EXPLORING EQUITY ISSUES:
Racial Parity: The Need for a Diverse Teacher Workforce

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PART I: WHAT WE KNOW

Currently, teachers of color make up approximately 18% of the United States' total teaching force (Camera, 2018; Digest of Education Statistics, 2014). Students of color make up 54% of the total student population (Digest of Education Statistics, 2017). For all students to succeed, we must achieve parity between our nation's teaching force and its diverse student population.

Dilworth and Coleman, writing on behalf of the National Education Association (NEA) in 2014, state:

> "A teaching force that represents the nation's racial, ethnic, and linguistic cultures and effectively incorporates this background and knowledge to enhance students' academic achievement is advantageous to the academic performance of students of all backgrounds, and for students of color specifically."

Thus, racial parity is part and parcel of a greater commitment to equity—equitable composition and cultural representation, equitable access to a high quality and effective education, and equitable learning outcomes for PK-12 students of color that have long been marginalized.

HOW STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM DIVERSE TEACHERS

Good teachers understand that positive academic outcomes result from a strong social and emotional foundation developed by classroom relationships between teacher and student and internalized by the learner. This is especially true for learners who have experienced limited success in school, struggled academically, or felt marginalized.

Teacher workforce parity advances the scope of cultural competence, belonging, and dignity needed to maximize the benefits of diversity in US schools. Data suggest that compared with their peers, teachers of color are more likely to have higher expectations of students of color, as measured by higher

numbers of referrals to gifted programs, for example (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Teachers of color are positioned to serve as role models. They are suited to confront issues of racism, serve as advocates and cultural brokers, and develop more trusting relationships with students who share the same or similar cultural background (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Furthermore, Cherng and Halpin (2016) note that students of all races are reported to hold more favorable perceptions of teachers of color compared to their White teachers, e.g., students believe non-White teachers hold higher academic standards and provide relevant support.

Research shows that teachers of color have a positive effect on students' executive function, sense of well-being, belongingness, and other attributes (sometimes referred to as passive benefits). Gershenson, Hart, Linday, and Papageorge (2017) researched students entering third grade and recorded their educational trajectories through senior year in high school. Their findings indicate that for Black male students exposed to at least one same-race teacher in grades 3 through 5, their long-run academic attainment increased, especially for low-income students. For both low-income Black male and female high school graduates, having at least one Black teacher in elementary school increased their postsecondary expectations to attend college. The findings further indicate a positive effect for reducing Black male dropout rates in response to having at least one Black teacher in grades 3 through 5.

Greater diversity of the teacher workforce leverages the opportunity for the advancement of cultural congruence between the school's curriculum and the lived experiences of students. The result is a culture of deep learning, a learning system that encourages learners to "develop their own visions about what it means to connect and flourish in their constantly emerging world, and equip them with the skills to pursue those visions" (Fullan and Langworthy, 2013).

This vantage of authentic and deep learning results from "cultural synchronicity," the shared cultural experiences between teachers and students (Irvine, 1988; Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Cultural synchronicity shapes the curricula, pedagogy, and school culture to allow historically underserved learners to unlock the merits of education in ways not possible before.

Taking its cue from research on the positive impact of teacher diversity on PK-12 student learning and development and on the overarching need to equitably address the changing demographics of the country's classrooms, many public and private entities have taken up the challenge to diversify the teacher pipeline. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) recently partnered with nine states to launch the Diverse and Learner-Ready Teachers Initiative to provide equitable learning for all students by ensuring all teachers are prepared to meet the needs of every learner in their classrooms. One action item is to build a diverse teacher workforce. CCSSO identified

several barriers. These are not mutually exclusive, nor germane only to the work of CCSSO, but reflect challenges faced by all involved in growing a diverse teacher workforce: cost of college and/or licensure, difficulties completing college, insufficient preparation, and challenging teaching conditions (CCSSO, 2018).

ADDRESS FINANCIAL OBSTACLES

Adopt service scholarship and loan forgiveness programs. Hansen, Quintero, & Feng (2018) conducted research on the correlation between financial incentives and teacher diversity. Their findings indicate that district loan forgiveness resulted in a nearly 4 percentage point increase in teachers of color hired. For example, the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program aimed to attract teachers for the fields of science, technology, and engineering, mathematics (STEM), and special education. The legislative-sponsored program offers up to $8,250 per year in forgivable loans to be paid back over 10 years (Stancill, 2017). From 1986 to 2015, the program recruited

nearly 11,000 new teachers, with an aim to attract at least 20 percent teacher aspirants from underrepresented populations (Public School Forum of North Carolina, 2016).

GROW YOUR OWN

Programs targeted at the development of local talents such as high school students, local employees like Paraprofessionals and Teacher Aides, and local community members are often referred to as "grow your own." The aim is to mobilize local resources. Many programs seek to meet the demand for qualified teachers in hard-to-fill areas with prospective teachers who know the communities they are to serve. According to a study by Reininger (2012), most participants are local, living within 20 miles of the high school they attended. Participants continue their training through district, state, and or university coursework to meet requirements for state teacher licensure.

For example, the Increase Teachers of Color Act created provisions to expand funding to "grow your own" programs throughout Minneapolis, as well as to continue the collaborative urban educator program (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.). The legislation increased service loan forgiveness from $1,000 to $2,000 annually and clarified the provision for signing bonuses to teachers of underrepresented groups via the Alternate Teacher Pay System. The specific short-term goals are to double the percentage of American Indian teachers in the state from 4 percent to 8 percent by 2020, and to increase the overall

number of ethnically diverse candidates in teacher preparation programs from 9 percent to 20 percent.

The Connecticut RESC Alliance (2011) reports on the High School Teacher Cadet Program of North Carolina as one of the most cited and replicated "grow your own" programs. Beginning in 1986, more than 60,000 students have participated in the program (Teacher Cadets, n.d.a). Participants include high school students. While the program seeks to recruit diverse candidates, the primary restrictions are the maintenance of a minimum 3.0 GPA, usefully complete coursework, field experience, and other assessments relevant to the profession of teaching. Data from the 2017-2018 cohort reveal a 32.6 percent participation rate among cadets of color (Teacher Cadets, n.d.b).

RECRUIT MEN OF COLOR
Several teacher recruitments targeting men of color, Black men in particular, have grown to earn prominence. Call Me Mister (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effectiveness Role Models) was established at Clemson University (South Carolina) in 2000. The program provides tuition assistance though loan forgiveness to freshmen men of color pursuing designated degrees leading to a teaching career. The program also provides academic supports, mentorship, and job placement assistance.

In 2015, New York City set a goal to recruit 1,000 additional male teachers of color by 2018. NYC Men Teach is a partnership between The Young Men's Initiative, the Department of Education, City University of New York, the Center for Economic Opportunity, and Teach for America. Based out of the City University of New York, the program offers financial incentives to participants, along with a metro card, a dedicated counselor, assistance with certification preparation and costs, and other benefits. All participants are required to attend a semester-long seminar focused on culturally-responsive education (City University of New York, n.d.).

THE FUTURE
Students begin to consider future professions more concretely in high school. In a pilot study of high school students of color from a New England metropolitan school district, students reported their perceptions on the value of teaching as a profession, as well as factors that would or would not make teaching an attractive profession for them (Easley, II., J., Moorehead, Gordon, Wickramasinghe, & Rosas, 2017). High school students indicated that working in a school among culturally diverse peers would make the teaching profession more attractive.

The status of teacher diversity and culturally astute school renewal today directly affects the teacher pipeline of tomorrow. We need to encourage these students to view teaching as an exciting and admirable goal. They are the future of the teacher workforce.

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