

DAY ONE PROJECT

Recruiting and Retaining Highly Effective Teachers of Color

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January 2021

The Day One Project offers a platform for ideas that represent a broad range of perspectives across S&T disciplines. The views and opinions expressed in this proposal are those of the authors and do not reflect the views and opinions of the Day One Project or its S&T Leadership Council.

Summary

The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to providing the best possible education to all students. Research has established that students of color experience benefits to social and emotional development and learning outcomes when taught by educators of color.^{1,2} Diverse educators and administrators are particularly important for schools with many students of color.³ Accordingly, schools across the country should prioritize hiring highly-effective teachers of color. This policy proposal identifies opportunities to recruit—and retain—highly effective K-12 educators of color.

As a first step, the Biden-Harris Administration should create an Under Secretary of Diversity at the Department of Education (ED), charged with organizing a White House Summit to establish the value of a diverse teacher workforce and convene leaders to identify best practices and a strategy for Federal Government support of state, local, and private programs. Following the summit, ED, led by the Under Secretary of Diversity, should revisit current programs that identify high need areas, such as math, science and special education to include the pressing need for diverse educators. Simultaneously, the administration must work with Congress to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, incorporating the previously introduced College Transparency Act to ensure robust data reporting and evaluate the effectiveness of financial incentives.

Challenge and Opportunity

A sense of belonging is widely accepted to be a basic human desire. Academic success can be heavily impacted by a sense of belonging in one's academic environment. For students who do not feel that they belong, it can affect their mental and physical health, and future criminal activity.⁴ Schools have at least four racialized areas potentially affected by teacher composition: content, teaching methods, feedback type, and disciplinary practices.⁵ Teachers of color are one piece of the solution. Recognizing similarities between shared attributes and/or social identities of themselves and their teachers, connecting with people they can trust and be open with can help support a sense of belonging,⁶ which is critical to academic success.

¹ Travis J. Bristol and Javier Martin-Fernandez, "The Added Value of Latinx and Black Teachers for Latinx and Black Students: Implications for Policy," *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 6, no. 2 (October 2019): 147-153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732219862573>.

² Desiree Carver-Thomas, "Diversifying the Teaching Profession Through High-Retention Pathways," Learning Policy Institute (April 2018): <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/diversifying-teaching-profession-brief>.

³ Please note that, for this memo, "students of color" refers to the share of Black and Latinx students in the United States.

⁴ Roy F. Baumeister, and Mark R. Leary, "The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation," *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3) (May 1995): 497–529. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>.

⁵ DeLeon L. Gray, "Why Black Adolescents Are Vulnerable at School and How Schools Can Provide Opportunities to Belong to Fix It," *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 7 no.1 (March 2020): 3-9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732219868744>.

⁶ Jennifer L. Hirsch and Margaret S. Clark, "Multiple paths to belonging that we should study together." *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, (December 2018): <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1745691618803629>.

Even as the demographics of the United States continue to shift, the teacher workforce remains overwhelmingly white,⁷ leading to a demand for teachers of color that far outweighs the supply. While certain states have had some success recruiting more teachers of color, individuals pursuing teaching careers face significant obstacles, causing many to leave the profession earlier than their white colleagues.^{8, 9} For many first-generation students and students of color, the path to a profession in teaching can be perilous, with unsustainable wages and work conditions. Some federal programs designed to help teachers manage student debt and continue teaching have failed the very people who our students need to stay in the profession. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated current inequalities in educational outcomes, presenting additional challenges to all teachers, and particularly teachers of color.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that college students are very interested in teaching but lack supported pathways and incentives to pursue a career in the field. Many passionate and talented state, local, and private leaders are working to support highly effective teachers of color, and a strong evidence base shows the potential for successful small-scale programs.¹⁰ However, programs and successes are inconsistent and piecemeal across the country. The Biden-Harris Administration should build on these opportunities to create a strong federal infrastructure that establishes teaching career pathways and supports teachers of color in the classroom.

The success of our country in meeting the needs of the future STEM workforce and productive labor market will depend on our ability to effectively educate a diverse population. Technology is the future—and the present. In STEM and other core workforce areas, the United States is trailing behind other industrialized nations. As the workforce of the future continues to evolve, we need to prepare our students. In our memo, we involve the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), as they, along with the Department of Education (ED), will want to prioritize the workforce of the future—ensuring that the United States is once again leading the world in breakthroughs in science and technology.

⁷ Laura Meckler and Kate Rabinowitz, “America’s schools are more diverse than ever. But the teachers are still mostly white,” *The Washington Post*, December 27, 2019. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/local/education/teacher-diversity/>.

⁸ Richard Ingersoll and Henry May, “Recruitment, Retention and the Minority Teacher Shortage,” *Consortium for Policy Research in Education*, (September 2011):

https://www.cpre.org/sites/default/files/researchreport/1221_minorityteachershortagereportrr69septfinal.pdf.

⁹ Richard Ingersoll and Henry May, “Minority teacher recruitment, employment, and retention: 1987 to 2013,” *Learning Policy Institute* (September 2017): https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Minority_Teacher_Recruitment_report.pdf.

¹⁰ Anissa Listak, “Building Effective Teacher Residencies,” *Urban Teachers Residency United*, (November 2014): <https://nctresidencies.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Research-Report.pdf>.

Plan of Action

On Day One, the incoming Secretary of Education should:

1. **Appoint an Under Secretary of Diversity, ED.** On Day One, the Biden-Harris Administration should create a new leadership position at ED, an Under Secretary of Diversity. This individual will serve the role of a Chief Diversity Officer, tasked with examining the role of race at the agency, in curricula, teacher preparation and development, and in school and district leadership nationwide, and with ensuring that national education initiatives are inclusive and actively anti-racist. Once in place, the Under Secretary will launch a White House summit, revisit existing programs and practices at ED to increase support for highly effective teachers of color, and support passage of critical legislation.
2. **Launch a White House Summit on how to recruit and retain a highly effective, diverse teacher workforce.** The Biden-Harris Administration should develop an interagency working group to coordinate efforts between ED, NSF, NIH, and the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC), as well as education funders and business leaders who have named teacher diversity as a clear priority, to convene leaders who have been successful in finding, developing, and retaining educators of color. This effort would be led by the Under Secretary of Diversity at ED and the Assistant Director for the Education and Human Resources Directorate at NSF.

A White House convening would establish that delivering the best education to students of color is a national priority. The broad goal would be to quickly generate new ideas and learn from best practices toward the goal of establishing a teacher workforce that mirrors the diversity of the American student population. The more specific goals would be:

- Identify early pathways for students of color to consider careers in education, beginning in high school.
 - Increase the inclusion of minority teachers in federal task forces, advisory committees, and policy settings.
 - Support effective, innovative traditional and alternative-certification models that ensure recruitment and retention of candidates of color.
3. **The Department of Education should prioritize supporting highly effective teachers of color.** ED should revisit current programs to include diverse educators in the requirements for high-need areas. The department currently provides incentives for states and school districts to hire and for individuals to pursue teaching. A comprehensive plan to substantially increase the diversity of educators must also consider retention and the professional experience after training. ED should promote retention by providing incentives for school districts to hire cohorts of diverse educators in order to reduce isolation and provide support. A “best-practices” grant program to ensure deep investment in programming also warrants renewed attention.

ED should:

- Rebuild the Office of Civil Rights (OCR). Under the leadership of Betsy DeVos, without opportunity for public comment, OCR altered procedures, allowing the office to dismiss hundreds of civil rights complaints, disregarding ‘burdensome’ cases.¹¹ These procedural changes should be reversed. Additionally, the office should ensure all data collection returns to 2016 levels of collection and rigor, including restoring special reports—such as the discipline report and the education equity report—to regular reporting levels.
- Issue a “Dear Colleague” letter to establish that supporting the recruitment and retention of diverse, highly qualified teachers is an agency priority. The agency should promote all federal programs available to aspiring and new teachers and amplify potential uses of Title I, II, and IV. Additionally, it should increase support to districts, including providing technical assistance and webinars.
- Immediately restore federal loan forgiveness for teachers. ED should expand the definition of Nationwide Teacher Shortage areas: districts should be enabled to consider the demand for culturally-competent educators in highly diverse schools, enabling teachers meeting these high-need categories to benefit from cancellation of up to 100 percent of Federal Perkins Loans, and other benefits.¹² It should also simplify recertification requirements and reduce penalties for the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program.^{13,14}
- Enhance the Support Effective Educator Development¹⁵ and Teacher Quality Partnership Program.¹⁶ The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education should launch a grant competition designed to retain high quality teachers of color, including proposals to hire cohorts of teachers of color. The Department should double the current budget of these programs, given growing concerns about increased teacher shortages following the pandemic.
- Increase diversity within education research, including among its leadership. The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) should increase diversity of researchers, peer reviewers, and programs supporting researcher development and early career scholars of color.¹⁷ Relatedly, the President should appoint diverse members of the Board of Education Sciences.

¹¹ Erica R. Green, “DeVos Education Dept. Begins Dismissing Civil Rights Cases in Name of Efficiency”, New York Times, April 20, 2018.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/20/us/politics/devos-education-department-civil-rights.html>.

¹² U.S. Department of Education, “Teacher Shortage Areas”, n.d., <https://tsa.ed.gov/#/home/>

¹³ Elizabeth Barkowski, “Study of the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program”, American Institutes for Research (March 2018) <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/highered/teach-grant/final-report.pdf>.

¹⁴ Jacqueline M. Nowicki, “Higher Education, Better Management of Federal Grant and Loan Forgiveness Programs for Teachers Needed to Improve Participant Outcomes,” Government Accountability Office (February 2015) <https://www.gao.gov/assets/670/668634.pdf>.

¹⁵ Supporting Effective Educator Development Grant Program.

<https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/effective-educator-development-programs/supporting-effective-educator-development-grant-program/>.

¹⁶ Teacher Partnership Quality Grant Program. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/tqpartnership/index.html>.

¹⁷ Mark Schneider, “Acting on Diversity,” IES blog, August 6, 2020. <https://ies.ed.gov/director/remarks/8-06-2020.asp>.

- Increase rigor of review and add accountability to states education plans. This should include efforts to effectively support students of color and provide technical assistance to support state success. ED should update federal guidance for the use of Title Funding to support a diverse, highly-effective teacher pipeline. This should include residency programs and support for colleges and universities graduating effective teachers to high-need districts supported with Title I funding.
 - Ensure that federal funding for “grow-your-own” programs is widely distributed. This initiative should particularly encourage partnerships with programs that have a track record of recruiting and retaining (beyond 5 teaching years) successful, diverse, and effective teachers. A growing body of scholarship is establishing the value of recruiting people from local communities that could successfully transition as teachers.¹⁸
4. **Urge Congress to Reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA), incorporating the previously proposed College Transparency Act (CTA).**¹⁹ Sustained federal investment in achieving diversity of K-12 educators that align with the diversity of our students will lead to improved social and emotional development and learning outcomes of our diverse population. CTA legislation is needed to enable the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to develop and maintain a secure, privacy-protected postsecondary student-level data system in order to accurately evaluate student enrollment patterns, progression, completion, and post collegiate outcomes, as well as higher education costs and financial aid. The Higher Education Act should be reauthorized to expand access, improve affordability, and promote completion for all students, including prospective teachers of color.²⁰ Reauthorization should include critical protections for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program.

¹⁸ Andrea Valenzuela, “Grow Your own Educators Program”.

(https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED582731.pdf?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=) November 2017

¹⁹ Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA), The College Transparency Act. March 14, 2019.

²⁰ House Committee on Education and Workforce, “Don’t Stop Believin’ in the Value of a College Education,” (March 2019): <https://edlabor.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Updated%20College%20Report%20Final.pdf>.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why should the Federal Government be involved with teacher preparation and retention? Isn't this a state and local issue?

The United States has not been competitive in education for some time, putting our country at risk of falling behind internationally. This has made it a necessity to exercise national leadership to create incentives and pathways for developing effective teachers—especially teachers of color. While some states have made important progress, too many have not. A diverse workforce benefits all students and prepares American students for a global, connected workforce. A federal role would leverage best practices for teacher preparation and retention that are often siloed within states and localities.

2. There are so many alternative certification programs, and institutions of higher education manage these programs. What could a federal program accomplish that they cannot?

A federal program can accomplish several key goals. First, a national call to action, much like that of the Peace Corps, can ensure that there is a national initiative that prioritizes teachers from across the nation and continues to elevate and professionalize the profession.

Secondly, the Federal Government, by leading the charge, can ensure that teaching is a profession of choice in our country. By working to limit student loan debt, incentivize high-quality programs, and continue to support American teachers, the Federal Government can leverage a new future for teachers wherein they invest deeply in our students without concern for the affordability of higher education for themselves.

3. How would proposed loan forgiveness programs differ from past approaches?

Past loan forgiveness programs required substantial administrative burdens with severe penalties for noncompliance. Furthermore, current efforts to minimize expenses are piecemeal and difficult for many teachers to navigate. New programs will be designed to retain high quality teachers of color.

About the Authors



Juliane Baron is the Executive Director of the Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences (FABBS), a coalition of scientific societies committed to advance the sciences of mind, brain, and behavior. Previously, Juliane was the Director of Government Relations at the American Educational Research Association (AERA). Following several years as a social worker and in the classroom, she has worked to make connections between practitioners, researchers, and policymakers to inform and strengthen policy and practice decisions. She holds a master’s degree from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin and an undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



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About the Day One Project

The Day One Project is dedicated to democratizing the policymaking process by working with new and expert voices across the science and technology community, helping to develop actionable policies that can improve the lives of all Americans, and readying them for Day One of the next presidential term. For more about the Day One Project, visit dayoneproject.org.