

CCSSO DLRT Teacher Pipeline Series:
What does Teacher Diversity and Culturally Responsive Practice have to do with ...
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS?

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 Student Demographics.

What are student demographics? What are their role in the larger Teacher Pipeline?

America's public schools are becoming more diverse year by year. Students of color now make up the majority of public school students, and their share is projected to continue growing over the next few decades.⁸ Linguistically diverse students also represent a growing proportion of the student population.⁹ While increasing student diversity can tremendously benefit all students and schools, it also makes the need for a diverse and culturally responsive workforce more acute.¹⁰

Currently, teachers of color continue to make up less than 20 percent of the teaching workforce, and at least 40 percent of public schools employ no teachers of color at all.^{11,12} Moreover, a recent analysis

finds that the diversity gap between teachers and students of color has only gotten worse in the last few years.¹³

What does Teacher Diversity have to do with student demographics?

The current demographic mismatch between teachers and students is a missed opportunity for all students, but particularly students of color. Studies show that having at least one same-race teacher can impact a range of student outcomes, from test scores to graduation rates to college aspirations.^{14,15}

Why does racial parity between students and teachers improve student outcomes? Part of the reason may be that teachers of color are more likely to have positive perceptions about students of color. Specifically, there is strong evidence that Black teachers hold higher performance expectations for their Black students than White teachers do.¹⁶ Research also indicates that Black teachers are less likely to perceive the behavior of Black students as disruptive.¹⁷ Not coincidentally, Black teachers are more likely to refer Black students to Gifted and Talented programs while less likely to subject Black students to exclusionary discipline practices such as suspension and expulsion.^{18,19}

Additionally, teachers of color are frequently motivated to work in high-need schools that enroll high numbers of students of color.²⁰ Additionally, some teachers of color have experienced inequality in their own schooling and can deeply relate to their students' experience.^{21,22} As a result, they are more likely to take on additional supportive roles that uniquely benefit diverse students, such as advocates, role-models, mentors, or cultural brokers.^{23,24} When compared to White teachers, teachers of color are also more likely to confront issues of race and racism in schools, and they are more likely to advocate for their students by questioning and defying inequitable systems and norms.^{25,26}

While students of color are uniquely impacted by having teachers who share their background, there is growing consensus that every student—and society at large—benefits from a diverse teacher workforce. As society grows increasingly multiracial, teachers of color can provide a significant social advantage to students by exposing them to different backgrounds and perspectives, and by promoting cross-cultural understandings.^{27,28} Research on student perceptions finds that students of all races believe teachers of color foster quality student-teacher communication, authentic relationships, and engaging lessons.²⁹

How can policymakers and school leaders leverage a student demographics to diversify the teaching force?

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) prompts states to leverage data to ensure individual student needs are met.³⁰ States should heed this recommendation by collecting data to determine which students currently have access to diverse teachers.³¹ Data on teacher-student racial parity can help districts make data-informed decisions about where to focus diversification efforts, including teacher residencies and Grow-Your-Own programs.³² By disaggregating teacher data by race and ethnicity, states can also help districts and schools strategize for teacher hiring, including potential partnerships with Minority Serving Institutions (MSI), to create a bigger pool of diverse teacher candidates.

Additionally, ESSA requires that states track achievement data by student subgroups, including by race, gender, English proficiency, and disability status. Increasing teacher diversity can be a powerful tool for reversing achievement gaps that are brought to light by cross-tabulated data.³³ However, there is still a great deal to learn about how teacher diversity impacts different racial and ethnic groups of students. Because most of the research on teacher diversity has focused on black students, states can fill a critical gap by evaluating the impact of teacher diversity on other student subgroups, such as Latino students, a

group which currently faces the starkest teacher diversity gap.³⁴ States can do this by developing research-practice partnerships with universities, Comprehensive Centers, laboratories and other researchers.³⁵

What does Culturally Responsive Practice (CRP) have to do with student demographics?

Diversifying the teaching workforce is an important goal, but it's only the first step. To be successful, students of color need teachers who share their background *and* who can foster high expectations, authentic relationships, and learning experiences that draw on their diverse backgrounds.³⁶ Unfortunately, there is a growing consensus that too few teachers exhibit these competencies.^{37,38} Additionally, research shows that teachers—both teachers of color and White teachers—can unknowingly harbor stereotypes about the ability of students of color, and particularly Black and Latino boys.³⁹ This cultural mismatch can be a significant obstacle to student learning.

Culturally Responsive Practice (CRP) can attend to this cultural divide. Culturally Responsive Practice (CRP) calls on educators to reject biases about students and families; to devise learning experiences that reflect students' backgrounds; to foster inclusive learning environments; and to challenge inequities that stymie student growth.^{40,41} Bringing these practices to life is no easy feat. Ensuring teachers can implement Culturally Responsive Practice (CRP) with fidelity therefore requires that teachers receive proper training, sufficient practice opportunities, and ongoing input throughout their careers.

How can policymakers and school leaders leverage a student demographics to increase teacher proficiency in Culturally Responsive Practice?

Research suggests that exposure to student diversity early in their careers helps prospective teachers unearth stereotypes about students of color and increases their desire to teach in diverse schools.^{42,43} When coupled with rigorous coursework, field experience can be especially effective at raising teacher candidates' awareness about issues of race and culture, which they are likely to encounter in diverse classrooms.⁴⁴ Both states and teacher preparation programs can play a role in ensuring teacher candidates in initiation licensure programs have access to—and are required to undertake—coursework and field work that will prepare them to work in diverse school settings. States can also develop and adopt standards of cultural responsiveness to guide the work of teacher preparation programs.⁴⁵

Once they enter the classroom, teachers should have access to quality professional learning in Culturally Responsive Practice (CRP) that increases in rigor as they advance in mastery. To set clear expectations for professional development, states can develop professional learning standards on cultural competence and devise evaluation processes to assess the quality of professional development programs.⁴⁶ Expanding the reach of Culturally Responsive Practice (CRP) is not just about building educator capacity, however. It is equally important to ensure that states and districts develop and adopt curricular materials that reflect the diverse cultures, backgrounds, and experiences of students.⁴⁷ States and school districts can explore the use of open education resources (OER) to help meet this goal.⁴⁸ Ultimately, teachers cannot be expected to adopt Culturally Responsive Practice (CRP) without the proper training and instructional tools.

Where can I learn more?

- [Culturally Responsive Education: A Primer For Policy And Practice](#), Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools

- [Culturally Relevant Education: A Guide for Educators](#), The Research Alliance for New York City Schools
- [Culturally Responsive Teaching Matters!](#), Equity Alliance
- [Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color](#), 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).

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

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

⁸ Hussar, W. J., & Bailey, T. M. (2017). Projections of Education Statistics to 2025. NCES 2017-019. *National Center for Education Statistics*. From <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED576296.pdf>

⁹ Ryan, C. (2013). Language use in the United States: 2011. *American community survey reports*, 22, 1-16. From www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/acs-22.pdf

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¹¹ US Department of Education. (2016). The state of racial diversity in the educator workforce. From <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/highered/racial-diversity/state-racial-diversity-workforce.pdf>

¹² Bireda, S., & Chait, R. (2011). Increasing Teacher Diversity: Strategies to Improve the Teacher Workforce. *Center for American Progress*. From https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2011/11/pdf/chait_diversity.pdf

¹³ Brown, C., & Boser, U. (2017). Revisiting the Persistent Teacher Diversity Problem. *Center for American Progress*. From <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/news/2017/09/28/415203/revisiting-persistent-teacher-diversity-problem/>

¹⁴ Egalite, A. J., Kisida, B., & Winters, M. A. (2015). Representation in the classroom: The effect of own-race teachers on student achievement. *Economics of Education Review*, 45, 44-52. From <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0272775715000084>

¹⁵ Gershenson, S., Hart, C., Lindsay, C., & Papageorge, N. W. (2017). The long-run impacts of same-race teachers. From https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2940620

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