

# Making the Case for Teacher Diversity

## IN ILLINOIS

ABOUT 52% OF ILLINOIS STUDENTS ARE CHILDREN OF COLOR. However, only 18% of teachers are people of color. Research shows that all students, regardless of race or ethnicity, [benefit](#) socially, emotionally, and academically from a diverse teacher workforce. Yet, teachers of color are more likely to [experience burnout](#) and [leave the profession](#) at higher rates than their White peers.

Amid rising censorship efforts, teacher shortages, and declines in enrollment to teacher preparation programs, state leaders must find effective ways to diversify their educator workforce and boost student outcomes by recruiting, supporting, and retaining more educators of color.

### 5 State Policies

To increase the racial diversity of the educator workforce, state leaders must create the right policy conditions to support educator preparation programs, districts, and schools in their efforts to recruit and retain teachers of color. The following shows Illinois' ratings in the five policy recommendations from Ed Trust's [Policy Scan Report](#) to diversify the teacher workforce:

1. Make educator diversity data visible and actionable to stakeholders
2. Set clear goals at the state and district level to increase student access to diverse educators
3. Invest in educator preparation programs to increase enrollment and improve the preparation of teachers of color
4. Target resources to districts and schools to support efforts to intentionally recruit and hire a diverse teaching workforce
5. Invest in efforts to retain teachers of color that include improving working conditions and providing opportunities for personal and professional growth for teachers of color

#### RATING SCALE



Meets all or most of the requirements within the goal



Meets some of the requirements within the goal



Meets one or no requirements within the goal

### State Context

Illinois' [Ed Trust Educator Diversity Profile](#) highlights the following data from the 2018-19 school year:

- Black students make up 17% of the student population, while Black teachers make up 6% of the teacher workforce
- Latino students make up 26% of the student population, while Latino teachers make up less than 10% of the teacher workforce

Illinois has recently increased investments in two main programs to support current and prospective educators of color. The state passed legislation to increase the scholarship ceiling in the Minority Teachers of Illinois program from \$5,000 per candidate of color to \$7,500 per candidate and expanded the program to include bilingual candidates. The state also invested

\$2 million to create [affinity groups for educators of color](#), which will include opportunities to build community and develop professionally. These investments in addition to updating their preparation program data dashboard and requiring all teacher preparation programs to create plans that diversify their candidate enrollment starting in 2022-23 are high-leverage solutions that should help increase the diversity of the workforce.

## State Action Plan

---

In July 2022, more than 100 educators of color, advocates, and leaders of national organizations gathered in Philadelphia for a convening, “Building a Movement: Creating and Sustaining a Diverse Educator Workforce,” hosted by Ed Trust and the Center for Black Educator Development (CBED). The convening leveraged research and policy recommendations from Ed Trust, including [state educator diversity briefs](#) in each state that include data and investments in policies that increase the diversity of the educator workforce. An Illinois team of educators of color attended and developed the three policy recommendations outlined below:

### **POLICY LEVER 1: Invest in efforts to retain teachers of color that improve working conditions and provide opportunities for personal and professional growth**

---

**Proposed Solution:** Build out the infrastructure for 40 or more affinity groups across Illinois to support educators of color; collect data on their effectiveness and expand practices in other districts in the state, including creating a community of practice with affinity group leaders and a website with promising practices and lessons learned.

**Example:** Minnesota’s \$6 million investment in [2022](#) and [2023](#) for districts to develop affinity groups and other retention strategies that prioritize teachers of color.

### **POLICY LEVER 2: Set clear goals at the state, district, and preparation level to increase educator diversity**

---

**Proposed Solution:** Set a statewide goal through the Diverse and Learner Ready Teachers (DLRT) work that is up to date and that districts can align with and report progress against — and possibly use affinity groups to help set district goals and identify strategies to accomplish their targets.

**Example:** [Arkansas](#) posted a clear, numeric goal to increase the number of teachers of color in public schools by 25 percent by 2025 on the state website and requires all districts to create and post on its website a Teacher and Administrator Recruitment and Retention plan to increase the diversity of the teacher workforce.

### **POLICY LEVER 3: Invest in educator preparation programs to increase enrollment and improve the preparation of teachers of color**

---

**Proposed Solution:** Increase funding for the scholarship program for teachers of color, including providing debt relief for educators of color in Illinois teacher preparation programs.

**Example:** Florida [developed a fund specifically for teachers of color](#) to receive annual scholarships of \$4,000 in their junior or senior years who are enrolled in a teacher education program at one of the state’s participating institutions.

When creating and implementing policies and practices that affect classrooms, it’s imperative that students and teachers have a permanent seat at the decision-making table. These recommendations were created by teachers of color to advance policy changes that affect teachers of color in Illinois. State leaders must continue to center the voices and stories of teachers of color and their students. Teachers of color are ready to act; they just need an opportunity to be heard.