



Minorities Underrepresented in Teacher Ranks

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A recent report from the Center for American Progress and the National Education Association cast a light on an issue facing school boards across the Nation: the lack of teachers who are members of a minority.

The study concentrated on the issue across the country, but I also looked up the statistics in Connecticut. They showed that this is an issue here as well.

We want the best and brightest as our teachers: the most qualified, skilled and knowledgeable. As one of the CABE representatives on the Educator Preparation Advisory Council, we have spent many hours discussing what we want in our newest teachers. One of the characteristics is cultural sensitivity and the ability to work and experience teaching in the kind of schools that they will start in— rural, urban or suburban.

In *America's Leaky Pipeline for Teachers of Color: Getting More Teachers of Color into the Classroom*, Farah Z. Ahmad and Ulrich Boser stated that "There is a large demographic mismatch between students and teachers of color. This matters because students of color need teachers who not only set rigorous standards for them but teachers who also can provide models of professional success. Teachers of color have demonstrated success in increasing the academic achievement of students of similar backgrounds."

They noted that "fundamental constraints" are limiting the potential number of highly effective teachers who are of color. This is due to students of color having significantly lower college enrollment rates than white students; a relatively small number of students of color enrolling in teacher education programs each year; and teacher trainees who are of color scoring lower on licensure exams for teaching

careers.

Additionally, teachers of color leave the profession at much higher rates than their white peers, noting "a perceived lack of respect for teaching as a profession, lagging salary levels, and difficult working conditions."

The report had some national recommendations, but, for our reference, those for states and districts are more relevant:

- "Provide generous scholarship support to future teachers that are tied to the effectiveness of the training program and of the teacher candidate, especially those in five-year programs.
- Improve articulation relationships between two year and four-year post-secondary institutions, given the number of students of color at two-year schools.
- Attract the brightest, most resilient people of color into the teaching profession by changing the compensation packages so that teachers of color are paid comparable to other professions requiring similar knowledge, skills, and responsibilities.
- Support and encourage local and state efforts to attract and place effective teachers of color."

An Associated Press article stated that there were around 3.3 million teachers in the nation's public elementary and secondary schools in 2012, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. 82 percent are white, 8 percent Hispanic, 7 percent black and 2 percent Asian.

The State Department of Education's statistics state that in 2010-11, there were about 37,000 "General Education" teachers. Of these, 34,146 (around 85%) were white, 1,106 (3%) were African American and 1,263 (3%) were Hispanic. Our 554,000 public school students today are 319,100 (57%) white, black 70,600 (13%) and Hispanic 115,546 (20%).

As demographic trends indicate that the nation will

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have a minority majority in the not-too-distant future, it is critical that we ensure that we have teachers who are excellent role models for all of our students and, one can argue, for those of our students who are of color, in particular. There is no reason to believe that this will be different in Connecticut.

It is incumbent that we begin to take action to support not only current teachers who are of color, but also teacher candidates who are members of

minority groups.

The Center/NEA report is available at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/report/2014/05/04/88960/americas-leaky-pipeline-for-teachers-of-color/>

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