ethnic background.

According to the findings, students feel more at ease in classrooms with teachers who resemble them, and teachers themselves believe that students are more receptive and responsive in such settings. Additionally, parents note higher expectations when their children have teachers from the same ethnic background compared to interactions with White teachers. The failure to address this disparity and provide students with relatable teachers can adversely affect student

motivation. This contributes to the widening opportunity and achievement gaps discussed in earlier chapters of this research.

Culture

Culture refers to the invisible but powerful meanings and mindsets held individually and collectively throughout a system. It is the shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school (Wagner et al., 2006). The culture prevalent in this district is characterized by mediocrity and can be described as adhering to the mindset of "this is how we have always done it." This way of thinking has proven to be a misstep in the district when it comes to recruitment and retention.

The district's recruiting approach is its almost exclusive use of local universities, primarily classified as Predominantly White Institutions (PWI), which can be described as a fatal flaw within the organization. Instead of seeking candidates from across the state and possibly neighboring states, the primary recruitment protocol involves collaborating with local partnerships of PWIs. Job positions are offered to them after completing student teaching by individuals sent to the district (mostly nonminority students) through these partnerships.

Another area for improvement in the recruitment process is the belated and limited platforms in which job vacancies are posted. Currently, the district uses its website and two other websites to post vacancies. The district has social media websites (FaceBook and Twitter) and avoids taking advantage of and posting vacancies on these high-traffic platforms. Choosing to advertise on only some possible platforms puts the district behind other districts using various resources, including social media, to attract applicants.

The culture of the district has also had a negative impact when it comes to retention. Research shows many teachers leave the profession due to a lack of support, including professional development. Within this district, professional development is also a concern. Teachers desire to attend professional development to help perfect their craft or to find strategies to assist with teaching students of minorities. The district's current culture, the "train the trainer" approach, does not meet the needs of the teachers. In fact, it restricts the plethora of available opportunities. Instead, the district relies heavily on district coaches for professional development, with most professional development focusing on curriculum. Less than 10% of the professional development is allocated to culturally responsive teaching, instructional strategies, and classroom management. The findings from my study highlight this as a highly problematic area. One teacher participant stated, "The need for professional development on culturally responsive teaching or ACEs [Adverse Childhood Experiences] training for us White teachers, considering that most of our student body falls into one or both of these categories, is greatly needed."

The district administration meets with the building administration each year and reviews student number projections. At this time, the building administrator makes an appointment to meet with HR to discuss which teachers they will release. While this is done early, sometime in February, HR will not allow the positions to be posted. Positions are only posted after all staff members have been informed that they are not returning and after the voluntary period (when teachers choose to move buildings, granted a vacancy exists) is over, which only happens in March. This process leads to the district posting positions much later than other districts. By the time the district posts and goes through the screening to verify credentials, applicants that had

once applied have often accepted another position. In other cases, highly qualified applicants did not have a chance to apply because the position was listed after they had accepted a position at another district. These late postings cause the district to miss out on minority, highly qualified, and experienced applicants.

Conditions

Conditions are a massive factor in this research. According to Wagner et al., (2006), the conditions are defined as the external architecture, the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources. Given that recruitment and retention are heavily dependent on resources, this component, as is, needs to be immediately remediated.

The district comprises over 1,300 employees and a student body exceeding 10,000. Remarkably, the Human Resources department operates with less than five (the assistant superintendent of HR, director of HR, and three clerical) staff members. The department handles a wide range of duties, including initiating, coordinating, directing, and monitoring personnel services. They are also responsible for coordinating all new personnel recruitment, selection, and employment recommendations. The current mentoring program also falls under their umbrella, along with monitoring staff credentials to ensure compliance with all federal and state employment-related laws and regulations. Because of this extensive array of responsibilities, the department needs an individual focused solely on recruiting and retaining staff, specifically staff of color.

Salary emerges as a significant factor in addressing the conditions. Traditionally, teachers have earned considerably less than professionals in other fields requiring a degree, and the wage gap continues to widen. As of 2021, the "teacher pay penalty" reached a record high, with

teachers earning 23.5% less than comparable college graduates (Najarro et al., 2022). In response to the low salary concerns, Governor Pritzker took action in 2019 by signing legislation to raise the minimum teacher salary to \$40,000 by 2023.

During the evaluation of this district, the salary offered was competitive compared to other school districts, and benefits often surpassed those of neighboring districts. However, the district did not provide any additional financial assistance (i.e., teacher bonuses) for new or current teachers, as the other districts did. This absence of financial incentives can be viewed as a negative, especially considering research indicates many minorities are drawn to careers with more lucrative salary packages, often inclusive of sign-on bonuses. While salary is undeniably a significant aspect, it is essential to note that it is also significantly impacted by historical and external factors, including politics.

Lastly, the district has a limited mentoring program. Teachers new to the district are assigned a mentor, who is usually retired and does not work in their building. Teachers are observed by their mentors; however, they are never allowed to observe their mentors in action. Those who serve as mentors only come and observe teachers approximately three to four times a year in their classroom. There is no outside time allotted for the two to meet and discuss the observation or for the teacher to ask for help with something specific, such as classroom management. When interviewing one of the teacher participants, she stated, “One thing that I felt like I could have benefited from when I first came to this district would be it would have been a mentor program, where I actually got to connect with an educator that looked like myself to be able to share experiences with not just coming to my classroom type of person that I didn't know.” This was just further proof that the mentoring program needs to be addressed.

Competencies

The final C, competencies, is just as critical as all the others and is a must for any of them to work. Competencies refer to developing adults' skills – as the repertoires of skills and knowledge that influence student learning. Wagner et al., 2006 further explains it by stating, “Skillful, competent adults are a foundation of this work. Teachers and administrators sharpen their skills through ongoing development opportunities and is needed for all parts to work” (pg. 99).

Continuing the examination of the HR department, I find there is a deficiency in executing additional support for minority staff members. Studies have shown that having affinity groups in school districts provides a safe place and a place of support for teachers of color.

Expanding beyond the HR realm and focusing on the department responsible for providing planning time for teachers, there needs to be more time for teachers working with a curriculum that requires staff to put in more time due to additional assessment and components of said programs. This happens within the district to Latinx teachers in the bilingual programs. One principal participant stated,

I personally lost a few great Latino teachers to neighboring districts for a variety of reasons. To be very specific, we asked our bilingual teachers to do a lot. We asked them to assess double the amount of our English general education teachers; we asked them to provide interventions and dual languages. We asked them to learn, you know, multiple curricula.

Supporting this statement is also the concern that Latinx teachers have when interpreting. Many Latinx teachers perform this additional duty without any thought from the person who has requested them to serve as a language interpreter and, more importantly, perform this duty with no additional pay. This extra burden on our Latinx teachers is causing the district to lose them. PLCs tailored for Black and Latinx teachers can create an environment for support and provide them with the additional time needed to meet with peers facing the same issues. This time will allow them to solve problems with their peers during the day.

Lastly is the lack of minority students' academic performance and the highly disproportionate amount of discipline referrals with Black males. Currently, the district does well regarding growing students academically, as noted in their local assessment. However, the gap that exists between minority students and their White peers is growing based on the state of Illinois data. In the area of ELA, the gap between Black and White increased from -15 in 2021 to -23 in 2023. The gap in ELA between Latinx and White increased slightly, from -12 in 2021 to -14. In Math, the gap between Black and White went from -16 in 2021 to -18 in 2023. Latinx and White remained the same, a gap of -13 in 2021 and 2023.

Within the district, the Latinx population is three times that of the Black population. Nevertheless, when reviewing the discipline data within the district, the number of referrals and suspensions is twice that of the Latinx population. Students from low-income backgrounds, with histories of low achievement, and residing in high-crime or high-poverty neighborhoods (all of which apply to the majority of the students within the district) may face a higher risk of engaging in behaviors leading to disciplinary actions such as office referrals and suspensions by their White teachers. George et al., 2018 say addressing this issue involves understanding biases,

implementing culturally responsive teaching practices, and creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students.

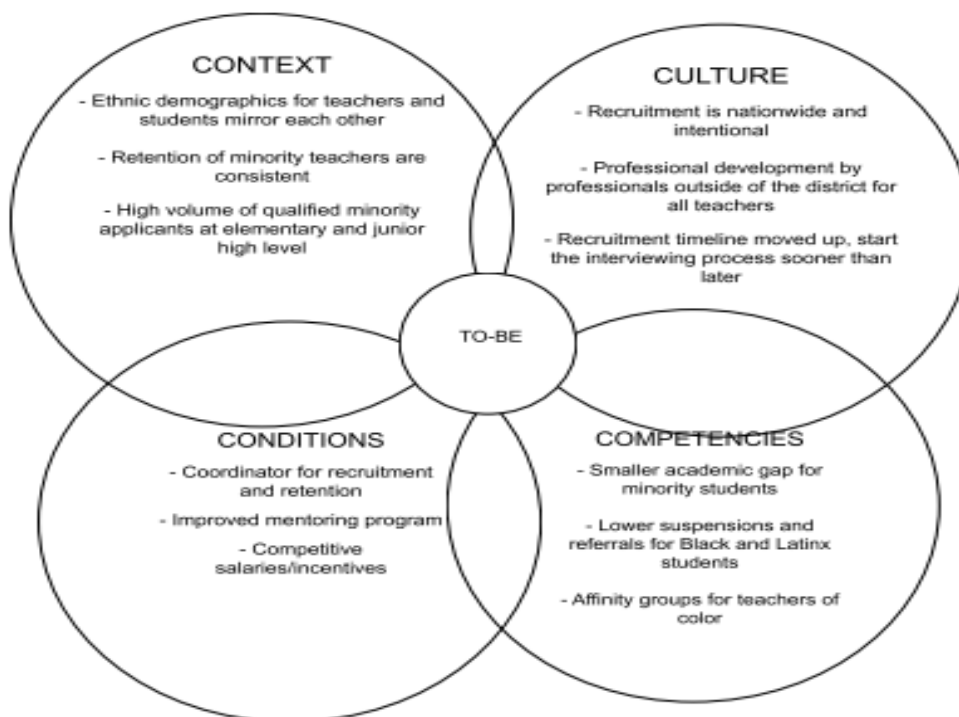
Examining the research problem centered on the scarcity of Black and Latinx teachers through the lens of the Wagner et al., 2006 Four Cs approach reveals the complexity of the substantial issue of recruiting and retaining Black and Latinx teachers. This challenge does not have a straightforward solution; instead, it is a complex systemic problem. Some aspects may be addressed through minor adjustments, while others require careful examination and incremental steps toward improvement. Heifetz would characterize this issue as an adaptive challenge—one lacking the necessary knowledge to resolve the problem.

Envisioning the SuccessTo-Be

Within this chapter section, I aim to explore the envisioned ideal context, culture, conditions, and competencies required for recruiting and retaining Black and Latinx teachers. Below is an illustrative image crafted to provide a peek into the envisioned future regarding recruitment and retention endeavors. I sincerely hope to witness the shift away from its current status quo culture and move towards a culture that esteems and prioritizes its most invaluable asset—human resources. As previously portrayed in the As-Is scenario, I have designed a visual representation (Figure 7) encapsulating my vision for a successful future blueprint.

Figure 7

Four C's Envision Success To Be



Future Context

In envisioning the ideal future context for this district, my aspiration revolves around fostering a more diverse teaching staff that closely reflects the demographic makeup of our student population. Specifically, this would substantially increase the representation of Black and Latinx teachers. Additionally, an essential enhancement to the district's context would involve expanding the Human Resources Department by adding a dedicated staff member exclusively tasked with recruiting and retaining teachers. The ideal candidate for this position would be certified and possess prior experience in evaluating and mentoring teachers.

Achieving these contextual changes requires a deliberate strategy involving seeking recruits from sources beyond our local colleges. To enable this shift, there is potential to create a fresh position using grant funds allocated by the state for Title I schools. This new role would tackle recruitment and retention challenges directly, ensuring ongoing and sustained efforts.

Future Culture

In the comprehensive examination found in the review of the literature, researchers emphasized that school culture is a pivotal factor contributing to the departure of minority teachers from the field. The research emphasizes that Black and Latinx educators often experience a sense of alienation rather than a feeling of belonging among their peers. Researchers further highlighted the importance of having a mentor program to retain minority teachers.

The forthcoming plan involves a collaborative effort between district-level and building-level administrations to address these challenges. This joint approach aims to establish an enhanced mentoring program and allocate dedicated space and time for Affinity Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Offering mentorship from accessible certified mentors within the

school premises provides crucial support for minority educators, an aspect they often feel lacking. When interviewed, a district-level administrator highlighted the significance of Affinity groups, emphasizing that they create a secure environment for educators who share everyday experiences and concerns. This sense of shared identity fosters inclusivity and belonging, influencing whether one remains within or leaves the organization. It is well-established that individuals stay where they feel connected to something aligning with their interests.

In a reimagined recruitment strategy, the district's new Retention and Recruitment Coordinator will be responsible for participating in national job fairs and ensuring nationwide advertising of district vacancies. This proactive approach seeks to initiate the recruitment process earlier by posting job openings on a national scale on time.

Furthermore, the district will collaborate with teachers and building-level administration to discern the specific professional development needs. Research indicates a decline in the time allocated for professional growth among teachers. To address this, district-level administration will collaborate with building principals to organize tailored training sessions based on the specific needs of each building. These sessions will cover various areas, including Critical Race Theory and effective teaching strategies for students of color, to enhance the teaching experience.

Future Conditions

The primary focus in idealizing best-suited conditions revolves around a comprehensive increase in teachers' compensation. An article in NEA Today highlights the concerning trend where teachers' salaries fail to match the inflation rate, resulting in an approximate \$3600 decrease in their earnings over the past decade.

In the proposed plan, addressing this issue involves a significant raise in teachers' pay coupled with the introduction of a loyalty bonus system. Darling-Hammond (2007) advocates adopting the practices seen in high-achieving industrialized nations to mitigate workforce shortages. Countries like Finland, Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, Germany, France, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore have successfully averted shortages by investing substantially in training new teachers. This investment entails government-funded graduate-level education combined with practical training, enhanced mentorship, induction programs with robust support mechanisms, and reduced teaching loads.

The loyalty bonuses will reward teachers who remain in the district for extended periods—five, ten, and fifteen years. Additionally, staff can earn bonuses based on their attendance and student growth. To attract new talent, incoming staff members will receive a signing bonus paid upfront, contingent on their commitment to remain with the district for a predetermined duration.

Future Competencies

Providing teachers with crucial professional development focused on instructing students from diverse backgrounds can help them understand that behaviors perceived as disrespectful, confrontational, or hostile may be rooted in the cultural context of the student. Grasping these cultural intricacies has the potential to decrease disciplinary incidents, thereby tackling the disproportionate referrals observed in the district—a vision I aspire to achieve in future competencies.

Through this professional development, teachers will gain insights into establishing connections, supporting students with trauma, and acquiring effective strategies for teaching

multilingual and culturally diverse students. These approaches aim to overcome barriers that hinder teaching and learning in the classroom. Ultimately, the primary objective is to enhance student achievement and narrow the academic gap.

Conclusion

Conducting a comprehensive examination of the district's existing state by applying Wagner's et al., 2006 4C Framework has yielded valuable insights into its current condition. This analytical process involved a thorough review culminating in an insightful analysis outlining the current status. Building upon this foundation, the subsequent chapter will delve into a more detailed exploration using Kotter's change model. This model will serve as a strategic guide to navigate the transformation from the present "As-Is" state to the envisioned "To-Be" state, specifically in the critical realm of recruiting and retaining Black and Latinx teachers.

The vision for the future encompasses several key areas. In terms of context, there is a strong focus on diversifying the teaching staff and implementing strategic recruitment methods that may be supported by grant funding. Culturally, the emphasis lies on improving the school culture to retain minority teachers through well-established mentorship, Affinity PLCs, and collaborative efforts between district and building-level administrations.

Regarding conditions and competencies, addressing concerns about teacher compensation and proposing loyalty bonuses based on tenure and performance are central. One should take inspiration from successful models in other countries aiming to invest in teachers' training, induction programs, and reduced teaching loads. An emphasis needs to be placed on providing teachers with professional development centered on understanding diverse student behaviors, cultural nuances, and practical strategies for student engagement. Creating an inclusive and

supportive environment will lead to reaching the ultimate goal of enhancing student achievement and bridging the academic gap and discipline concerns.

Chapter Six: Strategies and Actions, Implications, Policy Recommendation

The student population across America is changing drastically. What was once a population that consisted of a majority of White students is steadily shifting. According to the state of Illinois report card demographics, Latinx and Black students now make up over 40% of our student population; however, the demographics of teachers are reversed. White teachers make up over 80%, whereas Black and Latinx teachers barely make up 15%. Studies have shown that the minority teaching population is not keeping up with the rapidly changing increase in minority students. As I shared with you in chapter two, one of the benefits of recruiting Black and Latinx teachers is that it provides students with the opportunity to have teachers with a common background. Having this commonality between the teacher and student has shown an increase in relationship building, which leads to student motivation, which leads to higher performance from the student (Carver-Thomas, 2018).

Another concern or issue that I have addressed is the retention of Black and Latinx teachers. While teachers are leaving the field overall, research shows Black and Latinx teachers are leaving at a faster pace than their White peers (Carver-Thomas, 2018). In chapter two, I shared the benefits of recruiting Black and Latinx teachers. It is crucial that when we get them into the field, we must take the necessary steps to keep them.

In this chapter, I share with you the strategies and steps that I feel are needed to help with the recruitment and retention of Black and Latinx teachers. Through reflecting on the research that I presented to you in chapter two, reviewing the research and data I have personally gathered and presented in chapter four, and from my experiences as an administrator, I will create an action plan, highlight current existing policies and make a suggestion on policies I feel will be

practical. I will go into detail about the strategies and actions that will be needed to bridge the gap between the current As-Is that was identified in Chapter Five.

Strategies and Action

Change agent John Kotter introduced an eight-step model of change plan in which he identified the necessary steps an organization must go through to effectively and successfully implement change. These eight steps include creating urgency, forming coalitions, creating a vision for change, communicating the vision, removing obstacles, creating quick wins, capitalizing on the change, and anchoring the change. It is these eight steps that I have chosen to use as my strategies and identify the actionable steps that I will make. Below, I have outlined these steps and strategies (Table 8), and directly below, I go into depth for each strategy and the steps that are needed to achieve.

Table 8

Steps and Strategies

Steps	Recruitment and Retention Strategies
Step 1: Create a sense of urgency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I will meet with the current Coordinator for Recruitment, Retention, and Mentoring to go over the demographics of teachers and students ● Review data to show the impact of having students access to teachers with similar backgrounds ● Go over the data about mentoring
Step 2: Build a Guiding Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The following will make up my Guiding Coalition Committee (GCC): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Coordinator for Recruitment, Retention, and Mentoring ○ Director of Continuous School Improvement and Professional Learning ○ 2 Principals or Assistant principals (one K-5 and one 6th - 8th) ○ 4 Black and Latinx teachers (representation from both k-5th grade and 6th-8th grade)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parent and community member
Step 3: Create a Vision for Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recruiting Black and Latinx teachers to mirror the student population to provide students with teachers who can relate to and share a common culture will be the vision. ● The Guiding Coalition Committee (GCC) will assist with creating a nationwide recruiting plan, including better school branding, job fairs, and advertisements on different significant platforms. ● The Guiding Coalition will assist with creating affinity PLCs, identifying needed professional development, and assisting with revamping the mentoring program to include specifics for Black and Latinx teachers.
Step 4: Communicate the Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I will work with the GCC to come up with a communication plan. We will come up with three different communication plans that will address the following groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Superintendent and superintendent cabinet ○ Board of Inspectors and community members ○ Staff ● The communication will include the what, the how, and the why. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What - Recruiting and retaining teachers of color and retaining them ○ How - better advertising, nationwide job fairs, etc. ○ Why - Research shows an academic, discipline, and social-emotional benefit when students of color have access to teachers of color.
Step 5: Remove Obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide all teachers with professional development that will take place during work hours, which will include teaching kids with trauma and educating teachers on Critical Race Theories, which will consist of strategies teachers can use to build relationships with students who do not share a common background.
Step 6: Create Quick Wins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep a tracking system on advertising platforms and monitor how many visitors ● Monitor the different schools we are visiting for job fairs and how we are reaching out to different colleges ● Keep track of teachers who attend cultural professional

	development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create an observation form to track how and if teachers are taking what they learned from PD to the classroom ● Keep track of Affinity PLCs, making sure the time is sacred and not being removed from teachers
Step 7: Capitalize on the Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We will roll out the plan over the course of the next two years. Each year increasing
Step 8: Anchor the Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evaluate and assess what is working and what is not working and make changes by checking in throughout the year.

As I have stated throughout this dissertation, the student population in America has drastically changed, yet the teaching force remains the same. This resulted in very few students of color having access to teachers of color. The importance of having teachers teach children with whom they share a common background is crucial. Research shows that not only is there a social benefit, but it also extends to an increase in academics and a positive drop in discipline for Black and Latinx students. In a district that focuses on growth and achievement, and a state where the schools' academic achievement defines its success or lack thereof, identifying a solution, recruiting and retaining Black and Latinx teachers that can assist with closing the achievement gap is a cause for urgency.

Step One

Creating a sense of urgency is the first step of Kotter's model. Creating a sense of urgency will inspire people to act passionately and purposefully. The urgency builds momentum that excites people to pursue a vision of the future. It is my intention to meet with our current Coordinator of Recruitment, Retention, and Mentoring to discuss our current student and teacher demographics, review academic and discipline data, and look at our current mentoring program.

The data will show that there are far more Black and Latinx students and far fewer Black and Latinx teachers. The academic achievement gap amongst Black and Latinx students compared to their White peers is larger than the state, and our discipline data is highly disproportionate. Our current mentoring program does not provide new teachers with mentors within their building, and the staff that hold the role of mentors are all retired teachers. Looking at these factors with the coordinator will build the urgency required for the needed change.

Step Two

The next step in Kotter's plan is to form a guiding coalition. I call this step the creation of a Guiding Coalition Committee (GCC). The GCC is made up of a dedicated group of individuals originating from within the organization and is tasked with assisting with leading and organizing the change, along with conveying the activities for the change to happen (Kotter,2023). I will invite the following people to be a part of the GCC: Coordinator for Recruitment, Retention, and Mentoring, Director of Continuous School Improvement and Professional Learning, two principals or assistant principals (one K-5 and one 6th - 8th), four Black and Latinx teachers (representation from both k-5th grade and 6th-8th grade). The team will have representation from all grade levels, building administrators, and district administrators. I felt this was important to make sure all stakeholders within the district were represented. Having a mixture of representation from all areas of the organization gives us a better chance of creating a well-rounded plan and finding leaders who appeal to all stakeholders.

Step Three

In order to effectively lead and guide people through change, one must have a vision. Having a shared vision creates a common goal for people to work towards. Kotter's third step is

to form a strategic vision. This vision should clarify how the future will be different from the past. Its purpose is to get buy-in for making that future a reality based upon initiatives directly connected to the vision (Kotter, 2023). Our vision for the GCC is to have our teaching population mirror our student population by recruiting and retaining Black and Latinx teachers. In order to achieve this increase in teachers of color, our action plans to see our vision come to fruition will include a nationwide recruiting plan, better school branding, a variety of job fairs, and advertisements on different significant platforms. The Guiding Coalition will assist with creating affinity PLCs, identifying needed professional development, and revamping the mentoring program to include specifics for Black and Latinx teachers, all of which will help with the retention part of the vision.

Step Four

Step four is to enlist a volunteer army. Based upon Kotter's theory, "large-scale change can only occur when massive numbers of people rally around a shared opportunity. At an individual level, they must want to actively contribute. Collectively, they must be unified in the pursuit of achieving the goal together" (Kotter, 2023). Aligning with the steps, I plan to work with the GCC to come up with a plan to communicate the vision as well as the plan of action to make this vision come to life. The communication will entail a presentation to all stakeholders, including the superintendent of schools, the superintendents' cabinet, employees, the Board of inspectors, and community members, including students and families. The message will consist of the what (recruiting and retaining Black and Latinx teachers), the why(positive impact on academic, discipline, and social for our students), and the how(better marketing, mentoring, and

professional development). The team will be available to answer questions, address any concerns that may arise, and prevent stakeholders from understanding the vision.

Step Five

Our next strategy, and Kotter's (2023) step five, is to enable action by removing barriers. Any time you are in the process of implementing any kind of change, there will always be barriers. Kotter explains that by removing barriers, you clear the way for people to innovate and generate impact quickly. The barriers that will need to be removed will be making sure no scheduling conflicts are interfering with PLCs for affinity groups. I will also need to make sure we have enough people to serve as mentors and review the current contract to make sure we do not violate any contractual agreements. The major barrier would be the availability of times for staff to attend after-school PLCs or professional development. In order to remove this barrier, I will work with the GCC to create two surveys. One survey will be for all staff, asking about their preference for times for professional development, and the other survey will be specifically for teachers of color to identify their teaching schedules and find out their availability for afterschool PLCs. Removing these barriers will allow the team to create schedules when staff are available and times they prefer. This will prevent staff from not being available to attend.

Step Six

Identified as Kotter's step six is our next strategy: generate wins. "Wins are the molecules or results. They must be recognized, collected, and communicated, early and often, to track progress and energize volunteers to persist"(Kotter, 2023). Anytime you are dealing with staffing, short-term wins will likely be seen in the next year. However, the short-term wins we will be able to see immediately will be the recruiting wins. Creating a tracker to monitor the

number of applicants we get to apply, as well as the traffic we get to our website and the other sites that we have advertising our postings. It will be essential to share with the team; do not focus on how little the win is, just on the fact that any movement towards our vision is a huge win. The little wins will add up to a big win. We will also be able to celebrate the responsiveness of staff to professional development based on survey results. Regarding the affinity group, a short win we will celebrate is ensuring the building administrators keep the affinity group PLCs' times sacred. Making certain teachers get what they need so that they can attend these PLCs during the school day.

Step Seven

Sustaining acceleration is the seventh step. According to Kotter (2023), one should press harder after the first success. Kotter encourages you to be relentless and continue initiating change until the vision is a reality. When applying this step to my strategy in the area of both recruiting and retaining, I will work with the GCC to make sure that we have a timeline and stick to the timeline. Continue to press, even when we have fewer quick wins than we would like. As the leader of the GCC, I will make sure that the timeline is adhered to. I will work with the group to identify check-in points. It will be crucial for the team to understand that we can not make too many changes at once; even when things are looking good, it will be essential to stick to our timeline; this will also be the case when we do not see too many wins.

Step Eight

Kotter's final step I am applying to my change plan is step eight, institute change. In this step, Kotter says, you should “evaluate systems and processes to ensure management practices reinforce the new behaviors, mindsets, and ways of working you invested in”(Kotter, 2023,

para.12). Patton also shares the importance of program evaluation that fits into the same idea as Kotter's eighth step. According to Patton (2008), program evaluation involves gathering information systematically about program activities, features, and results with the aim of making assessments, enhancing program efficiency, and/or guiding decisions regarding future programming. My goal is to set up dates with the GCC where we check in and review the status of the timeline. We will look at the strategies we have implemented and evaluate what is working and what is not. At this time, we will assess and make whatever changes need to be made so that the vision can continue to come to life.

Policy Statement

The state and possibly the nation face a challenge when attempting to attract and retain Black and Latinx teachers. Therefore, I propose the following to assist with the challenge.

- Black and Latinx high school graduates aspiring to enter the field of Education can qualify for a full-tuition scholarship at any state-affiliated institution, contingent on their commitment to a minimum of five years teaching in a public school whose student demographics is at least 20% Black and Latinx.
- Supplementary funding from the state should be allocated for seasoned educators to offer mentorship to newly hired Black and Latinx teachers to support their induction and retention within the profession.
- Districts will be required to establish affinity professional learning communities (PLC) tailored for Black and Latinx educators, creating safe spaces for them to share experiences and openly express their feelings and needs.

A significant barrier to education is financial strain, particularly evident in research indicating that Black and Latinx teachers often carry a higher debt burden upon completing their education compared to their White counterparts. The disparity between the debt incurred and the initial earnings as a first-year teacher is insufficient, which strongly deters minorities from going into education.

Introducing a mentoring initiative can significantly bolster teacher retention. Research demonstrates that teachers engaged in mentoring programs exhibit higher job satisfaction and are less susceptible to burnout. Alarming, nearly one in three new teachers leaves the profession within five years. However, when new teachers have access to mentors, this attrition rate decreases substantially to one in seven, as per Sutchter et al.'s (2016) findings. Chapter Two shared details on how a well-structured mentoring program positively impacts retention rates by enhancing teachers' attitudes, efficacy, and instructional skills. Mandating school districts to mentor new teachers will bolster retention and result in cost savings for the district. The expenses incurred in implementing a mentoring program are notably lower than the costs associated with recruiting new teachers to replace those who leave. According to George (2023), in a 2019 study, the approximate cost of a mentorship program per teacher is \$9,223, whereas the average cost of hiring a new teacher totals \$17,872.

Having racial affinity groups for teachers of color assists with responding to racism and oppression experienced by educators of color in schools. Affinity groups affirm participants' goals, values, racial identity, and humanity. They provide informal and formal mentorship, create community and supportive relationships, and, in some instances, compensate educators financially for engaging in professional development (Bristol & Martin,

2019). In a different study conducted by Warren-Grice (2021) on the importance of Affinity groups and how they provide a safe space for support a participant of the study, Dr. Tonya Walls shared the following:

What we're finding—and this is not new, we're finding it all across the country—Black teachers and Black administrators are experiencing the same push-out effect that our students are experiencing: the dishonoring of our voice and the knowledge that we bring to the space, the gatekeeping of access to leadership opportunities, opportunities to expand our knowledge and teaching capacities and leadership capacities... and blatant White supremacy and experiencing the effects of that with our colleagues and peers and our leaders. (p. 8)

Consideration for Decision Makers

I have deliberately chosen to concentrate on a policy recommendation that many districts can promptly adopt, at least to some extent, without substantial assistance from the state. This involves the implementation of mandatory mentoring and affinity groups for minority teachers.

In the next section, I took the time to conduct a more thorough analysis of the suggested policies by delving deeper. This analysis will cover four areas: economic, political, legal, moral, and ethical assessments. This evaluation will provide all decision-makers with a deeper understanding of the policies that I am recommending. I will begin by discussing the financial impact of the policy.

Economic Analysis

The economic analysis of this policy would be to compare the cost and benefit of implementing a mentoring program and affinity groups. As I stated earlier in this chapter, the cost of a mentoring program compared to replacing teachers who have left is a lesser expense financially and a far more significant benefit. Well-designed mentoring programs assist new teachers with staying in the profession, preventing burnout when teachers are not mentored.

The mentoring policy would have to consider the following cost factors:

- How many mentors will be needed - The district would need to decide the mentor: mentee ratio and provide the necessary mentors
- Mentor pay - Will the mentor receive an hourly rate, or will it be a stipend position requiring a determined minimum number of hours, such as the state of Kentucky requires their new teachers and mentors to spend at least 70 hours working together, twenty hours in class and the remaining 50 outside of the classroom
- Mentee pay - Will teachers be compensated for participating in the program
Providing ongoing support is also a form of mentoring and that is another way to look at affinity groups. Affinity groups, like mentoring, benefit districts by assisting with retaining educators of color. When looking into the economic details of affinity groups, I was able to review that as a low financial policy implementation to districts. The following costs would need to be considered, but not all would be required:
- Affinity group leader - The district will need someone who will be in charge of the groups

- Training - The group leader will need to be trained focused on equity-centered training
- Meetings - Time will be needed for these groups to meet. Districts can get creative and have meetings during the school day and on half days; this will eliminate having to pay teachers to stay after school hours.

Again, affinity groups benefit districts by retaining educators of color who often leave the field due to feeling undersupported and unheard. Educators of color often complain about being undervalued and expected to take on additional roles and responsibilities while being judged (Dixon et al., 2019).

Supporting both a mentorship program and affinity groups for teachers of color, over time, will yield more significant benefits and foster a more robust, fairer environment. This, in turn, will result in a more positive interaction between educators and students of color, leading to improved academic performance, attendance, and disciplinary outcomes. Despite the initial financial investment required for implementation, the returns far exceed the costs.

Political Analysis

Almost every part of education is political. Politicians create programs such as “No Child Left Behind” or require states to follow what they have deemed is needed, such as “Common Core Standards.” when recommending these policies, I immediately begin to think about the political impact. The political impact of implementing a mentoring program and racial affinity groups will come down to how policymakers view the impact of these programs on education. Research has proven that high-quality mentoring programs, when implemented well, can increase retention and teacher effectiveness and improve student learning. It will require policymakers to have a great understanding of the “why.” Why is it important for Black and Latinx teachers to have mentoring specifically? Why is it important for Black and Latinx

teachers to have a separate PLC just for them? It will also be necessary for all policymakers to understand how these programs will, in turn, help improve our students' educational experience.

In Montana, Rep. Melissa Romano sponsors House Bill 455, a bill for a mentoring program for new teachers in the state. The funds from this bill will allow new teachers to be matched with peers across the state with more experience teaching in their subject. The bill will use one million dollars annually for the next four years. Romano states:

Well-designed mentor programs help beginning teachers stay in the profession at much higher rates. In addition, mentee teachers also show accelerated professional growth and improved student learning. I believe that Montana has worked very strategically and continues to work strategically to recruit teachers. We have an opportunity with this bill to make sure that when once we have recruited our teachers and they begin their careers, they have a strong systematic support that they can go to and rely on. (Smith, 2023)

As of 2012, there are at least 27 states that require some form of mentoring for all teachers. Amongst the 27 are Colorado and Massachusetts, which both require their new teachers to have successfully completed a teacher induction program, which includes mentoring, as a requirement to obtain their professional license (Potemski and Matlach, 2014). Just like Montana, the state of Illinois has recognized the importance of induction programs, which include mentoring and has provided funds for grants for schools to apply for. Since 2012, the state of Illinois has provided funds to districts; the political ties to the grants are which schools have been given the grants? When looking into providing money, it is essential that policymakers have an equitable approach to how schools will receive these funds.

Currently, in Illinois, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has adopted affinity groups as part of its three-year strategic plan to provide support with retention. While ISBE has

adopted affinity groups, according to an article in Education Week by Eesha Pendharkar, there have been four complaints and a federal lawsuit against school districts for offering affinity groups. A parent group called Defending Education has filed these suits, claiming that these groups violate the Civil Rights Act and the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. It will be necessary for policymakers to take on groups such as these and support the purpose of affinity groups. A purpose that includes creating a community within a school for those Black and Latinx teachers who feel isolated and highly outnumbered by their White peers.

Legal Analysis

When analyzing the legal ramifications that would occur when implementing a mentoring program and affinity PLC groups for Black and Latinx teachers, it is crucial that school districts abide by union contracts. When mentors are choosing to serve in the role, it is vital that a well-thought-out plan is created for the selection process. Failure to do so may open districts to grievances for choosing candidates who may not be qualified. The other legal pitfall that can possibly occur if not careful is mentoring sessions being used as evaluatives. As for legal analysis for affinity groups, it is crucial that the purpose is outlined and very specific as to the why. Districts should be prepared to address the concerns that staff members who are not Black and Latinx want to join. Failure to address and plan for this can be a downfall for the district, potentially prohibiting the groups from coming together.

Moral and Ethical Analysis

Creating a mentoring program for all new teachers, especially with Black and Latinx, to help retain and create affinity PLC groups align morally and ethically. Implementing these strategies is a way of meeting the needs of all students. It is one of the many solutions that can

be used to correct the lack of diversity in Education. Addressing a need for the support of a student population that is growing at a rapid pace is not only ethical but also moral. The Board vs. Brown decision was made due to what many felt was a moral and ethical responsibility for lawmakers. Providing a mentoring program and affinity PLC groups aligns with that landmark decision.

Conclusion

The purpose of this program evaluation was to explore and identify the needs of Black and Latinx teachers. The goal was to identify the importance of students having access to teachers who shared a common background and the results that came from having that access. Through a plethora of literature, research on my own, and personal career experiences, the results were all conclusive that Black and Latinx teachers are not only needed but are required to improve the attendance, academic, discipline, and social and emotional aspects of our students of color. U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona said it best, “To Raise the Bar for learning conditions in our schools, we must make sure every student in every community has equitable access to outstanding educators who represent the diversity of the communities they serve and are well-supported, well-prepared, and fully empowered to lead in the classroom.”

The research that has gone forth has been a compilation of program evaluations, policy recommendations, and a deep dive into analyzing solutions that will help the problem of the lack of diversity in education. By highlighting the importance and benefits that will be provided to our students by retaining and recruiting Black and Latinx teachers, I hope this study can serve as a guide to my district and districts across the country.

Appendix A: Human Resource Interview Questions

1. What is your role in the district?
2. How many years of experience do you have in this role?
3. Tell me about your recruitment process.
4. What is your retention rate for Black and Latinx teachers? White teachers?
5. Do you have any programs to attract Black and Latinx teachers? To retain Black and Latinx teachers?
6. Are these programs successful? Why or why not?
7. Why are teachers leaving your district?
8. What programs do you have to support Black and Latinx teachers?

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Administration

1. What is your role in the district?
2. How many years of experience do you have in this role?
3. What role do you play in hiring and releasing teachers in your building?
4. Do you provide additional support for your Black and Latinx teachers in your building? Why or why not?
5. To what extent does teacher diversity impact or influence Black and Latinx students' educational success?
6. To what extent does culturally relevant pedagogy inform professional development opportunities that assist in building teacher efficacy and capacity?
7. How do district/you leaders reflect on opportunity gaps that impede student achievement using insights gleaned from professional development efforts and teacher feedback?
8. How can district leadership enact policies that support building leaders and teachers efforts to implement culturally responsive programs and structures?
9. What suggestions, if any, do you have for attracting Black and Latinx teachers?
10. What suggestions do you have for helping Caucasian teachers teach black and brown students?

Appendix C: Interview Questions for Teachers

1. How many years have you been a teacher? How long in this district?
2. What do you teach?
3. Tell me about the climate of your building.
4. What is the racial breakdown of your class? teachers?
5. Do you feel that your administration supports you in the building? At the district level?
Why or why not?
6. In what ways do you feel you need more support?
7. How do you meet your professional development needs?
8. Do you see a difference in academic achievement between students of color and white students?
9. Based on the makeup of your class, do you provide any different instruction to meet the needs of your students of color?
10. How do you meet the social and disciplinary needs of your students of color?
11. Do you notice a difference in behavior with your students of color? If so, what?
12. Do you feel there is a closer bond when you teach students who look like you? Why or why not?
13. What do you feel you provide for students who look like you?
14. Do you feel there is a benefit to teaching students who look like you vs. those who do not? If so, what is that benefit?
15. What suggestions, if any, do you have that will assist with attracting teachers of color?
Retaining teachers of color?

Appendix D: Email to Administration (Principals and Human Resources)

I am a doctoral student at National Louis University. I am conducting research titled "Addressing the Importance of Recruiting and Retaining Black and Latinx Teachers: Strategies Designed to Diversify the Teacher Pipeline." The purpose of this letter is to seek your participation in this study. The research will begin in October 2022. This study aims to understand the impact that teachers of color can have on students of color and strategies that can be used to recruit and retain teachers of color. Your honest feedback will help determine what strategies have been successful and possible new strategies that can be implemented.

Your participation in this study will take no longer than 1 hour through one semi-structured interview. Interviews will be voice-recorded, and participants may view and have final approval on the interview transcripts content by request.

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without any bias or penalty. Your identity will only be known to me as the interviewer throughout this study. However, I will utilize pseudonyms in all data collection and dissertation writing to ensure your anonymity. The research results may be published and potentially used to inform policy. Identities of the participants will remain anonymous (data will be reported anonymously and bear no identifiers that could connect data to individual participants). All data will be collected and kept in a password-protected or lock and key location that only I will have access to. Three years after data collection is complete, all files and folders will be destroyed.

Please consider sharing your experiences through this interview process. Your opinion is valuable.

Reach out to me via email or phone at [REDACTED] to confirm your interest in participating. I will then provide you with a consent form.

Thank you for your consideration,
Shavon Pittman
[REDACTED]

Appendix E: Email to Teachers

I am a doctoral student at National Louis University. I am conducting research titled "Addressing the Importance of Recruiting and Retaining Black and Latinx Teachers: Strategies Designed to Diversify the Teacher Pipeline." The purpose of this letter is to seek your participation in this study. The research will begin in October 2022. This study aims to understand the impact that teachers of color can have on students of color and strategies that can be used to recruit and retain teachers of color. Your honest feedback will help determine what strategies have been successful and possible new strategies that can be implemented. Your honest feedback will help determine what strategies have been successful and possible new strategies that can be implemented.

Your participation in this study will include one interview and no more than three observations of your teaching. The interviews will be semi-structured and should last no longer than one hour. Interviews will be voice-recorded, and participants may view and have final approval on the interview transcripts content by request. All observations will be scheduled in advance with the participant. Each observation will last no longer than 45 minutes.

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without any bias or penalty. Your identity will remain anonymous. The research results may be published and potentially used to inform policy. All data will be collected and kept in a password-protected or lock-and-key location that only I will have access to. Three years after data collection is complete, all files and folders will be destroyed.

Please consider sharing your experiences through this interview process. Your opinion is valuable.

Reach out to me via email or phone at [REDACTED] to confirm your interest in participating. I will then provide you with a consent form.

Thank you for your consideration,
Shavon Pittman
[REDACTED]

Appendix F: Informed Consent Observation Interview

My name is Shavon Pittman, and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University. I am asking you to participate in this study, “Addressing the Importance of Recruiting and Retaining Black and Latinx Teachers: Strategies Designed to Diversify the Teacher Pipeline,” occurring from 09-2022 to 09-2023. This study aims to identify the impact teachers of color have on students of color and how to recruit and retain teachers of color.

During this interview, I will ask questions that may or may not include your relationship with students, climate and culture in your building or district, teaching style, opinions on students' academics and behaviors, professional development, and recruitment and retention.

This form outlines the purpose of the study and describes your involvement and rights as a participant. By signing below, you are providing consent to participate in a research project conducted by Shavon Pittman, a doctoral student at National Louis University. Please understand that the purpose of the study is to explore the importance of recruiting and retaining Black and Latinx teachers and not to evaluate coaching or teaching.

Participation in this study will include one individual interview scheduled at your convenience and, for teachers, at least two classroom observations, but no more than three. All observations will also be scheduled at your convenience. The interview will last no longer than an hour and will include no more than ten questions. All interviews will be audio recorded, and participants may view and have final approval on the content of interview transcripts. By participating in this interview, you give consent for your answers to be used to guide this study and quoted. The research results may be published and potentially used to inform policy. Identities of the participants will remain anonymous (data will be reported anonymously and bear no identifiers that could connect data to individual participants).

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without penalty or bias. The results of this study may be published or otherwise reported at conferences and employed to inform recruiting and retention practices, but participants' identities will in no way be revealed. To ensure confidentiality, the researcher will secure recordings, transcripts, and field notes in a locked cabinet in her home office. Only Shavon Pittman will have access to data.

There are no anticipated risks or benefits no greater than that encountered in daily life. Further, the information gained from this study could be helpful to schools and districts looking to initiate or refine their recruiting and retention practices. All data will be destroyed three years after the conclusion of this study.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that the researcher has not addressed, you may contact the dissertation chair, Dr. Harrington Gibson: email:

[REDACTED] the co-chairs of NLU's Institutional Research Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth; email: [REDACTED] or Dr. Carla Sparks; email: [REDACTED] Co-chairs are located at National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

Upon request, you may receive summary results from this study and copies of any publications that may occur. Please email the researcher, Shavon Pittman, at [REDACTED] to request results from this study. In the event that you have questions or require additional

information, please contact the researcher, Shavon Pittman, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Thank you for your consideration.

By signing below, you consent to participate in research conducted by Shavon Pittman, a doctoral student at National Louis University, Lisle.

Consent:

I understand that by signing below, I am agreeing to participate in the study “Addressing the Importance of Recruiting and Retaining Black and Latinx Teachers: Strategies Designed to Diversify the Teacher Pipeline.”

My participation will consist of one interview lasting approximately 60 minutes and, for teachers only, 2-3 classroom observations. Both interviews and observations will be scheduled.

Participant’s Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher’s Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix G: Email to College Students

I am a doctoral student at National Louis University. I am conducting research titled "Addressing the Importance of Recruiting and Retaining Black and Latinx Teachers: Strategies Designed to Diversify the Teacher Pipeline." The purpose of this letter is to seek your participation in this study. The research will begin in October 2022. This study aims to understand the impact that teachers of color can have on students of color and strategies that can be used to recruit and retain teachers of color. Your honest feedback will help determine the social impact.

Your participation in this study will include one interview. The interviews will be semi-structured and should last no longer than one hour. Interviews will be voice-recorded, and participants may view and have final approval on the interview transcripts content by request. All observations will be scheduled in advance with the participant.

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without any bias or penalty. Your identity will remain anonymous. The research results may be published and potentially used to inform policy. All data will be collected and kept in a password-protected or lock and key location that only I will have access to. Three years after data collection is complete, all files and folders will be destroyed.

Please consider sharing your experiences through this interview process. Your opinion is valuable.

Reach out to me via email or phone at [REDACTED] to confirm your interest in participating. I will then provide you with a consent form.

Thank you for your consideration,
Shavon Pittman

[REDACTED]

Appendix H: Interview Questions for College Students

1. What year did you graduate?
2. What is your nationality?
3. How would you describe your school's student demographics?
4. How many teachers were Black or Latinx in elementary and high school?
5. Do you feel there was a difference in the teachers who looked like you? If so, what differences did you notice? Academically and socially?
6. If you had never had a teacher of your same background, would it have made a difference if you did? If so, what?
7. What type of grades did you have in elementary school? In high school?
8. After graduation, did you or are you attending college? If so, where?
9. Describe your current school's student demographics.
10. As a college student, how many of your teachers are Black or Latinx?
11. Did your teachers play a role in the college you chose?
12. What is your current major?
13. Did you ever think of a career in education? Why or why not?
14. Is there anything you would like to share about the importance or lack of importance of having Black or Latinx teachers?

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