

Diversifying the Teacher Workforce

This is one of a series of evidence-based strategies to help states and school districts invest Covid relief aid effectively. Read all 18 strategies in FutureEd's [Covid Relief Playbook](#).

Research shows that diversifying the teacher workforce produces positive outcomes for all students. For students of color, having a teacher of the same race or ethnicity has been shown to improve test scores and attendance and reduce suspension rates. However, in 2015-16, teachers of color accounted for only 20 percent of U.S. public school teachers, while children of color accounted for half the student population. States and local districts can invest Covid relief aid in a range of strategies for recruiting and retaining a more diverse workforce.

THE RESEARCH

One promising strategy is to recruit teachers of color from nontraditional paths and support their transition into teaching. A 2021 [study](#) of six cohorts of new teachers by University of Florida researcher Christopher Redding found that alternate routes into teaching are associated with an increased proportion of new teachers of color in any given state. The study also found that alternate routes into teaching are associated with a 22 percentage point increase in the number of Black teachers in a state and a 6 percentage point increase in other teachers of color.

"Grow your own" programs work to recruit teaching candidates from nontraditional paths, including high school and community college students, paraeducators, after-school program staff, substitutes, and community members. A New America [analysis](#) of existing literature found that recruiting teachers "from the community for the community" increases diversity and allows for a better demographic match between teachers and students. Research also shows that teachers trained through "grow your own" programs have higher retention

rates and lower rates of turnover, especially in hard-to-staff schools.

Another approach to diversifying the teacher workforce is teacher residency programs, in which candidates are partnered with an experienced mentor teacher for at least a year whom they shadow in the classroom while enrolled in coursework. Teacher residencies attract higher percentages of teachers of color than traditional teaching credential programs, according to a Bellwether Education Partners [analysis](#). For example, 38 percent of all Boston Public School teachers identify as teachers of color, whereas 50 percent of candidates in the Boston Teacher Residency identify as teachers of color. The report also notes that candidates who go through a residency program stay in their jobs longer than teachers entering the profession through traditional pathways.

The Boston Teacher Residency, Chicago's Academy for Urban School Leadership, and New Visions/Hunter College Urban Teacher Residency all have annual retention rates above 90 percent, according to the Bellwether analysis. And they find data out of San Francisco are similar, with 80 percent of teachers from residency programs staying in the profession for at least five years, compared to 50 percent of teachers who did not participate in residency programs. Teach for America also recruits and places teachers of color at rates higher than their 20 percent representation in the nation's teaching force.

WHAT TO CONSIDER

Grow-your-own programs often partner with school districts, universities, and community colleges, and community-based organizations and provide teachers

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Continued

with financial, academic, and social support. Public partnerships can help offset some of the cost of a program, which is typically between \$7,000 and \$22,000 with a partner. And Teach Plus finds the key components of teacher residencies to be effective mentor teachers, placing residents based on district staffing needs, the program spanning a full school year with coursework, hiring decisions based off school needs, and an onboarding procedure for after the resident leaves the program.

Efforts to retain teachers of color already in the profession are also important. One challenge, particularly during the pandemic and post-pandemic periods, is to avoid adding unpaid, often stressful responsibilities to their already demanding jobs. Seth Gershenson of American University warns that teachers of color often assume multiple roles on top of regular teaching, including disciplinarian, community liaison, and mentor.

RESEARCH

- [Changing the Composition of Beginning Teachers: The Role of State Alternative Certification Policies: MODERATE](#)

RESOURCES

- [Recommendations for Critical Components of a Teacher Residency Program](#)
- [Why a Diverse Teaching Force Matters and How We Can Get There](#)
- [Trading Coursework for Classroom: Realizing the Potential of Teacher Residencies](#)
- [Investing In Grow Your Own Teacher Programs](#)