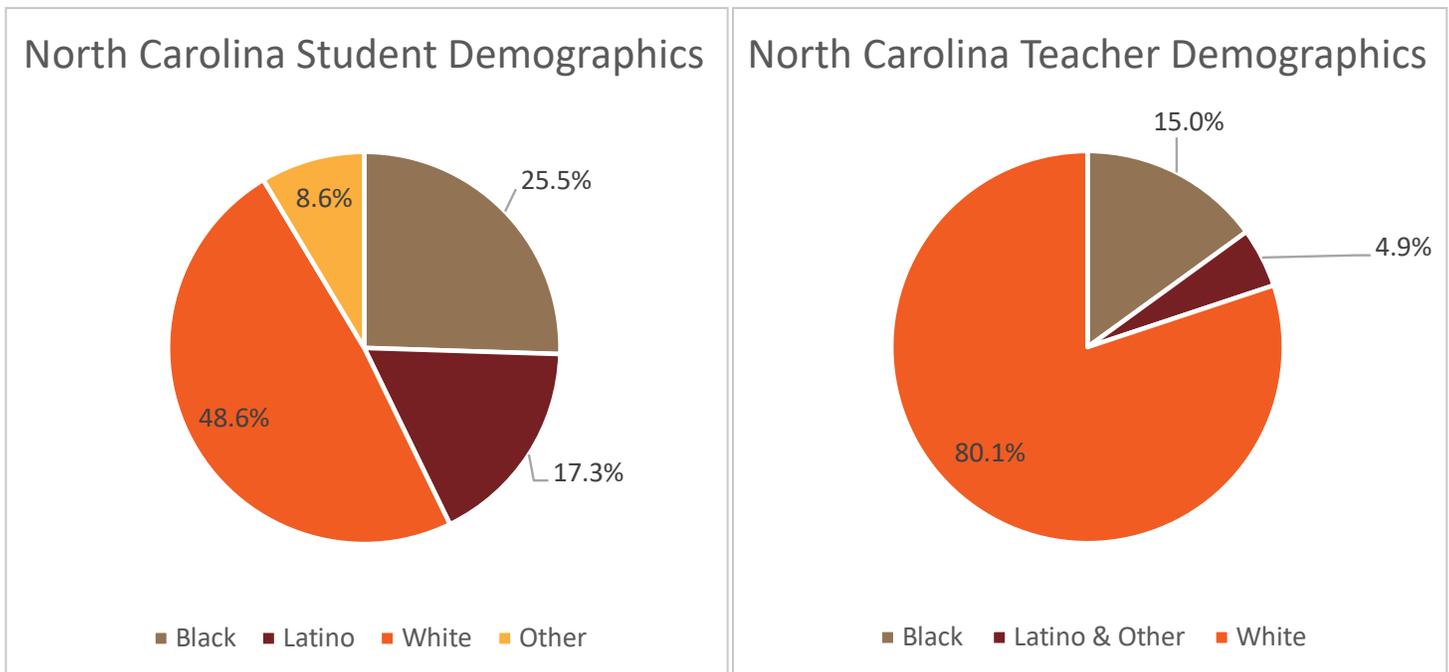# Understanding the Shortage of Teachers of Color in North Carolina

About 43 percent of North Carolina K-12 public school students are Black or Latino, but only 20 percent of teachers are non-White. As a result, students of all backgrounds miss out on the many academic and social-emotional benefits of a racially and ethnically diverse teacher workforce. The data are stark: 11 school districts in the state have no Latino teachers in their schools and eight have no Black teachers. One district has no teachers of color at all.[1]

North Carolina Student Demographics

- 25.5%
- 8.6%
- 48.6%
- 17.3%

■ Black ■ Latino ■ White ■ Other

North Carolina Teacher Demographics

- 15.0%
- 4.9%
- 80.1%

■ Black ■ Latino & Other ■ White

All students benefit from having at least one teacher of color.[2] Increasing teacher diversity can:

- **Promote positive models of leadership:** Schools staffed by leaders and teachers of color expose students to positive role models and counteract negative stereotypes that misrepresent people of color**.**[3]

- **Improve classroom experiences:** Students, regardless of race, express favorable perceptions of the abilities of teachers of color to captivate their attention and clarify information.[4]

And the benefits of teacher diversity can be especially important for students of color. It can:

- **Help to close achievement gaps:** When students of color have a teacher of the same race, they tend to do better academically,[5] and they are more likely to graduate from high school and go on to a four-year college.[6] For example, Black students are 13 percent more likely to enroll in college if they had one Black teacher by third grade, and 32 percent more likely to go to college if they had two Black teachers.[7]

- **Foster a positive school climate and high expectations for students of different races:** Teachers of color are more likely than White teachers to refer students of color to gifted and talented programs[8] and have high expectations for students of color.[9] Students of color also report having more positive school experiences when they have a teacher of color.[10] Teachers of color are also less likely to use exclusionary discipline on students of color.[11]

There are too few teachers of color in schools throughout North Carolina, including urban, rural, and suburban parts of the state.

- In Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools, there are six White students for every White teacher, whereas there are 21 Black students for every Black teacher, and 169 Latino students for every Latino teacher.

- In Asheville City Schools, there are nine White students for every White teacher, whereas there are 56 Black students for every Black teacher, and 52 Latino students for every Latino teacher.

- In Wake County Schools, there are nine White students for every White teacher, whereas there are 25 Black students for every Black teacher, and 100 Latino students for every Latino teacher.

- In New Hanover County Schools, there are 10 White students for every White teacher, whereas there are 44 Black students for every Black teacher, and 117 Latino students for every Latino teacher.[12]

What can stakeholders do to increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the teaching workforce?[13]

We know that state, district, and school leaders can and should be taking action to improve teacher diversity throughout the pipeline — via preparation, certification, recruitment and retention strategies, as well as support and development programs, and opportunities to grow and lead in the classroom.

Legislators and other state and local policymakers should:

- Expand financial support — including loan forgiveness, service scholarships, loan repayment incentives, and relocation incentives — for teacher candidates.

- Fund programs to help create a pipeline of bilingual teachers.

- Reduce unnecessary barriers to obtaining a teaching credential, including ensuring that assessments used in teacher credentialing are not racially or culturally biased.[14]

- Collect and disaggregate data (by race and ethnicity) to understand teacher diversity (by certification area, geography, district, and school) and teacher experiences, including how they are prepared, supported, developed, and why they leave or stay.

- Create state data systems that monitor and report the racial diversity of enrollees in teacher (and principal) preparation programs by certification area, as well as those who complete the programs.

- Invest in the recruitment, preparation, and development of strong leaders by using Title II's optional 3 percent leadership set-aside funds, which should improve school teaching conditions that play a role in retention of teachers of color.[15]

District leaders, school leaders, and teacher leaders should:

- Create and fund "grow-your-own" pathways into the teaching profession for candidates from untapped sources (e.g., local high schools, paraprofessionals, after-school staff, youth development workers, etc.) who are likely to reflect the student population and are already dedicated to serving students of color.

- Partner with teacher preparation programs, particularly at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and minority serving institutions (MSIs), to recruit excellent teachers who reflect the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the students and the community.

- Identify and rectify racial bias in hiring practices and in interactions among educators through professional development and ongoing training in cultural competence, racial equity, and unconscious bias.

- Provide financial compensation, time during the workday, and or promotional opportunities for the additional work and responsibilities that many teachers of color are often asked to take on outside the classroom (e.g., Latino teachers are often asked to serve as translators).

- Make intentional efforts to diversify leadership opportunities (e.g., district advisory committees, opportunities to teach advanced courses, opportunities to mentor new teachers, etc.).

- Ensure that there is a culturally inclusive school climate that values the unique experiences and voices of teachers of color.

- Create support networks for teachers of color that provide mentorship, camaraderie, and professional development.[16]

- Survey and disaggregate data on current and outgoing teachers to better understand their experiences in schools, what motivates them to stay, and their reasons for leaving the school or profession.

- Be thoughtful about how teachers of color are hired, assigned, and inducted into schools across districts by using cohort models—programs that connect teachers of color working in different schools to decrease isolation.

Student leaders, parent leaders, and other community leaders should:

- Urge school, district, and state leaders to take the kinds of actions listed above to recruit and retain more teachers of color and ask them to document these commitments in their school and district plans.

- Build momentum for action by telling other students, families, and community members about the academic and social-emotional benefits that teachers of color bring to school and about their experiences with teacher diversity.

- Ensure that policymakers are making data on teacher diversity and retention easily accessible, tracking it to see if it's moving in the right direction, and changing course based on real-time outcomes.

For Further Reading:

- "Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color" (Learning Policy Institute)

- "Lessons for Teacher Education: The Role of Critical Professional Development in Teacher of Color Retention" (*Journal of Teacher Education*)

- "Exploring the Boundary-Heightening Experiences of Black Male Teachers: Lessons for Teacher Education Programs" (*Journal of Teacher Education*)

- "Voices From the Classroom: A Survey of America's Educators" (Educators For Excellence)

- "Through Our Eyes: Perspectives and Reflections From Black Teachers" (The Education Trust)

- "Our Stories, Our Struggles, Our Strength: Perspectives and Reflections From Latino Teachers" (The Education Trust)

- "Review of State Policies on Teacher Induction" (New Teacher Center)

- "Retaining Black Teachers: An Examination of Black Female Teachers' Intentions to Remain in K-12 Classrooms" (*Equity & Excellence in Education*)

- "National Study on Union-Management Partnerships and Educator Collaboration in US Public Schools" (Collaborative School Leadership Initiative)

Endnotes

1 The Education Trust analysis of 2016-2017, district-level North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Teacher and Student Demographic data.

2 Amy Stuart Wells, Lauren Fox, and Diana Cordova-Cobo, "How Racially Diverse Schools and Classrooms Can Benefit All Students" (New York, NY: The Century Foundation, Feb. 2016), https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/production.tcf.org/app/uploads/2016/02/09142501/HowRaciallyDiverse_AmyStuartWells-11.pdf.

3 U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service, "The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce," (Washington, D.C., 2016).

4 Hua-Yu Sebastian Cherng and Peter F. Halpin, "The Importance of Minority Teachers: Student Perceptions of Minority versus White Teachers," *Educational Researcher* 45, no. 7 (Oct. 2016): 407-420. This study also shows that students perceive Black teachers as holding students to higher academic standards and being more supportive of student efforts than White teachers.

5 Anna J. Egalite and Brian Kisida, "The Effects of Teacher Match on Students' Academic Perceptions and Attitudes," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 40, no. 1 (Mar. 2018): 59-81.

6 Seth Gershenson et al., "The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers" (Bonn, Germany: IZA Institute of Labor Economics, Mar. 2017), http://ftp.iza.org/dp10630.pdf.

7 Nicholas W. Papageorge, Seth Gershenson, and Kyung Min Kang, "Teacher Expectations Matter" (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, Nov. 2018), https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3282955.

8 Jason A. Grissom and Christopher Redding, "Discretion and Disproportionality: Explaining the Underrepresentation of High-Achieving Students of Color in Gifted Programs," (Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association, Jan.-Mar. 2016), https://news.vanderbilt.edu/files/Grissom_AERAOpen_GiftedStudents1.pdf.

9 Lindsay Fox, "Seeing Potential: The Effects of Student-Teacher Demographic Congruence on Teacher Expectations and Recommendations" (Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association, Jan.-Mar. 2016), http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2332858415623758.

10 Joel Mittleman, "What's in a Match? Disentangling the Significance of Teacher Race/Ethnicity," June 2016, https://ssrn.com/abstract=2796150.

11 Constance A. Lindsay and Cassandra M. D. Hart, "Teacher Race and School Discipline," *Education Next*, 17, no. 1 (Winter 2017): 72-78.

12 WRAL analysis of North Carolina Department of Education data, 2017-18 https://www.wral.com/nc-s-teacher-diversity-gap-where-are-the-black-and-brown-teachers/18129132/.

13 The work of a number of organizations and researchers has shaped our perspectives in these recommendations. For specific resources, see "For Further Reading" section.

14   For example, a study of the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) data found no disparities in pass rates between candidates of color and White candidates.

15 Desiree Carver-Thomas, "Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color," (Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, 2018).

16 For example, in Philadelphia there is the Black Male Educators of Color Fellowship which intends to bring in 1000 new Black male teachers by 2025. Also, in Montgomery County Public Schools (Maryland) the Bond Project pushes to recruit, retain, and develop men of color in classrooms through professional enrichment and mentoring.