

CCSSO DLRT Teacher Pipeline Series:

What does Teacher Diversity and Culturally Responsive Practice have to do with ... RETENTION?

Introduction

In 2018, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) engaged nine states¹ in their Diverse and Learner-Ready Teachers (DLRT) Initiative. CCSSO also engaged a range of national organizations as collaborators to support the work of the DLRT states. One subset of national collaborators, the Communications and Advocacy Work Group², identified the need for developing a common language for policymakers around diverse teaching and learning. The group worked to address this need by developing two resources. First, they collaboratively assembled the following definitions for two key terms – teacher diversity and culturally responsive practice:

- Diversity can be defined as the sum of the ways that people are both alike and different. The dimensions of diversity include race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, language, culture, religion, mental and physical ability, class, and immigration status. **Teacher Diversity** refers to the representation of dimensions of diversity in the collective makeup or pool of individuals within the K-12 public school teacher workforce. The work of the CCSSO DLRT Initiative focuses specifically on increasing the *racial* diversity of the teacher workforce.^{3,4}
- **Culturally Responsive Practice** in the classroom refers to both: 1) the use of cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for all students; and, 2) the embodiment of attitudes and dispositions that empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The work of the CCSSO DLRT Initiative focuses specifically on increasing the culturally responsive practice *aptitude* of the teacher workforce.^{5,6,7}

Next, based on these definitions, group members developed a series of short papers that would address how these two terms relate to nine key aspects of the teacher pipeline: Accountability, Compensation, Data Systems, Induction and Mentoring, Preparation, Recruitment, Retention, Student Demographics, and Well-Rounded Education. These papers form a series that seeks to provide both language and rationale to state policymakers as they work to incorporate teacher diversity and culturally responsive practice in policy initiatives across the spectrum of teacher pipeline issues. The current paper specifically addresses the intersection of diversity with Retention.

What is retention? What is its role in the larger Teacher Pipeline?

States and districts are confronted with a complex teacher human capital challenge: how to effectively retain an excellent, diverse teaching workforce. Doing so is core to building and sustaining a high-quality teacher pipeline. Myriad reasons can influence why a teacher may decide to exit the profession, including low compensation, poor working conditions, ineffective school leadership, and insufficient support and professional development.⁸ Teacher turnover is costly, disruptive, and hurts student achievement. Thus, understanding and addressing the root cause issues of teacher turnover is a critical and urgent policy matter.

What does Teacher Diversity have to do with retention?

Research is clear that a diverse teacher workforce benefits all students.⁹ Yet, as the country becomes more racially diverse, the educator workforce has trended in the opposite direction.¹⁰ In response, states and districts have increased efforts to boost teacher diversity to better match the diverse student populations educators serve. Recruitment efforts to attract more minority teachers into the field have proven successful but have been undercut due to high churn rates of these same teachers, who tend to work in high-need schools where teacher turnover is higher.¹¹

What are some policies and practices that could help make Teacher Diversity an integral part of retention?

State, district and school-level policies targeting teacher recruitment - but not retention - contribute to a “revolving door of in-and-out recruits”.¹² To recruit minority teachers to the classroom and help ensure they stay, policy makers should consider providing scholarships to students enrolled in high-retention preparation programs and offer loan forgiveness to minority teachers or teachers in high-need districts and schools.¹³ State leaders could also require, and specifically fund, strong induction and ongoing professional development programs that respond to the unique needs and experiences of minority teachers.¹⁴

State supports and incentives to boost principal pipelines to recruit and retain effective principals in high-need schools can also be a high-impact policy lever to improve retention of minority teachers.¹⁵ Strong school leaders can foster equity-driven and supportive workplaces that can reduce minority teacher turnover.¹⁶ Examples of this include promoting inclusivity and ensuring diversity on school leadership teams.

What does Culturally Responsive Practice (CRP) have to do with teacher retention?

Given the changing demographics of school-aged students, all teachers, regardless of background, should be prepared and developed to demonstrate CRP principles. Well-prepared “learner-ready” teachers must, among other things, “understand the differing needs of their students, hold them to high expectations, and personalize learning to ensure each learner is challenged”.¹⁷ Teachers who fail to demonstrate CRP struggle to build important connections with their students.¹⁸ It is not surprising, then, that while white teacher retention is slightly higher than minority teacher retention overall, it is lower in schools with high-need populations.¹⁹

A growing body of research suggests that instruction may be more culturally relevant, and teacher expectations higher, when there is teacher-student racial alignment.²⁰ Improving minority teacher retention, then, might also contribute to improved CRP in diverse schools.

What are some policies and practices that could help make Culturally Responsive Practice (CRP) an integral part of teacher retention?

Because minority teachers are the exception, not the norm, in most classrooms, states must work to ensure more teachers, regardless of background, are better equipped to provide high quality instruction to diverse student bodies. State leaders should consider incorporating high standards for CRP in teacher preparation and then throughout the teacher career continuum.²¹

For example, states can require that teacher candidates receive culturally responsive pedagogy during their preparation, and then receive continued support in this practice through early induction and mentoring and ongoing professional development. School leaders, who help connect teachers with professional development opportunities, can support this work by ensuring that CRP principles are embedded in ongoing training and mentoring opportunities.²²

Where can I go to learn more?

- [America Needs More Teachers of Color and a More Selective Teaching Profession](#), Center for American Progress
- [High Hopes and Harsh Realities: The Real Challenges to Building a Diverse Workforce](#), Brookings Institute
- [Minority Teacher Recruitment, Employment, and Retention: 1987 to 2013](#), Learning Policy Institute

¹ The nine states initially engaged in CCSSO’s DLRT initiative were: Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, and New York.

² The national organizations represented in the Communications and Advocacy Work Group were: American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE), Center for American Progress (CAP), Data Quality Campaign (DQC), Education Commission of the States (ECS), Education Testing Service (ETS), Education Trust, National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), National Center for Teacher Quality (NCTQ), New America, and Teach for America (TFA).

³ Council of Chief State School Officers. (2018). Preparing “Learner-Ready” Teachers: Guidance from NTEP States for Ensuring a Culturally Responsive Workforce. Washington, D.C.: Council of Chief State School Officers. From <http://www.ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/Preparing%20Learner-Ready%20Teachers.pdf>

⁴ National Education Association. (2008). Diversity Toolkit Introduction. From <http://www.nea.org/tools/diversity-toolkit-introduction.html>

⁵ Council of Chief State School Officers. (2018). Preparing “Learner-Ready” Teachers: Guidance from NTEP States for Ensuring a Culturally Responsive Workforce. Washington, D.C.: Council of Chief State School Officers. From <http://www.ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/Preparing%20Learner-Ready%20Teachers.pdf>

⁶ Geneva Gay. (2010). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*. Teachers College Press.

⁷ Gloria Ladson-Billings. (1994). *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*. Jossey-Bass.

⁸ Ingersoll, R. & May, H. (2016). *Minority Teacher Recruitment, Employment, and Retention: 1987 to 2013*. Palo Alto: Learning Policy Institute. From https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Minority_Teacher_Recruitment_Employment_Retention%20_BRIEF.pdf

⁹ Partelow, L., Brown, C. & Johnsen, C. (2017) *American Needs More Teachers of Colorado and a More Selective Teaching Profession*. Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress. From <https://www.americanprogress.org/about/contact-us/>.

¹⁰ Ibid., Ingersoll & May.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Darling-Hammond, L. & Ducommun, C. (2007), *Recruiting and Retaining Teachers: What Matters Most and What can Government Do?* From <https://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Darling-Hammond.pdf>

¹³ Achinson, B., Ogawa R. & Sexton D. (2010). *Retaining Teachers of Color: A Pressing Program and a Potential Strategy for 'Hard-to-Staff' Schools*. *Review of Educational Research*, 71-107. From <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3102/0034654309355994?journalCode=rera>;

Carver-Thomas, D. and Grayson, K. (2017). *Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse, High-Quality Teacher Workforce*. From <https://www.idra.org/resource-center/strategies-recruiting-retaining-diverse-high-quality-teacher-workforce/>

¹⁴ Goldrick, L., Osta D., Barlin D., & Burn J. (2012). *Review of State Policies on Teacher Induction*. Santa Cruz, CA: New Teacher Center. From <https://newteachercenter.org/wp-content/uploads/brf-ntc-policy-state-teacher-induction.pdf>; Bristol, T. J. (2015). *Differentiating PD for Male Teachers of Color. Culturally Diverse Classrooms*, 10(13). From <http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol10/1013-bristol.aspx>

¹⁵ Learning Policy Institute. (2017). *The Role of Principals in Addressing Teacher Shortages*. Palo Alto: Learning Policy Institute. From https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Role_Principals_Addressing_Teacher_Shortage_BRIEF.pdf

¹⁶ Ibid., Ingersoll & May.

¹⁷ Council of Chief State School Officers. (2018). *Preparing "Learner-Ready" Teachers: Guidance from NTEP States for Ensuring a Culturally Responsive Workforce*. Washington, DC: CCSSO. From <http://www.ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/Preparing%20Learner-Ready%20Teachers.pdf>

¹⁸ Johnston, E., D'Andrea Montalbano, P., & Kirkland, D.E. (2017). *Culturally Responsive Education: A Primer For Policy And Practice*. New York: Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, New York University. From https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/media/users/atn293/pdf/CRE_Brief_2017_PrintBooklet_170817.pdf/

¹⁹ Putman, H., Hansen, M., Walsh, K., & Quintero (2016). *High Hopes and Harsh Realities: The Real Challenges to Building a Diverse Workforce*. Washington, D.C.: Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings. From https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/browncenter_20160818_teacherdiversityreportpr_hansen.pdf

²⁰ Ibid., Partelow, Brown, and Johnson, 2017.

²¹ Ibid., Council of Chief State School Officers.

²² Ibid., Putman, Hansen, Walsh & Quintero.