

# ADVANCING A DIVERSE FUTURE

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RECRUITING AND RETAINING  
EDUCATORS OF COLOR IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY



THE GREATER LA  
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

# Executive Summary

**Los Angeles County needs to recruit and retain more educators of color, especially Black and Latinx educators, in order to provide students with the best possible education in equitable, diverse, and inclusive schools throughout LA County's 80 school districts.**

Research shows that educators of color bring unique strengths and skills in the classroom and in leadership roles, which yield academic and holistic benefits for students. But among the approximately 1.5 million students, 74,000 teachers, and 6,800 school administrators in Los Angeles County, there are significantly more students of color (85%) than teachers (57%) and administrators (61%) of color. This paper finds that:

- The largest gap in representation is between Latinx students (65%) and teachers (33%).
- Although Black students (8%) and teachers (8%) are represented equally at the county level, many districts see a shortage of Black male teachers, who make up only 2% of the teacher workforce in LA County.
- In school districts with the highest shares of Black and Latinx students, Black and Latinx teacher and administrator representation varies widely.

Representation alone is not enough. Educators of color must be supported to thrive. Once educators of color overcome barriers to college graduation and teacher certification to enter teaching initially, too many leave the profession or report feeling undervalued, overburdened, or unrecognized for their expertise and skills.

In order to create a sustainable change in the teaching workforce that attracts, retains, and supports educators of color to succeed and lead and to bring about deeper anti-racist reforms in schools, this paper recommends the following actions, based on analysis of LA County data, interviews with local educators and education leaders, and national research:

## Train and Recruit:



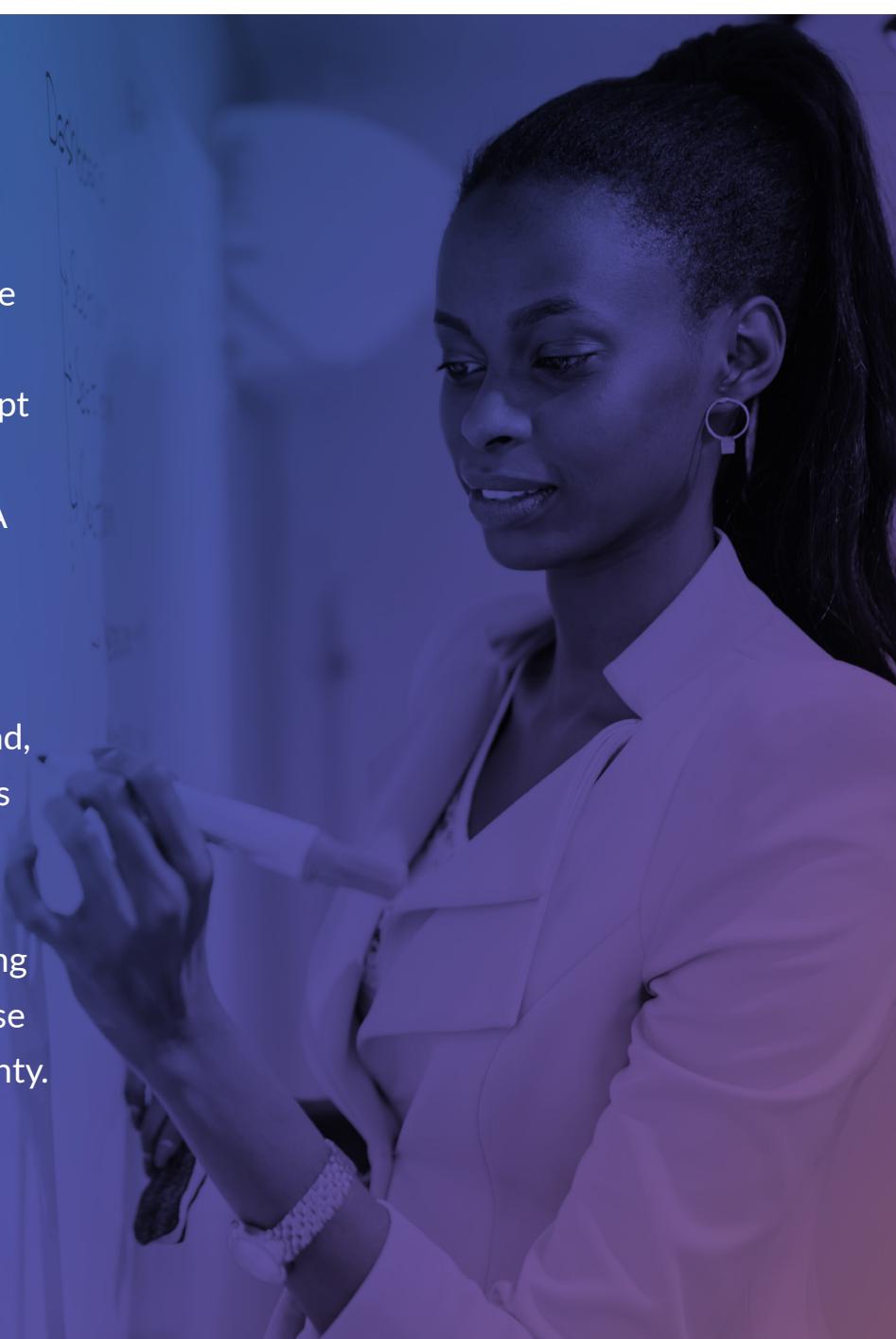
- Close college graduation gaps,
- Incentivize entrance into teaching and reduce procedural barriers, and
- Expand innovative and supportive teacher preparation pathways.

## Support and Retain:



- Set workforce equity and inclusion goals with transparent data,
- Build support structures for classroom teachers,
- Strengthen leadership opportunities in and out of the classroom, and
- Create more inclusive school climates.

Responsibilities for action around training and recruitment are shared across higher education, school districts, and state policymakers, while school districts hold primary responsibility for support and retention actions. Other education stakeholders also have important roles to play. Educators, especially educators of color, should play a leading role in envisioning and shaping the work environments they need to thrive in the profession. Advocates must push for policy change where needed and hold leaders accountable for prioritizing this issue. Philanthropic partners can fund new initiatives and pilots to create space for convening and collaboration.



The Greater LA Education Foundation's mission is to advance deeper collaboration between schools and communities to disrupt inequity and meet the needs of today's diverse learners across LA County. Increasing recruitment and retention among educators of color is a top priority for our organization, and in the year ahead, we will build upon the work of this publication by bringing together stakeholders, releasing further research and analysis, and mapping out implementation steps for these recommendations across LA County.

# Introduction

Los Angeles County, the nation's most populous county, is home to over 10 million residents who make up one of the most diverse regions in the world. More than one-third of all LA County residents were born outside the United States, and more than half speak a language other than English at home.<sup>i</sup> LA County's rich diversity in race, ethnicity, origin, and home language contributes to its economic strength and vibrant culture.

LA County is also home to nearly 1.5 million school-age children. Of those students, 1.3 million are children of color. Every day, a workforce of nearly 74,000 teachers and 6,800 school administrators in 80 school districts works to support these students' educational growth, ensures they thrive in school, and prepares them to graduate ready for college and career. LA County has an opportunity to lead the nation in excellence and equity for students of color, students living in poverty, and other historically underserved populations.

There are many ways in which LA County can improve outcomes and promote educational equity for every child. While the recipe for a great education contains multiple ingredients, excellent teachers are essential. Research establishes that access to an excellent teacher in elementary or middle school raises the likelihood of college attendance and higher income in young adulthood.<sup>ii</sup> Educators of color in particular can help improve academic outcomes and reduce barriers to educational success, especially for students of color.<sup>iii</sup> And educators of color can help solve teacher shortages, like the bilingual teacher shortage faced by LA County, by bringing unique skills to hard-to-staff roles and subjects.<sup>iv</sup>

LA County teachers do not yet reflect the diversity of the students and communities they serve: 57% of LA County teachers are people of color, compared with 85% of students.<sup>v</sup> Racial and ethnic demographics of teachers and students vary substantially among districts. For example, in LA County districts like Lennox, Compton Unified, and Inglewood where less than 1% of students are white, between 16% and up to 24% of teachers are white.<sup>vi</sup>

## About Greater LA

In order to elevate and grow philanthropic investment in public education throughout the region, the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) launched the Greater Los Angeles Education Foundation (Greater LA) in 2019.

Greater LA's **mission** is to advance deeper collaboration between schools and communities to disrupt inequity and meet the needs of today's diverse learners across LA County.

Greater LA's **vision** is that all students in LA County have the educational experiences that address their full needs and allow them to thrive in college, career, and life.



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Teachers are not the only factor that matters — school leaders matter as well. Leadership is the second most impactful school-based factor in student success, in part because of effective leaders' ability to recruit and retain highly effective teachers.<sup>vii</sup> So, it is also important for more people of color to occupy instructional leadership roles, including principal and superintendent roles. Currently, 61% of school administrators in LA County are people of color.<sup>viii</sup>

Our definition of “educators of color” includes Latinx, Black, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, Filipino, and multiracial teachers and administrators. Including both classroom teachers and leaders is important because of the decisive role instructional leaders play in shaping school culture, teachers’ work environments, coaching, and professional development.<sup>ix</sup>

Although representation of educators of color is higher in LA County than in California as a whole and many other metropolitan areas, representation alone is not sufficient for students or educators. Too often, educators of color leave the profession at higher rates than their white peers<sup>x</sup> and report feeling undervalued, overburdened, or disrespected.<sup>xi</sup>

LA County must recruit, retain, and develop more educators of color, especially Black and Latinx educators, and empower them to thrive in the profession. Within LA County, inequitable opportunities and outcomes among Black and Latinx students demand additional attention. For example, K-12 schools are more likely to discipline, expel, or otherwise push out Black and Latinx youth, disrupting their educational pathways, and colleges and universities enroll and graduate fewer Black and Latinx B.A. students compared to other student groups.<sup>xii</sup> Research shows that Black and Latinx educators can help address these inequities by improving academic and non-academic outcomes among Black and Latinx students, including test scores, discipline rates, high school graduation, and access to advanced coursework.

This emphasis is not meant to exclude other non-Black, non-Latinx students, and educators of color whose communities deserve recognition for the wide array of skills and strengths they bring to schools and who also face distinct educational equity challenges.

Educators of color are not the only component of a more inclusive, anti-racist education system, but they are a necessary one. And in the midst of multiple crises, school systems are at risk of losing more educators of color unless they prioritize recruitment and retention. As recent protests against racial injustice have emphasized, addressing systemic racism in public institutions cannot wait. Increasing educator diversity and encouraging schools and educators to prioritize anti-racist actions will shape students’ experiences of race and cultivate more equitable school systems.

This report combines available data on educators of color in LA County as well as national and state research on educator diversity and educator recruitment and retention, and draws on interviews and conversations with LA County educators and educational leaders to inform recommendations for schools, districts, and county leaders.



“We have a responsibility to make sure that we are pushing for more teachers of color and that we are developing pathways and maintaining the teachers that we have with clear strategies in place.”

- Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools Debra Duardo

# How might COVID-19 affect efforts to diversify and strengthen the educator workforce?

COVID-19 will likely widen existing inequities and cause economic and health instability for many children and families. COVID-19 has already taken a toll on school budgets and the teaching profession, but the full effects are still emerging. We can learn from previous economic crises to prepare for what may come and forecast how teachers and students of color might experience disproportionate effects from this crisis without dedicated action:

- **Teacher Preparation:** The 2008 recession correlated with a significant decline in teacher preparation program enrollment nationally. Enrollment in these programs peaked during the 2009-10 academic year and has fallen by more than 36% in the following years. Although the 2008 recession led to a surge in college enrollment in 2009, barely half of those students had graduated 6 years later.
- **Layoffs:** 4% of US educators lost their jobs over the course of the 2008 recession. Layoffs typically focus on newer teachers, who are more likely to be teachers of color. They also hit underresourced schools and districts harder. Students of color were more likely to attend schools impacted by teacher layoffs. In 2008 and 2009, over 4% of Black and Latinx students in Los Angeles lost their teachers, compared with just 2% of white students. And teacher mobility increased beyond layoffs, likely because of uncertainty and instability.
- **Retirements:** During “normal” recessions, the number of teachers retiring remains relatively stable because teachers have access to retirement benefits that take effect regardless of external economic factors. Research shows that retirements in California weren’t significantly impacted by the 2001 and the 2007-09 recessions. It’s unclear how exactly COVID-19 will impact teacher retirement decisions, but it will depend on a number of factors including teachers’ reaction to school reopening plans and the continued spread of the virus.

State and local leaders should take action now to protect teachers of color and ensure that the impacts of COVID-19 do not fall hardest on schools serving mostly Black and Latinx students.

Sources: Matt Barnum, “12 ways the last recession changed America’s schools — and what that means for the years ahead,” Chalkbeat, April 22, 2020, <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/4/22/21230992/great-recession-schools-research-lessons-coronavirus>; Lisette Partelow and Christina Baumgardner, “Educator Pipeline in Risk,” Center for American Progress, 2016, <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/14084443/TeacherPrep-report.pdf>; Ben Casselman, “Half Of People Who Went To College In The Recession Haven’t Graduated,” FiveThirtyEight, November 17, 2015, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/half-of-people-who-went-to-college-in-the-recession-havent-graduated/>; Chad Aldeman, “How Will Teacher Retirements Change in the Midst of COVID-19?,” TeacherPensions.org, August 28, 2020 <https://www.teacherpensions.org/blog/how-will-teacher-retirements-change-midst-covid-19>; Katharine Strunk, “How the Threat of Teacher Layoffs Affects Teachers: Evidence from the Los Angeles Unified School District,” Policy Analysis for California Education, seminar presented April 15, 2016, <https://edpolicyinca.org/events/how-threat-teacher-layoffs-affects-teachers-evidence-los-angeles-unified-school-district>.

# How Educators of Color Affect Students

**Educators of color can have a range of positive effects on students of all races and ethnicities, especially students of color.**

These positive effects are amplified when educators of color are situated within supportive school environments with sufficient resources and leaders who encourage and enable them to thrive and grow.



## Academic Advantages

A growing body of research shows many measurable academic advantages teachers of color can have for students of color, especially among Black and Latinx students and teachers. Demonstrated positive impacts include measures such as test scores, graduation rates, access to rigorous coursework, and more.<sup>xiii</sup> For example:

- Black students in Tennessee assigned to one Black teacher between kindergarten and third grade had higher math and reading scores, a difference equivalent to about 1/3 of the typical academic gap between Black and white students.<sup>xiv</sup>
- Schools with greater numbers of Black teachers have greater representation of Black students in gifted education programs and advanced courses, and the same holds true for Latinx teachers and students.<sup>xv</sup>
- Exposure to just one Black teacher in elementary school significantly reduced the high school dropout rate among Black boys.<sup>xvi</sup>
- More Latinx math and science teachers in middle and high school increased the likelihood of Latinx students taking STEM classes in college.<sup>xvii</sup>

These findings are especially compelling because of the persistent opportunity and achievement gaps for Black and Latinx children and youth in LA County, in California, and in the nation as a whole.<sup>xviii</sup> Increasing access to educators of color could be one way to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in educational outcomes.

“ It is clear in the research that having Black teachers for Black students, or Latinx teachers for Latinx students, confers real academic advantages. ... It is important to have a teacher who values you and your intellect. ”

– Dr. Mayra Lara, Education Trust – West



## Engagement and Empathy

One way in which educators of color support their students academically is by acting as role models with whom students can identify and using their knowledge and experience to empathize and engage with students. They might not share the same biases as other teachers — research has found that white teachers tend to view Black students more negatively than their classmates,<sup>xxix</sup> and Black students are less likely to be punished with suspension or expulsion when they have a Black teacher.<sup>xx</sup>

Educators of color we interviewed also felt that their personal experiences, and in some cases a shared language, helped them build trust more quickly with students' families and the broader community.

And a more diverse educator workforce can benefit students of all races and ethnicities, including white students, in ways that academic assessments don't measure.<sup>xxi</sup> Exposure to educators of different racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds can challenge stereotypes or emerging biases and prepare students to succeed in a diverse world and learn across lines of difference.



## Leadership

When educators of color choose to pursue a leadership path as principals, superintendents, or other instructional leaders, they can have a broader reach and shape a school or district culture in which students and teachers of color can thrive. School leaders of color act as role models for students of all races, can act as mentors to teachers of color, can form faster connections and build trust with families of color, and can reshape curriculum and professional development of teachers in culturally responsive ways.<sup>xxii</sup> Additionally, if prospective teachers of color see people who look like them in school and district leadership roles, it could combat the perception that teaching does not provide enough opportunity for financial or professional growth.

Educators in LA County we spoke with universally affirmed the value and importance for students and teachers of having more people of color in instructional leadership roles, such as coaches, principals, chief academic officers, and superintendents.

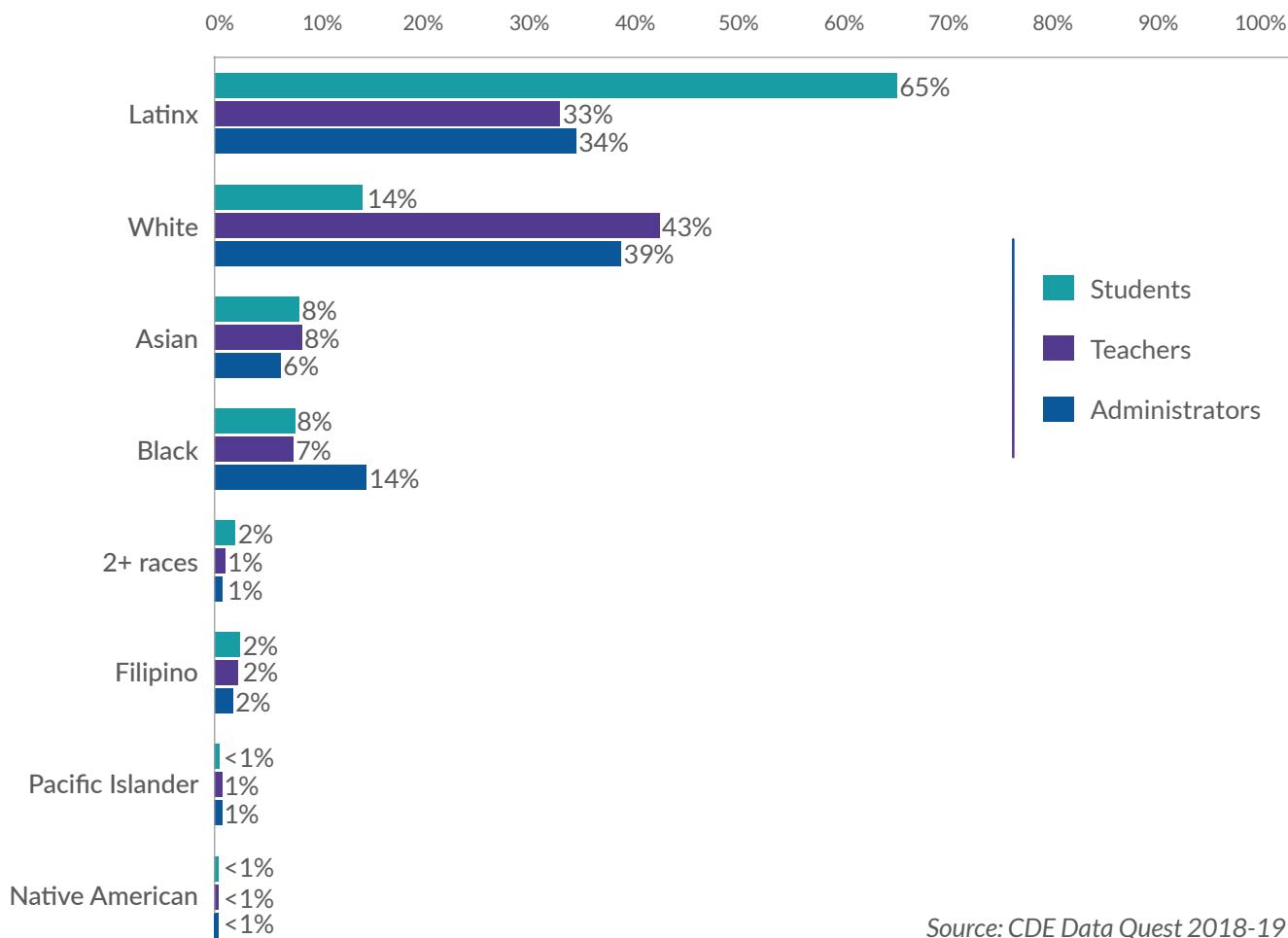
**"If you're able to have healthy, supportive relationships with kids and families, you'll be more successful with academic and behavioral outcomes."**

— Dr. Kathryn Edwards, equity, access, and curriculum support coordinator, LACOE

# By the Numbers: Educators of Color in LA County

The vast majority of children in LA County schools are children of color, over 85%. Their diversity is not adequately represented in the workforce of teachers and administrators, as Figure 1 shows. 57% of LA County teachers and 61% of administrators are people of color.

Figure 1: Students, Teachers, and Administrators in LA County by Race/Ethnicity, 2018-19



Racial and ethnic representation and the stories of demographic changes in student and teacher populations vary widely underneath those averages. School districts serving the highest percentages of Black and Latinx students tend to have higher percentages of Black and Latinx teachers (see Figures 2, 3 below). Some of these communities, such as Compton, Inglewood, and Montebello, have been majority Black or Latinx for decades. Many teachers of color in these districts grew up in local schools themselves, and school leaders are thinking about how to sustain teacher pipelines in the future. In other communities, such as the Antelope Valley, demographics have changed rapidly as more LA County families of all races and ethnicities seek affordable housing farther away from the gentrifying urban core of Los Angeles.<sup>xxiii</sup>

“It is important that educators and leaders represent the communities they serve. It has a lot to do with connecting with and believing in leaders, knowing they share your values, and building trust. We can't do the work of educating our children alone.”

- Dr. Erika Torres, county administrator, Inglewood USD



## Latinx Educator Representation

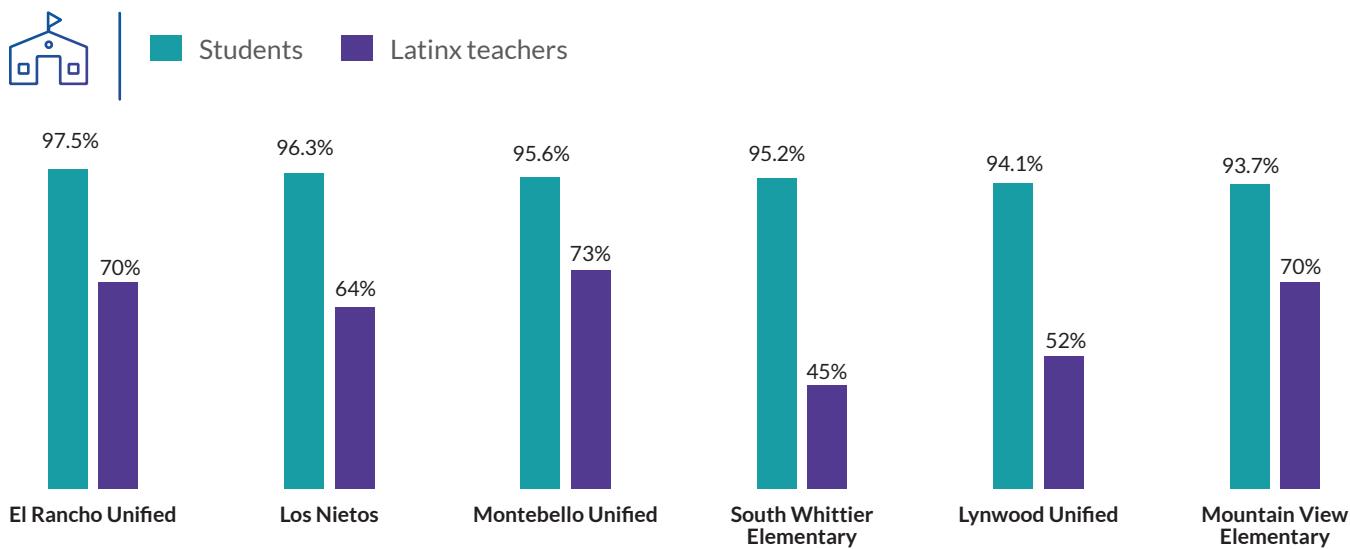
Latinx communities are a fast-growing share of the overall population of LA County, increasing from 38% of the county's population in the 1990 census to 48% in 2018 census estimates.<sup>xxiv</sup> Latinx young people make up an even larger share of the child and youth population, 64% of those under the age of 25 in LA County.<sup>xxv</sup>

Latinx students have made incredible gains in educational attainment and achievement in recent decades. Latinx students in California have shown significant improvement in fourth- and eighth-grade reading and math assessments since the early 2000s, and the number of Latinx youth in California completing a postsecondary degree has doubled since 2006. Nevertheless, school systems and higher education institutions must still improve their outcomes for Latinx children and youth. The performance gap between white and Latinx students on math and reading assessments has barely changed,<sup>xxvi</sup> and Latinx Californians are still least likely among all ethnic groups to have a college degree.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Underlying gaps in educational attainment, combined with the large numbers of younger people in LA County's Latinx communities, can explain some of the representational gaps between Latinx teachers and students. But compared with national trends, LA County has made important strides in Latinx representation in the classroom. Approximately 33% of LA County teachers are Latinx. Looking at the intersection of ethnicity and gender, 6,720 Latino men make up about 9% of LA County teachers, and 27% of Latinx teachers in LA County. This is equal to the representation of male teachers of any race or ethnicity in LA County, also 27%.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Among the LA County districts with the largest share of Latinx enrollment, representation of Latinx teachers is high. In some districts like El Rancho, Montebello, and Mountain View, 7 out of 10 teachers are Latinx.

Figure 2: Top Six LA County Districts by Latinx Student Enrollment and Share of Latinx Teachers



Source: CDE Data Quest 2018-19

The Latinx community encompasses many cultures, nationalities, and racial backgrounds, which complicates the narrative that students benefit from same-race educators. It's possible for a Latinx student to share the same ethnicity as Latinx teacher and have little in common culturally or linguistically. In spite of this complexity, Latinx teachers still serve as role models for students and can bring a diversity of experiences to the classroom, which can serve students of all backgrounds. Moreover, as we discuss above, research suggests that Latinx students can benefit academically from having a Latinx teacher, through outcomes such as increased enrollment in gifted education courses and advanced placement courses.

Other interviews and recent research suggest that Latinx educators face unique barriers getting into teaching and additional barriers once in the classroom. Latinx youth who feel pressure to provide financially for their families may avoid teaching because it is not viewed as a lucrative profession. California's legacy as a state with discriminatory policies (e.g., California outlawed bilingual education in the mid-1990s) toward Latinx students still lingers for potential teachers, which may limit the number of Latinx young people who see schools as a welcoming space to work.<sup>xxix</sup> Some Latinx teachers and potential teachers face extra uncertainty in the workplace due to their immigration status. For example, approximately 5,000 education professionals in California have work permits through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.<sup>xxx</sup> The majority of DACA recipients are Latinx. Additionally, a new report from Teach Plus California based on focus groups with teachers of color finds that Latinx teachers feel added pressure to speak a language other than English and will be often be tasked with multiple translation and interpretation requests without acknowledgement or compensation.<sup>xxxi</sup>

State and local leaders must acknowledge this history and address these barriers in order to improve Latinx representation among LA County educators. Moreover, given the large gap in representation between Latinx students and educators, state and local leaders will need to consider solutions with distinct programmatic focus on recruiting and retaining Latinx educators.



“Teachers of color, and especially Black men, are seen as the people who are able to manage behaviors and are placed in a box. We aren’t given opportunities to prove ourselves as instructional leaders or people who are capable of leading amazing instruction and getting results for our students.”

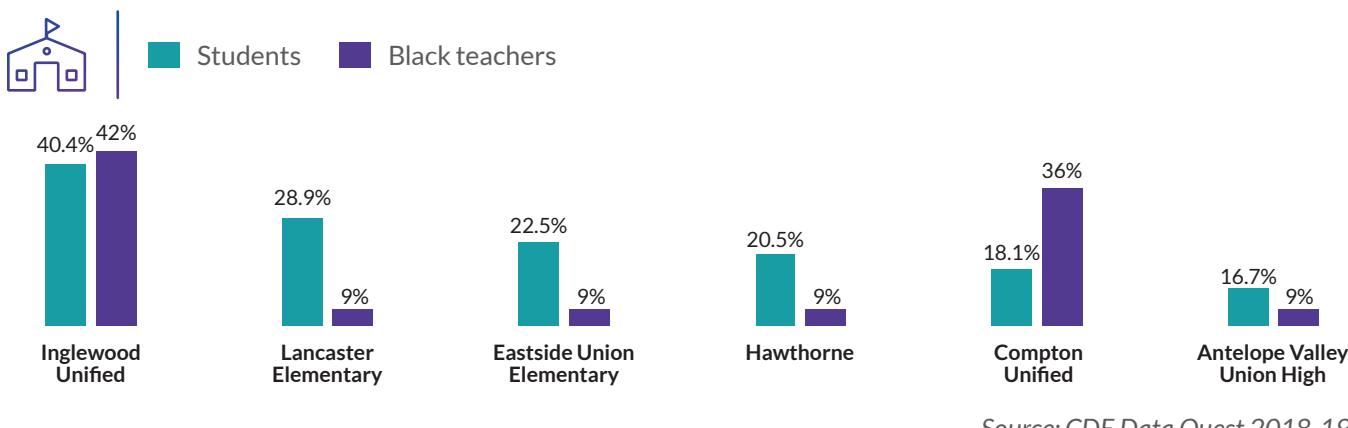
– Charles Snow, Los Angeles high school special education teacher

## Black Educator Representation

Averages at the county level show roughly equal percentages of Black students and teachers, and Black administrators are slightly overrepresented. But averages don't tell the full story. The need to focus on recruiting and retaining more Black educators, especially Black men, was elevated in interviews with several county education leaders and advocates. California state superintendent Tony Thurmond has also identified recruiting more Black male educators as a state priority.<sup>xxxii</sup> Black men make up only 2% of LA County's nearly 74,000 teachers, and 29% of Black teachers.<sup>xxxiii</sup> This is similar to the representation of men among Latinx teachers, and among teachers overall in LA County.

Among the LA County school districts with the largest shares of Black student enrollment, representation of Black teachers is high in historically majority-Black districts like Inglewood and Compton, but there are gaps in school districts like Antelope Valley High SD, Lancaster Elementary SD, Hawthorne USD, and Eastside Union Elementary SD (Figure 3). So while the largest gap in representation overall is between Latinx students and educators, countywide averages do not translate to a lack of need for Black educators.

Figure 3: Chart of Top Six Districts by Black Student Enrollment and Share of Black Teachers



Source: CDE Data Quest 2018-19

Black educators need more representation in LA County schools for many reasons. For one, LA County schools must dramatically improve outcomes for Black students — from college preparation, to graduation rates, to test scores.<sup>xxxivxxxxv</sup>

Increasing recruitment and retention of Black educators is one way to do so. Even though the proportion of Black teachers to Black students in LA County is even now, that relative equilibrium may be temporary. Interviews indicated a potential generation gap among Black educators in LA County, with a larger group of mostly Black women for whom teaching was a reliable middle-class career option now nearing retirement and too few younger Black women and men coming up behind them. For example, according to Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Deputy Chief Human Resources Officer Ileana Dávalos, approximately 40% of LAUSD's overall teacher workforce is over age 50.

Increasing the share of educators of color is not just about training and hiring more teachers of color. Schools and districts also must retain the teachers they already have, and develop them into master teachers and/or instructional leaders who can work together to create inclusive learning environments that support better outcomes for students.

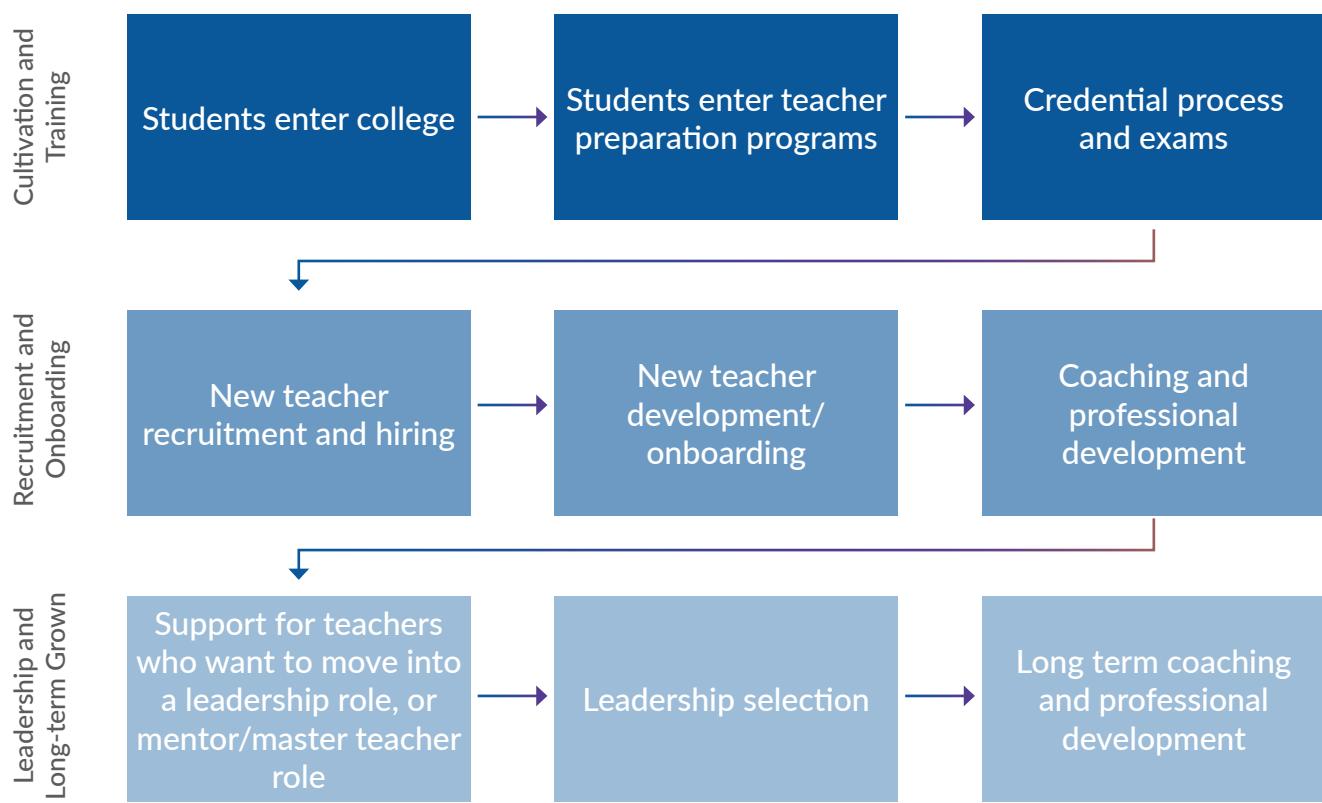
“I got pushback from my family regarding pay when I decided to go into teaching. ‘Why do you want to do that? Why do you want to put yourself through that? You’re not going to make any money’”

- Gregory Williams, Los Angeles high school instructional coach



# How to Support Educators of Color Throughout Their Careers

The graphic below visualizes the career pathway for educators, beginning with their entry to college and preservice training and credentialing, continuing through their recruitment and early instructional development, and branching off into long-term development and opportunities for leadership inside or outside of the classroom. At every step in this journey, there are opportunities to retain, or lose, educators of color, and district, county, and state leaders can adopt a range of strategies to take action in each stage — cultivation, training, recruitment, development, and retention.



Unfortunately, it is impossible to pinpoint where in this process LA County districts and leaders need to prioritize their efforts because California does not collect or publish data on teacher retention by race and/or ethnicity. Districts have access to this information internally, but they rarely share it in a comprehensive way. That is just one of many staff and student equity metrics that could inform data-driven plans to recruit, support, and retain educators of color in the schools that need them most. Absent LA County-specific data, national and state research, as well as stakeholder interviews, can indicate trends in the LA County teacher workforce.



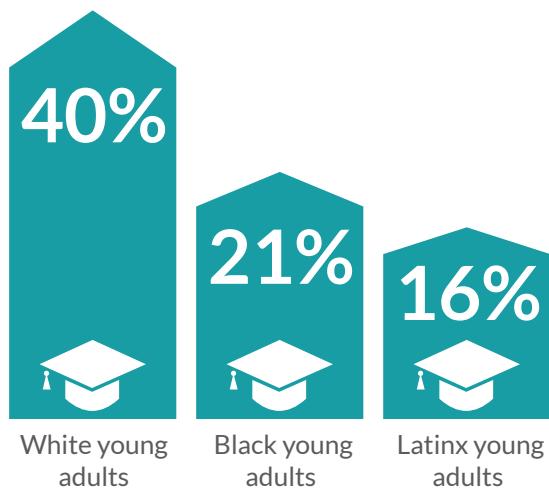
## Cultivate, Recruit, and Train

The journey to teaching for educators of color includes many barriers before teachers ever reach the classroom. In order to increase the number of teachers of color in classrooms, barriers in cultivation, recruitment, and training must be addressed. Recent research at the state level indicates declining enrollments in California teacher preparation programs and acute needs for more teachers in special education, science, and math, with emerging needs for bilingual instructors and career and technical education.<sup>xxxvi</sup> It is also important to consider changes in the teacher workforce as a result of COVID-19. Low-income students and students of color may be at higher risk of not entering or finishing college because of educational disruptions, while older teachers may choose to retire sooner, creating an even more urgent need to evaluate and strengthen educator workforce pathways.

National research indicates that one of the biggest initial hurdles for building a more diverse educator corps is the fact that colleges and universities graduate fewer Black and Latinx students than white students.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

### In 2015

40% of white young adults had a B.A., compared with 21% of Black young adults and 16% of Latinx young adults.



Among college graduates, although teaching is a familiar profession, students of color might be dissuaded from pursuing teaching for a variety of reasons, including lack of role models and perception of low pay or few advancement opportunities in teaching. The rising cost of living in many LA County communities amplifies potential teachers' financial concerns.<sup>xxxviii</sup> On top of the costs of obtaining a college degree, the steps to teaching certification can be complex and costly, including a semester or more of student teaching and a variety of certification exams that can cost hundreds of dollars in fees.<sup>xxxix</sup> Barriers like these have a disproportionate effect on first-generation college students, students from low-income families, and/or students of color.

Comprehensive solutions to lower barriers facing potential educators of color must also go beyond the boundaries of K-12 schools and higher education. Severe shortages in affordable housing, the growing racial wealth gap, and the rapid gentrification of historically Black and Latinx neighborhoods all shape the educational and career choices available to people of color in LA County.

Additionally, there is a largely untapped population of people of color already working in schools and familiar with communities who could make excellent teachers — aides and paraprofessionals. In LA County, the population of school staff outside of teachers and administrators more closely mirrors the student population: approximately 80% of paraprofessionals are people of color who already work closely with children.<sup>xli</sup> However, these working adults may not be able to spend years without pay in order to earn a teaching certification. Some districts and higher education institutions have created special programs aimed at recruiting paraprofessionals and supporting them through the teacher training and certification process, especially in high-need subject areas. These are often called “grow your own” teacher preparation programs. For example, LAUSD’s STEP UP and Teach program recruits special education and multilingual education paraprofessionals who want to become teachers and provides them with mentoring, financial assistance for tuition, and assistance with credentialing fees.<sup>xlii</sup>

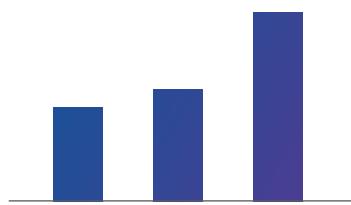
Another potential way to innovate and improve diversity in teacher preparation is through new models like residencies. Teacher residencies can take many forms but generally encourage on-the-job teacher preparation training, combined with coursework, for a faster path to teaching that emphasizes time in the classroom under the mentorship of an expert educator.

The state has allocated \$75 million in teacher residency funding to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) and created a new Teacher Residency Lab, managed by the CDE Foundation, to provide support to residency grantees.<sup>xliii</sup> In February 2020, Gov. Newsome proposed doubling funding based on high initial demand, but it is unclear how the COVID-19 crisis will affect the future of the program.

Residencies appeal to a wider, often more diverse pool of teacher candidates in part because these programs do not require teacher candidates to make large upfront financial investments to earn certification. More than 45% of teacher residents in the National Center for Teacher Residencies Network identify as people of color, compared to 18% of all new teachers nationally.<sup>xliii</sup> California allows a variety of education entities to apply for \$20,000 grants per student teacher with the following requirements:

- Teacher candidates are not charged,
- They must earn a credential in tough-to-staff subjects such as science, computer science, math, special education, and bilingual education, and
- Teachers are required to teach for at least four years.

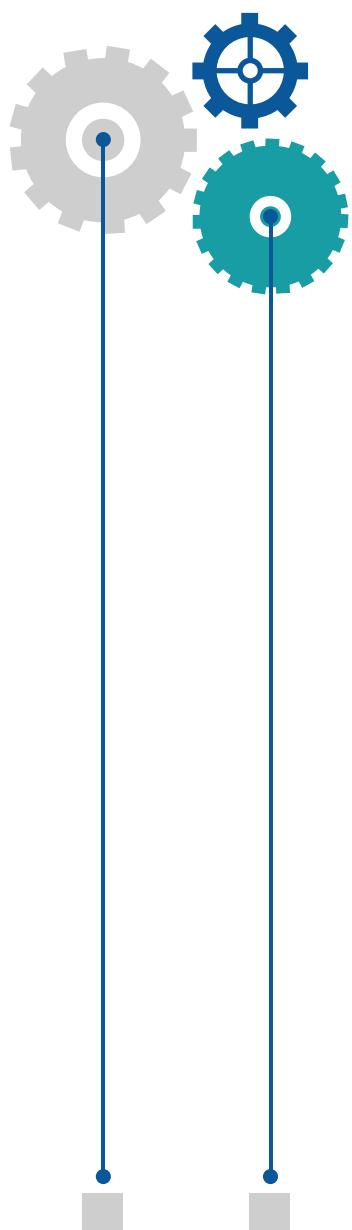
Additionally, affirmative action policies, which California voters will consider in the fall of 2020, may be able to provide more avenues to support and provide recruitment incentives to specific racial groups.



## Recommendations to Improve Cultivation, Recruitment and Training

There are several key actions state, county, higher education, and district leaders can take to reduce barriers and create more supportive structures for educators of color.

These recommendations have not yet been implemented on a wide scale largely because of frequent institutional disconnects between higher education and K-12 school systems, along with the legacies of long-standing racist and classist policies and practices that fostered college-attainment and teacher credentialing disparities among racial and ethnic groups.



- **Close College Graduation Gaps** with wraparound supports, advising, and guided pathways for low-income students, first-generation college students, and students of color in the transition from high school to college through partnerships with institutions of higher education within LA County.<sup>xliv</sup>
- **Incentivize Entrance Into Teaching** with outreach programs to high school students, scholarships, loan forgiveness, reduced or eliminated credentialing fees, competitive starting salaries in lower-performing schools, and housing or student teaching stipends. For example, a new law passed in September 2020 focuses on increasing the supply of affordable housing specifically for teachers.<sup>xlv</sup> Simultaneously, California should re-examine any procedural barriers, like credentialing tests, that disproportionately impact potential teachers from underrepresented groups.
- **Expand Innovative and Supportive Teacher Preparation Pathways** such as “grow your own” programs for paraprofessionals, residencies where students apprentice alongside a master teacher while earning a stipend and taking classes, targeted recruitment for college students majoring in STEM subjects, and partnerships between districts and institutions of higher education to train and recruit educators directly into high-demand roles.

This strategy should include stronger partnerships between school districts and regional public institutions of higher education, including CalState TEACH (an online teacher preparation program), the CSU 5,<sup>xlvi</sup> and UCLA, and should expand upon the foundations of current teacher preparation and certification programs like the LACOE Beginning Teacher Programs.<sup>xlvii</sup> The California Teaching Commission has a key role to play in accrediting and approving programs designed to reach underrepresented teacher groups.



## Support and Retain

National studies indicate that once educators of color are in the classroom, they tend to change schools or leave the profession at higher rates than their white peers, and rates of turnover among teachers of color nationally appear to have increased from the early 2000s through at least 2013.<sup>xlviii</sup> As mentioned above, California does not make this data publicly available at the county level.

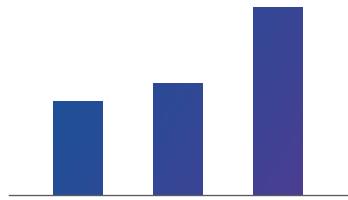
Why would teachers of color be more likely to leave their districts or leave teaching altogether? There are a variety of potential reasons. Just like in the world outside, too often teachers of color, especially Black and Latinx teachers, experience racism in their school buildings.

Teachers of color are more likely than their white peers to work in schools with high rates of student poverty and majority students of color; in fact, many consider it a duty to do so. In the school districts above with the highest shares of Black and Latinx students (Figures 2 and 3), the percent of students who are low-income, in foster care, or English learners is typically more than 70%, 80%, or 90%.<sup>xlix</sup> These school districts also contain a disproportionate share of schools identified as low-performing by the state, and rank lower on health and environmental metrics that can affect educational performance.<sup>l</sup> High-poverty, hard-to-staff schools and districts are more likely to be underresourced and present challenges in the work environment that make educator turnover more likely.<sup>li</sup>

As mentioned above, immigration policy can affect retention for some educators of color. If DACA-recipients were to lose their legal immigration status, for example, California stands to lose thousands of education professionals. These educators are more likely to be multilingual people of color, who serve important roles in their schools and communities. Schools and districts can help advocate for and support immigrant educators, as they also support immigrant students and families.

Assumptions about engagement and empathy can also mean more work for educators of color. In interviews with educators and leaders, teachers of color felt that they were expected to do extra work as interpreters or ambassadors for families, or as disciplinarians for challenging students. This can leave teachers feeling overworked and undervalued.<sup>lii</sup> This feeling is amplified when there are few teachers or administrators of color in the school.

Teachers of color might also be more likely to leave if they do not see opportunities for advancement and professional growth. While a move toward administration can be one path to career advancement, a cohort of teachers in LA County is expressing a desire to lead and grow as educators without leaving classroom instruction.



## Recommendations to Improve Support and Retention

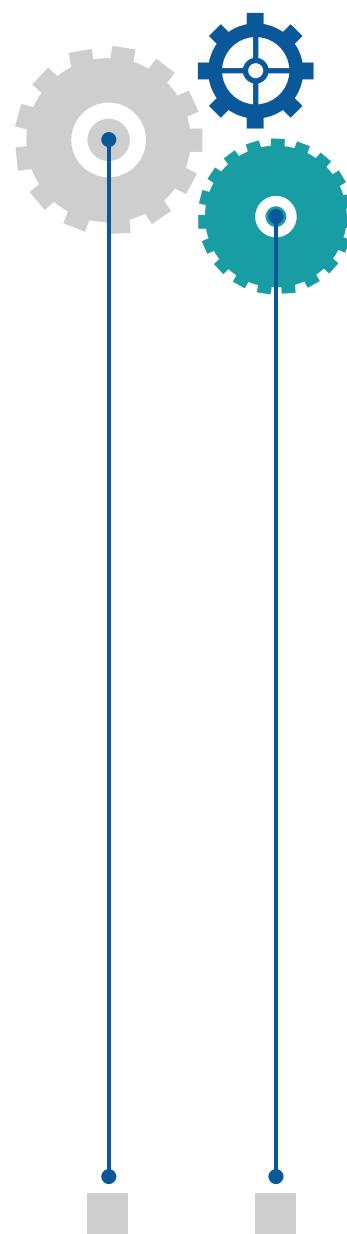
Unlike cultivation, training, and recruitment, school districts mostly have the ability to enact retention strategies on their own. However, in order to implement the recommendations below, districts need 1) the will to prioritize the issue of educator diversity among competing priorities; 2) collaboration with teachers, principals, and their unions; 3) support and resources to drive change forward; and 4) a clear road map of what practices and policies should change.

- Set Workforce Equity and Inclusion Goals With Transparent Data at the district and county levels in order to benchmark success and make goals clear to teachers and the community. For example, plans for hiring teachers in high-demand positions should also prioritize considerations for inclusion and equity. This recommendation could be advanced under districts' Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs), a state-mandated three-year plan to support student outcomes, especially if the state makes this goal-setting part of the LCAP priorities.<sup>lvi</sup> Further, California counties collect and approve regional LCAPs, so this is an area where the LA County Office of Education can play a pivotal role in accelerating change.
- Build Support Structures for Classroom Teachers such as dedicated mentorship programs or affinity groups for educators of color.



For example, at Dominguez High School in Compton, former Principal Blain Watson led the **Compton Male Teachers of Color Network**, a group that provides teachers with coaching, peer support, and a stipend for their extra efforts.<sup>lvii</sup> These spaces can also act as venues for educators of color to give meaningful feedback on school culture and curriculum.

- Strengthen Leadership Opportunities in and out of the classroom, ensuring that educators of color have equitable opportunities to train and be considered for



administrative and instructional leadership roles or to lead as master teachers from within the classroom if they desire to do so.

- Create More Inclusive School Climates by embedding anti-bias and anti-racist trainings within existing systems for educator professional development and leadership training. These trainings should not put additional burden on educators of color, and if possible should offer tangible rewards for additional work on school diversity, equity, and inclusion. Specifically, if school leaders invite educators of color to plan or lead portions of these trainings, they should compensate teachers for this additional labor and incentivize participation, similar to how the Compton Male Teachers of Color Network provides a stipend for participation. Schools and districts should also expand the skill sets of all teachers and leaders to support students with culturally responsive education that lifts up students' identities, languages, and cultural experiences as assets for learning, not deficits.<sup>lv</sup>

“I think it’s important that administrators set a tone of creating a culturally affirming space so that teachers can have their social and emotional needs met, just like we would do for students.”

- Meghann Seril, Los Angeles elementary school teacher



“This is not just about representation. This is about supporting high-quality, diverse educators who will have a greater impact on educational achievement, cultural inclusivity, and racially just schools.”

– Dr. John Garcia, president, Greater LA Education Foundation

# A Call to Action

In times of uncertainty and upheaval, sometimes ambitious action can seem out of reach. But there has never been a more important or necessary time for LA County to focus on recruiting and retaining more educators of color in order to close achievement gaps and create more equitable and inclusive schools. Doing so will require more resources, new strategies, and stronger partnerships from schools, districts, higher education, community leaders, philanthropy, and more.

In many cases, there are no clear policy barriers standing in the way of substantial changes and action on this issue. It is fully within the power of educational leaders at all levels, working together, to create school systems where educators of color reflect the diverse communities they serve and contribute to a better educational future for all students.

One of the county's biggest opportunity for improvement is to address the large gap between Latinx students and teachers. The county needs to focus on closing this gap through intentional strategies to research, uncover, and address the needs of Latinx educators in particular. The county will also need a sustained focus on recruitment and retention for Black educators, especially Black men. The intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender is an important consideration, as men of all races and ethnicities are underrepresented in teaching. Throughout this work, it will be critical to uplift the nuances and different needs among educators of color in order to identify durable and effective solutions that serve LA county's diverse communities.

The Greater LA Education Foundation commits to accelerating this work by bringing together district and community leaders across the county to learn and share, strengthening partnerships to advance collective impact solutions, and advocating for the policy changes that will enable educators of color to grow in number and continue to nurture learning in students.

The research in this brief uncovered many more questions of interest that require further investigation. How have teacher demographics changed over time as community demographics have shifted? Are there local preparation programs, schools, or districts where recruitment and retention of teachers of color is high, and what can other districts learn from these examples? What is standing in the way of accomplishing our recommendations, and how can those barriers be eliminated?

Due to lingering questions like these, this publication will be the first in a series focused on educational equity in LA County. The purpose of these publications will be to:

- Make education data more accessible to educators, families, policymakers, and funders and
- Provide recommendations to improve educational practice and policy in partnership with the community.

To complement this series of publications, the Greater LA Education Foundation will also host forums where we can discuss findings, advance recommendations, and strengthen relationships with key stakeholders.

We hope leaders, educators, and families across LA County will join us in taking action to diversify the education workforce and create more equitable, inclusive, and educationally strong schools.

## Acknowledgments

Thank you to the educators, researchers, and education leaders in LA County who graciously agreed to be interviewed for this paper, and to participants in the Greater LA working group on recruiting and retaining educators of color in LA County, whose input informed recommendations. Particular thanks to those who offered feedback on drafts of this paper, including Nick Stephany and Kathryn Edwards of LACOE, Mayra Lara of the Education Trust-West, and Nadia Funn of the Ballmer Group.

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