



MINORITY TEACHERS IN CONNECTICUT

A Durational Shortage Area

TECHNICAL REPORT

STATE EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER

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MINORITY TEACHERS IN CONNECTICUT

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TECHNICAL REPORT

The purpose of this brief technical report is to succinctly delineate some of the issues and concerns outlined in the existing literature surrounding minority teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention. It provides data and information specific to the state of Connecticut to give the reader some context about the minority teacher pipeline in Connecticut.

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MINORITY TEACHERS IN CONNECTICUT

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TECHNICAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The low numbers of educators of color signify a major concern in teacher and leader preparation, recruitment, and retention across the country. Some progress has been made: from 1998 to 2008, nationally the number of minority teachers in the classroom nearly doubled, outpacing both the growth of students of color in the classroom and the growth of white teachers (Lenz, 2011). However, the lack of teacher diversity continues to be a problem in the field (Irvine & Fenwick, 2011) for a variety of reasons.

The minority teacher shortage has been framed as a civil rights issue and a major reason for the minority achievement gap and, subsequently, unequal occupational and life outcomes for disadvantaged students (Ingersoll & May, 2011). “There is a growing consensus among researchers and educators that the single most important factor in determining student performance is the quality of his or her teachers” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). The National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force (2004) noted that while teacher quality “has been accepted and internalized as a mantra for school reform, the imperative for diversity is often marginalized rather than accepted as central to the quality of education.” It is problematic that the teaching workforce does not match our student populations, especially in larger, urban school districts (Madkins, 2011).

The limited representation of teachers of color in large urban districts has implications for students, schools, and the public at large. Research indicates that disadvantaged students benefit academically and socially from having teachers with whom they can identify (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Assuming teachers are well trained and effective, if a diverse teacher force is racially and ethnically reflective of the students served, students of color and English language learners (ELLs) will see themselves in the professional realm and are more inspired to pursue higher education (Madkins, 2011).

2011-2012 Data

As the nation’s population and students have grown more diverse, the teaching force has grown more white (Ingersoll & May, 2011).

Racial and Ethnic Composition in American Public Schools, K-12

Figure 1: STUDENTS

Source: Bitterman, Gray & Goldring, 2013

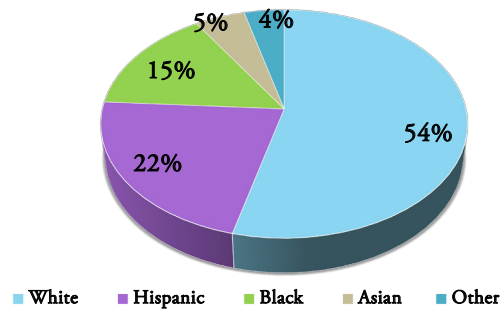


Figure 2: TEACHERS

Source: Goldring, Gray & Bitterman, 2013

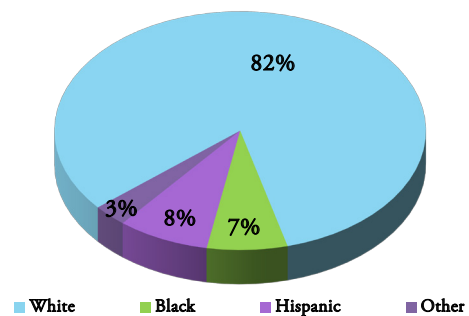
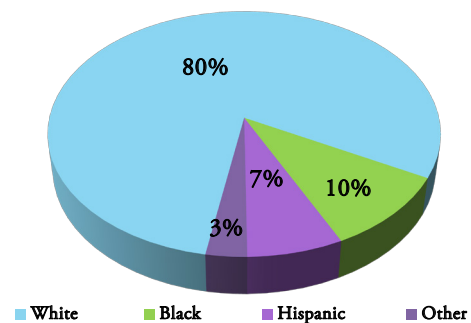


Figure 3: PRINCIPALS

Source: Bitterman, Goldring & Gray, 2013



Minority students are usually more successful in classrooms when their teachers reflect their racial or ethnic groups, but minority teachers are beneficial also to all students to help create an awareness of and appreciation for diverse populations (Sims, 2010). Among other findings, research suggests that teachers of color serve as role models for all students by giving them clear and concrete sense of what diversity in education – and society – look like (Bireda & Chait, 2011).

The benefit of minority educators extends well beyond the social domain. Specifically, as cited in Villegas and Irvine (2010), a quantitative study conducted by Meier, Stewart and England (1989) revealed that school districts with large populations of Black teachers had fewer Black students placed in special education classes, lower rates of suspension and expulsion for Black students, more Black students placed in gifted and talented programs, and higher graduation rates. The National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force (2004) report suggested that teachers of color can help close the academic achievement gap, particularly if they are skilled at culturally responsive instruction and hold high expectations of their students.

Shortages of minority teachers have been a big issue for the nation's schools for several decades, and continue to exist (Ingersoll & May, 2011). In the 2008-2009 school year, 34% of the nation's population was minority, and 41% of all elementary and secondary students were minority, but only 16.5% of all elementary and secondary teachers were minorities (Ingersoll & May, 2011). Data from the 2011 Schools and Staffing Survey (Bitterman, Gray, & Goldring, 2013) indicated that levels of diversity among students versus diversity among teachers differed by more than 25 percentage points in more than 20 states.

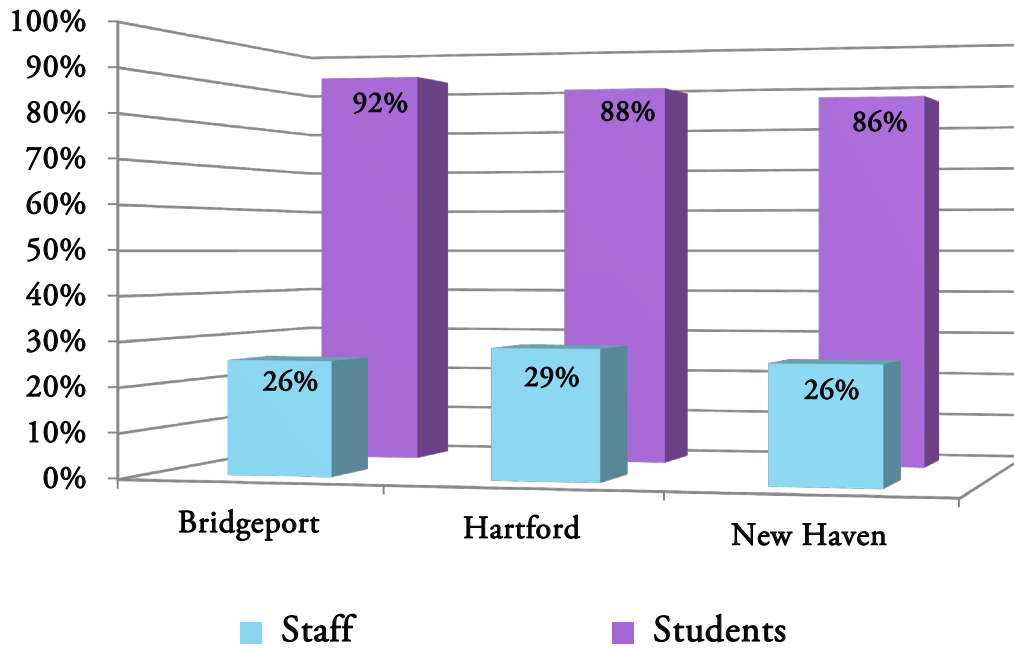
This trend is apparent in Connecticut as well. According to Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) data, in 2008, 35.5% of the state's total student body was comprised of minority students, while only 7.9% of the staff were minorities – a 27.6% difference. This gap only widened in 2010-2011, as the minority student population increased (i.e., 36.3%) while the minority staff percentage remained the same.



Figure 4: 2010-2011 Data

Percentage of Minority Students and Minority Staff in Connecticut's Largest Urban Districts

Source: Connecticut State Department of Education, CEDaR



The contrast becomes more apparent when examining the three largest urban districts within the state. For example, in the New Haven school district, minority students consist of almost 86% of the student population while staff is only 26% minority. This 60 percentage-point difference between minority students and minority staff is particularly interesting because minority teachers are two to three times more likely than white teachers to work in public schools serving high-poverty/high-minority, urban communities, where teacher turnover is greater (Allen, 2005; Ingersoll & May, 2011).



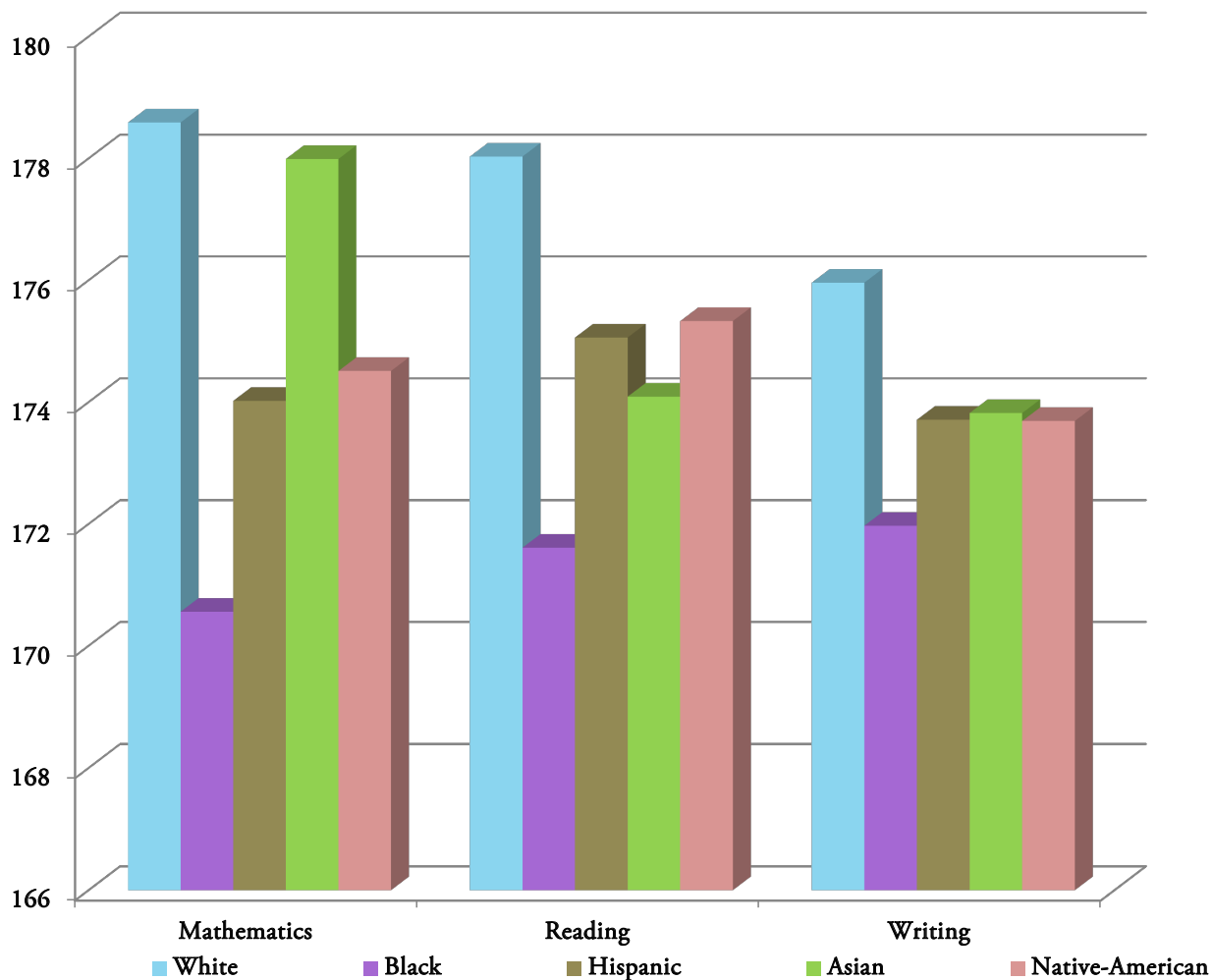
As Collins and Hunter-Davis (2013) write, “Whether the issues are centered around the attractiveness of the profession due to low salaries, low societal appreciation of teachers, or the struggle of igniting student engagement, the dilemma of preparing, acquiring, and maintaining a diverse teaching population is compounding, and there is a scarceness of research that examines this challenge.” Below, this issue is addressed by examining what prevents Black and Hispanic college students from successfully joining the teaching profession.

PRE-SERVICE PREPARATION

When minority candidates seek to enter teaching preparation programs, they encounter challenges – in particular, teaching entry tests, on which minority candidates have lower pass rates than whites (Ingersoll & May, 2011). The Educational Testing Service found significant differences in average scores between test takers of different racial/ethnic subgroups, with Black and Hispanic test takers scoring lower than their white counterparts on the reading, mathematics, and writing sections of the Praxis I test (Tyler, 2011). The following table displays the average means and difference in standard deviations between white test takers and their minority counterparts.

Figure 5: Average Praxis I Test Results

Source: Tyler, 2011



These performance gaps persist with the Praxis II content area assessments as well. ETS (Tyler, 2011) examined the 12 highest volume assessments (i.e., Elementary Education: Content Knowledge, Middle School Mathematics, Principles of Learning and Teaching: Grades 7-12, etc.) on the Praxis II and again found significant differences among subgroups. To satisfy the requirements for highly qualified teacher status, educators must demonstrate competence in each core subject area that they teach. This competence is often represented by a passing score in content area assessments, such as those named previously. Thus, the different passing rates among subgroups have direct implications for how many minority teachers are able to attain highly qualified status.



Special Programs

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are among the primary places to train and recruit prospective minority teachers. These institutions, which collectively prepare more than half of all minority teachers, play a major role in preparing the next generation of effective minority teachers (USDE, 2011). Regrettably, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) rates HBCU teacher preparation programs as some the weakest in the country as measured by how well graduates perform on teacher certification exams like the Praxis – which, research shows, might be attributed to cultural bias (Valentine, 2012).

Fortunately, there are examples of how HBCUs can actively contribute to quality K-12 public education. For example, in Baltimore, Morgan State University created a free Science, Engineering, Math and Aerospace Academy (SEMAA) for students and their parents, while Coppin State University has helped create a public charter elementary and middle school (<http://rosemont.coppin.edu>) that allows Coppin State students to get real-time experience in communities that can benefit the most from the most well-trained teachers (Valentine, 2012). In Washington, D.C., the Howard University Middle School of Mathematics and Science, known as (MS)², is a public charter school committed to academic excellence, with a specific focus on mathematics and science (howard.edu/ms2). Florida A&M University's Developmental Research School was created to conduct research, demonstration, and evaluation of the management of teaching and learning (famudrs.org).

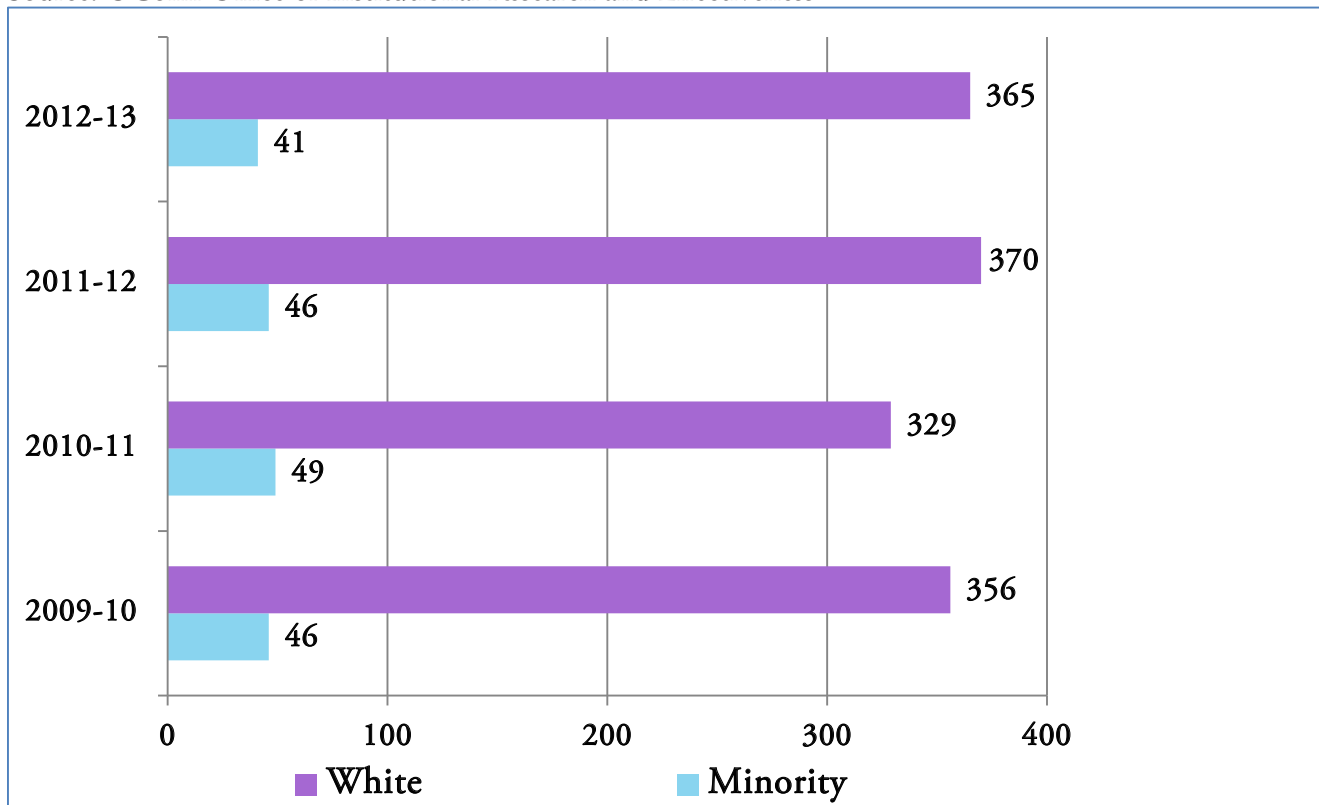
In order to mitigate poor passing rates, Connecticut’s RESC-Minority Teacher Recruitment Alliance offers a Praxis I Preparation Program to assist candidates with passing the exam, as well as financial assistance for registrants to attend the program (Connecticut RESC Minority Teacher Recruiting Alliance, 2012). Likewise, the grant-funded advising center at Central Connecticut State University’s School of Education & Professional Studies (CCSU-SEPS) “has 60 Praxis I and II study guides available for loan and can provide reimbursement for purchase of online tutorial materials[,]...offered 15 Praxis I review workshops covering each of the exams content areas, and offered 1-on-1 tutoring for the Praxis I exam for English language learners” (Central Connecticut State University, School of Education & Professional Studies, 2012).

PRE-SERVICE REPRESENTATION

According to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (2013), 82% of candidates who received bachelor’s degrees in education in 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 were white. “The study, which surveyed close to 700 colleges and universities that train just under two-thirds of new teachers, also found that few candidates graduate with credentials to teach math, science, special education, or English as a second language, all subjects that experts say are increasingly important to prepare students for jobs and to meet the demands of an increasingly diverse student population” (Rich, 2013). Even in programs that award teaching certificates to candidates who do not obtain full education degrees, the majority of these students are white.

The low number of pre-service candidates of color is reflected in Connecticut’s data as well. The University of Connecticut educates more than 30,000 students annually statewide (UConn Fact Sheet, 2012). Over the past four years, the teacher preparation program in UConn’s Neag School of Education averaged just over 400 students enrollees per year. An overwhelming percentage of these students are white. Figure 1 shows the number of white and minority (i.e., Black & Hispanic) students enrolled in the UConn teacher preparation program from 2009-2013.

Figure 6: Number of Students Enrolled at the University of Connecticut Teacher Preparation Program, 2013
 Source: UConn Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness





Connecticut's four state universities (Central, Southern, Eastern, and Western) collectively enroll more than 34,000 students (Connecticut State Colleges & Universities, 2013). In fall 2012, just over 3,300 students from these universities were enrolled in their respective teacher preparation programs. Again, the overwhelming majority of students are white (87%), while only a small percentage of these students are Black (5%) or Hispanic (5%) (Connecticut State Colleges & Universities, 2013).

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Overall, the data show that minority teachers' careers are less stable than those of white teachers (Ingersoll & May, 2011). Recent research on teacher recruitment and retention reveals that schools may be losing minority teachers just as they are pulling more into the classroom, with turnover rates for minority teachers being significantly higher than for their white counterparts (Bireda & Chait, 2011). Effectively recruiting minority teaching candidates from accredited teacher education programs is a critical first step in building a strong minority teacher pipeline to offset turnover.

Recruitment and retention must be supported with effective evidence-based strategies and supports. Teacher mentoring programs have been found to be an effective retention method as attrition rates are far more prevalent among beginning teachers (Allen, 2005).

In recent decades, numerous government and nongovernment organizations have implemented a variety of minority teacher recruitment programs and initiatives, including future educator programs in high schools, partnerships between community colleges and four-year teacher education programs, career ladders for paraprofessionals in schools, and alternative teacher certification programs to boost raw numbers (Ingersoll & May, 2011). For example, in Connecticut, the Minority Teacher Recruiting (RESC-MTR) Alliance "was established by statute of the State of Connecticut General Assembly and is a collaboration of the six Connecticut Regional Education Service Centers and the public school districts they serve.... The mission of the RESC-MTR Alliance is to assist Connecticut school districts to recruit, hire, develop, support and retain a racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse teaching and administrative workforce" (Connecticut RESC Minority Teacher Recruiting Alliance, 2012). Initiatives like these have been designed to bring minority teachers into schools serving predominantly minority student populations, often in low-income, urban school districts (Ingersoll & May, 2011).



Since 2009, the RESC-MTR's Accelerated Routes to Certification Scholarship program has awarded 45 tuition and book scholarships “to minority career changers attending state approved accelerated routes to certification teacher training programs” (Connecticut RESC Minority Teacher Recruiting Alliance, 2012).

In 2011-2012, CCSU-SEPS began to partner with New Britain High School's Teacher Cadet Academy, a program introducing the profession of teaching to the high school's diverse student body in order to build the recruitment pipeline by leading underrepresented students to their teacher preparation programs (Central Connecticut State University, School of Education & Professional Studies, 2012). Furthermore, there are additional opportunities for minorities to enter the teacher preparation programs with specialized scholarship programs such as the Alma Exley Scholarship and the Minority Teacher Incentive Grant, which underwrite expenses and loan repayment for full-time participation in undergraduate pre-service programs.

To counteract national trends that show poor, minority, and low-performing students are more likely to get the least-experienced and least-credentialed teachers, some districts are embracing federal initiatives such as the Teacher Incentive Fund (Carr, 2009), which supports performance-based teacher and principal compensation systems in high-need schools, primarily through grants to school districts and consortia of school districts.

Another strategy referenced in the literature for recruiting and retaining minorities in the teacher force is increasing the use of alternate route to certification programs. The Connecticut Council for Education Reform (2013) suggested that Connecticut increase the growth of Alternative Route to Certification (ARC) programs by allowing effectiveness measures to be substituted for the standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education standards.

“Nontraditional or alternative programs frequently appeared to recruit individuals whose characteristics differed from those in standard teacher education programs and sometimes produced higher retention rates than traditional programs” (Guarino et al., 2006).

ADDITIONAL SOLUTIONS

Martin (2011) noted that developing a successful minority teacher pipeline requires a multitude of elements, such as programs in middle and high school focused on changing students’ perception of teaching; developing strong partnerships with local community colleges and universities; assisting with test preparation and financial assistance for education majors; marketing alternate route programs to attract diverse populations; and providing opportunities for creativity and autonomy in the classroom as well as building a school culture that welcomes diverse staff.

Another strategy is to aggressively recruit minority teacher candidates specifically from minority-servicing institutions such as HBCUs. While the 105 HBCUs represent just 3 percent of the nation’s institutions of higher learning, they graduate nearly 20 percent of African Americans who earn undergraduate degrees (Valentine, 2012). Teach for America, for example, has relied heavily on HBCUs to seek talented minority teacher candidates (Lesesne, 2013).

To retain minority teachers, Carr (2009) found that intrinsic rewards may be particularly powerful for Black teachers, who value the opportunity to directly and positively impact young people. Alternatively, Elfers, Plecki, and Knapp (2006) found that support for professional learning through incentives and access to resources was particularly important in retaining teachers in schools with high rates of poverty.

Finally, Irvine and Fenwick (2011) recommend “developing a statewide strategy for eliminating racial disparities in pass rates on teacher licensure exams and advocate for the development of new assessment measures that do not maintain or exacerbate existing racial disparities,” adding that “with teacher shortages in every state and dwindling enrollments in teacher preparation programs, the nation can ill afford to use standardized tests to screen out individuals who have expressed an interest in becoming a teacher.”

CONCLUSION

The shortage of minority teachers has received considerable attention in recent years. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, in launching the department’s “Teach.gov” initiative, said he was “very concerned” that “our teachers don’t reflect the great diversity of our nation’s young people” (Bireda & Chait, 2011). Years earlier, a National Education Association (NEA) statement declared that “multiracial teaching staffs are essential to the operation of schools” (NEA, n.d.). The Center for American Progress has written that it is “not only a matter of a philosophical commitment to diversity,” but also that “increasing the number of *current* teachers of color may be instrumental to increasing the number of *future* teachers of color” (Bireda & Chait, 2011, italics added).

While districts often struggle to attract high-achieving candidates, recruiting and retaining minority teachers bring specific challenges, particularly in providing sufficient resources and support to teaching candidates (Bireda & Chait, 2011). The low numbers suggest that the teaching profession may not be able to continue to attract effective minority teachers in high-need schools without significant resources aimed at recruiting and retaining them (Irvine & Fenwick, 2011).

Though the literature offers some concrete recommendations about how to invest in attracting and retaining minority teachers, no method can guarantee success. Connecticut has implemented some promising strategies, and a heuristic approach would help stakeholders explore and evaluate the merits of the various strategies. A comprehensive appraisal of which strategies are most effective would be informative to next steps. Fortunately, the state’s commitment to closing the achievement gaps assures a continued focus on diversifying the teaching force to better reflect the entire student population.

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