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NEW STUDY: BUILDING A TRULY DIVERSE TEACHER WORKFORCE WILL TAKE MANY DECADES--EVEN WITH ALL HANDS ON DECK

Researchers find that a teacher workforce that reflects the diversity of the student population is going to require exceptionally ambitious efforts, taking far longer than anyone acknowledges.

Racial parity is not possible by relying solely on school districts to recruit more minority teachers.

Washington DC — A study released today by the Brookings Institution shows that achieving genuine racial parity between public school teachers, whose minority representation constitutes 18 percent of the workforce, and public school students, whose minority representation has increased to 50 percent, will be incredibly difficult, requiring an additional 300,000 black teachers and over 600,000 Hispanic teachers.

This study, ***High Hopes and Harsh Realities: The Real Challenges to Building a Diverse Workforce***, focuses on the four main problems that contribute to the dearth of minority teachers: lower retention rates for minority teachers, lower hiring rates, fewer minorities interested in pursuing teaching, and lower college graduation rates. The co-authors of the report, researchers from the National Council on Teacher Quality and the Brookings Institution, use data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Center for Education Statistics, and other sources to build a unique teacher workforce model. This model answers the questions of how our teacher workforce would change if the nation increased the rates of minority adults who (1) completed college, (2) pursued education degrees and certification, (3) were hired into teaching positions, and (4) remained in teaching positions, so that the minority rates were equivalent to those of white adults.

“Clearly, our workforce of teachers is nowhere near as diverse as the students they now serve and, even more worrisome, the gap is projected to grow even larger in the decades to come,” said Kate Walsh, President of the National Council on Teacher Quality. “Building a diverse teacher workforce is important for many reasons, but we need a reality check on our current expectations, expectations that rest too much on the shoulders of school districts’ HR offices. They’re being pressured to recruit candidates who just don’t exist and also to hire minority teachers regardless of qualifications. If we are serious about achieving diversity, we need all hands on deck, including higher education, and a long-term strategy. We also have to make

teaching a viable option for talented minority candidates who often carry significant student loans and who have so many other more lucrative and higher status options available to them.”

Why is a diverse teaching force important? While a teacher’s race or ethnicity is not the most important factor in whether she effectively teaches her students, it does play a meaningful role. Research finds that same-race teachers tend to hold their students to higher expectations and recommend minority students for gifted and talented programs at higher rates, among other differences.

The report finds that if the current rates of college completion, pursuit of teaching careers, hiring, and retention stay the same, the diversity gap of 9 percentage points between black teachers and black students will fail to improve even looking as far ahead as the year 2060, while the 18 percentage point gap between Hispanic teachers and Hispanic students will actually increase by 4 percentage points.

The findings, asserts co-author Michael Hansen, Senior Fellow and Director of the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution, “should serve as a wakeup call to any group invested in this issue. Researchers, practitioners, and policy makers all agree that we could serve our nation’s students better with a more diverse workforce, but few acknowledge how big a problem this is or how long it might take to fix it.”

Key findings include:

- If schools started **retaining** the same proportion of black and Hispanic teachers as white teachers, the report projects that by 2060, the nation would still only reduce the diversity gap by 2 percentage points for black teachers and 0.6 points for Hispanic teachers.
- If districts successfully **hired** black and Hispanic teachers at the same rate as they currently do white teachers, the report projects that by 2060, the nation will still only reduce the gap by less than 1 percentage point for each group.
- If more black and Hispanic candidates were persuaded to **enter teaching** either through traditional or alternative certification routes at the same current rate as white candidates, the report projects by 2060, the gap would still only be reduced by 2 points for black teachers but more significantly by 7 points for Hispanic teachers.
- If black and Hispanic college students **graduated** at the same current rate as white college students, the report projects by 2060 that the gap would only narrow by 1 point for black teachers and five points for Hispanic teachers.

However, by achieving success on all four of these strategies in combination, the authors calculate the nation could fully close the diversity gap for black teachers and students much earlier - by 2044. Closing the gap for Hispanic teachers and students remains a tremendous challenge due to continuing growth in the young Hispanic population, as projected by the U.S. Census. For Hispanic teachers, even by 2060, success with all four strategies narrows but does not close the gap, still leaving a 3 point gap.

These findings make three things quite clear:

1. Creating a teacher workforce that mirrors the diversity of our nation's students requires multi-pronged investments and more attention to teaching's broader appeal as a career choice;
2. The responsibility for these efforts cannot rest solely with school district recruitment efforts, particularly if it leads districts to overlook the importance of teacher quality; and,
3. Accomplishing parity is many years away, so we look to strategies we can put in place *now* to ensure that all teachers have the training to work towards greater educational equity.

To read the report, click [here](#).

About the National Council on Teacher Quality:

The National Council on Teacher Quality is a nonpartisan research and policy group committed to modernizing the teaching profession based on the belief that all children deserve effective teachers. We recognize that it is not teachers who bear responsibility for their profession's many challenges, but the institutions with the greatest authority and influence over teachers. To that end we work to achieve fundamental changes in the policy and practices of teacher preparation programs, school districts, state governments, and teachers unions. Our [Board of Directors](#) and [Advisory Board](#) come from a broad range of backgrounds and perspectives, and they all believe that policy changes are overdue in the recruitment and retention of teachers. More information about NCTQ can be found on our website, www.nctq.org.