



The Potential of Teacher Residencies to Help Recruit and Regain Black Teachers



Black teachers are under-represented in our nation's schools. According to the [most recent federal data](#), Black students comprise 15 percent of public school enrollment. But only [seven](#) percent of public school teachers are Black.

[Evidence](#) also suggests that this share has declined, according to a [report](#) published in 2018 by the [Learning Policy Institute](#). Yet Black teachers play a critical role, especially for Black students, that report suggests. Those Black students earn better test scores and are more likely to graduate from high school and apply to college when assigned to at least one Black teacher during their K-12 years.

Students of other races appear to benefit from Black teachers, too. For example, the Learning Policy Institute report notes that White students give teachers of color higher ratings than White teachers when it comes to feeling academically challenged and cared for.

In a recent [article](#) published in the peer-reviewed journal *Issues in Teacher Education*, NEPC Fellow [Robert Shand](#) of American University and his colleagues [Naureen Madhani](#) and [Kimberly Austin](#) of Columbia University delve into one approach with the potential to increase the share of Black teachers: teacher residencies. Modeled on medical residencies, these programs place aspiring teachers in the classroom with a mentor for a year or more as they pursue coursework required for certification. Because they receive financial support,

participants are often required to commit to spending several years in the classroom after the program ends.

Drawing upon the results of an evaluation of the National Center for Teacher Residencies' Black Educators Initiative, Shand, Madhani, and Austin find promise in the practice of using residencies to help recruit and retain Black educators. They identify several key components of program design and implementation that appear to help further this goal, including the following:

- **High-quality support and care:** “[S]imply recruiting more people by looking in more places or adding greater racial diversity on program materials” is not sufficient, the study’s authors write. Rather, program administrators need to make an “intentional effort to cultivate relationships with prospective residents and demonstrate a caring approach.” Promising practices included handpicking residence schools with diverse populations and anti-racist approaches; drawing on community connections and HB-CUs to recruit aspiring teachers; and maintaining ongoing, one-on-one contact with current and prospective participants.
- **Financial support:** Program participants emphasized the importance of providing stipends and scholarships in order to reduce or remove financial barriers to entering the teaching profession. To help with retention, some programs also provided emergency support (such as help with an overdue utility bill) that might have led participants to drop out to try to make more money. Programs also paid for licensure-related costs such as testing and test prep. Residents noted that higher stipends would have made it easier to remain in the program and to avoid the need for emergency assistance.
- **High-quality preparation:** This means significant time spent in the classroom and high-quality mentoring. Some residents suggested, however, that there was a disconnect between their experiences in schools that embraced social justice and anti-racism and their university-based coursework, which focused less on these areas.
- **A welcoming school climate:** The study’s authors identified several school climate characteristics that helped retain Black participants, including cohort models that provided communities of support, “diversity among residency faculty and staff, supportive leadership, and centering issues of race and equity while maintaining safe and supportive environments for open discussion.” Given the importance of school climate, the authors suggest, “Residencies should consider how they might expand their scope of practice to cultivate supportive environments for the success of Black teachers beyond the residency year experience.”

They conclude:

“During the school year 2022-23, teacher turnover reached its [highest point](#) in five years, about two percentage points greater than pre COVID rates, especially in high-poverty schools . . . This teacher turnover [disproportionately affects Black students](#). There is therefore not just growing research consensus but also a

critical urgency in recruiting and retaining more effective Black educators as an important element of increasing both equity and effectiveness of schools. Teacher residencies present a promising approach to teacher preparation and retention that addresses many challenges and limitations that have been identified in traditional teacher preparation programs.”

NEPC Resources on Teacher Education, Quality, and Professional Development

This newsletter is made possible in part by support provided by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice: <http://www.greatlakescenter.org>

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