



**STRATEGY BRIEF:**

Retaining  
Educators of  
Color

Local education agency (LEA) and school leaders can use this brief to learn more about:

- Effective practices they can use to improve rates of retention among educators of color;
- How other LEAs have implemented strategies to address this challenge; and
- Resources to support this work in your LEA.

*To learn more about educator retention generally, see the Retention Guide.*

## Context

All students benefit from a racially diverse teacher workforce as students prepare to enter an increasingly diverse society.<sup>1</sup> Students of color, in particular, benefit from a diverse teacher workforce as teachers of color are less likely to discipline or expel students of color, more likely to identify students of color for gifted programs, tend to have higher academic expectations for students of color, and can serve as academically successful role models.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, teachers of color can be more motivated to work in typically hard-to-staff schools, which may help reduce teacher attrition rates in these schools.<sup>3</sup> Thus, states and LEAs invest in various strategies to recruit and hire teachers of color. While some recruitment efforts have been relatively successful, retaining teachers of color can pose a challenge. Turnover rates for teachers of color are higher than those of white teachers, including in Pennsylvania.<sup>4</sup>

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**1** Council of Chief State School Officers, (2019) A Vision and Guidance for Diverse and Learner-Ready Teacher Workforce, available at [https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/Vision%20and%20Guidance%20for%20a%20Diverse%20and%20Learner-Ready%20Teacher%20Workforce\\_FINAL010919.pdf](https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/Vision%20and%20Guidance%20for%20a%20Diverse%20and%20Learner-Ready%20Teacher%20Workforce_FINAL010919.pdf)

**2** Council of Chief State School Officers, (2019) A Vision and Guidance for Diverse and Learner-Ready Teacher Workforce, available at [https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/Vision%20and%20Guidance%20for%20a%20Diverse%20and%20Learner-Ready%20Teacher%20Workforce\\_FINAL010919.pdf](https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/Vision%20and%20Guidance%20for%20a%20Diverse%20and%20Learner-Ready%20Teacher%20Workforce_FINAL010919.pdf)

**3** Di Carlo, M., Cervantes, K. (2018) The Collection and Availability of Teacher Diversity Data: A Survey of 51 State Education Agencies, available at <http://www.shankerinstitute.org/resource/teacherracedata>

**4** Bireda, S. & Chait, R. (2011) Increasing Teacher Diversity: Strategies to Improve the Teacher Workforce, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2011/11/09/10636/increasing-teacher-diversity/>; Pennsylvania Department of Education (2018 and 2019). Professional Personnel Staff Reports.

# Effective LEA policies and practices

## **Track and report teacher retention and turnover rates.**

Track mobility rates of teachers of color within the LEA to determine if there are patterns of teachers leaving certain schools for other schools within the LEA. Using these data, LEAs can work to understand the school-level factors driving teachers to leave and provide resources and supports to increase the retention of teachers of color for schools with high turnover.<sup>5</sup> Where possible, track information regarding teachers moving to other LEAs or leaving the profession,<sup>6</sup> and use exit surveys to learn why—if the number of teachers leaving is large enough for anonymity.

## Reflection Questions

- *What data do you have regarding retention and turnover of teachers of color in your school/district?*
- *How about data on retention of teachers of color by their ratings on the multiple measures used in PA's educator effectiveness system?*
- *What do the data reveal about why teachers of color leave certain schools and where do they go?*
- *Are there unanswered questions in your data?*
- *What improvements can be made to data collection to provide better insight as to why teachers leave and guidance for how to improve teacher retention, particularly retention of teachers of color in high need schools and/or positions?*

**Resource:** *Insights on Diversifying the Educator Workforce* – A free, user-friendly, Excel-based tool developed by the Center for Great Teachers and Leaders that districts can use to analyze their own data to understand the underlying causes of their diversity gaps. The tool helps identify and visualize diversity gaps across the entire career continuum, from

<sup>5</sup> Council of Chief State School Officers, (2019) A Vision and Guidance for Diverse and Learner-Ready Teacher Workforce, available at [https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/Vision%20and%20Guidance%20for%20a%20Diverse%20and%20Learner-Ready%20Teacher%20Workforce\\_FINAL010919.pdf](https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/Vision%20and%20Guidance%20for%20a%20Diverse%20and%20Learner-Ready%20Teacher%20Workforce_FINAL010919.pdf); Dixon, D., Griffin, A. and Teoh, M. (2019) If you Listen, We Will Stay: Why Teachers of Color Leave and How to Disrupt Teacher Turnover, available at <https://teachplus.org/DisruptTeacherTurnover>

<sup>6</sup> Steinberg, M.P.; Neild, R.C., Canulette, W.K., Park, S., Schulman, E., Wright, M. (2018) Teacher Mobility in the School District of Philadelphia, 2009-10 through 2015-16, available at <https://www.phledresearch.org/teacher-mobility>

high-school graduates entering preparation programs to experienced classroom teachers. The tool supports users in examining educator workforce diversity gaps by guiding users through the development of charts and maps. The first chart outlines the differences between the number of White educators and educators of color in the workforce as they progress through the career continuum. The second, identifies the most significant moments of attrition in the teacher career spectrum (e.g. postsecondary enrollment, teacher preparation program enrollment, state licensure test, etc.). The third, identifies racial disparities between the student and teacher populations. The fourth, generates easy-to-read maps to help users understand the role of geography in diversity gaps in their districts.

### **Provide financial incentives.**

Provide loan forgiveness, service scholarships, loan repayment incentives, and relocation incentives for teachers who remain in the LEA—and particularly in high need schools and/or positions—for several years. The financial burden of entering and remaining in the profession can be great for teachers of color.<sup>7</sup> Financial incentives may support both recruitment and retention as they make it more financially feasible for teachers of color to become teachers and reduce their debt so that staying in the profession is more sustainable.<sup>8</sup>

### **EXAMPLE IN ACTION:**



**Urban Teacher Enhancement Program** is a grow-your-own program for teachers committed to urban schools. A partnership between the University of Alabama at Birmingham and three high-need school districts in Birmingham, Alabama, the program uses a variety of recruitment methods to reach candidates of color. The program recruits mid-career professionals, recent college graduates who did not major in education, paraprofessionals, and other school staff in the partner districts to teach in high-need schools. Program participants receive tuition support for teacher education coursework, coursework co-taught by university faculty and teachers from the partner districts, and mentorship from master teachers in the partner districts. About 90 percent of candidates complete the program, about 70 percent of program participants are African American, and the program has a 70 percent retention rate after three years—with 80 percent of graduates teaching in high poverty schools.<sup>9,10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Dixon, D., Griffin, A. and Teoh, M. (2019) If you Listen, We Will Stay: Why Teachers of Color Leave and How to Disrupt Teacher Turnover, available at <https://teachplus.org/DisruptTeacherTurnover>

<sup>8</sup> Dixon, D., Griffin, A. and Teoh, M. (2019) If you Listen, We Will Stay: Why Teachers of Color Leave and How to Disrupt Teacher Turnover, available at <https://teachplus.org/DisruptTeacherTurnover>

<sup>9</sup> Urban Teacher Enhancement Program website <https://www.uab.edu/education/cue/34-projects/current-projects/84-urban-teacher-enhancement-program>;

<sup>10</sup> Bireda, S. & Chait, R. (2011) Increasing Teacher Diversity: Strategies to Improve the Teacher Workforce, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2011/11/09/10636/increasing-teacher-diversity/>

## **Invest in school leaders.**

Invest in the recruitment, preparation and development of strong and diverse school leaders committed to positive working conditions that promote a diverse workforce.<sup>11</sup> Teachers frequently leave schools because of dissatisfaction with their administrators<sup>12</sup> and research shows that administrative support can be especially important for retaining teachers of color.<sup>13</sup> To support teacher retention, school leaders should be effective instructional leaders and managers who encourage inclusive decision-making, set norms for students and staff, nurture a positive and encouraging culture, and keep schoolwide systems running smoothly.<sup>14</sup> School leaders should also build a school culture that creates a welcoming space for teachers of color.<sup>15</sup> LEAs can provide leadership training to help school administrators create work environments that encourage teachers of color to stay.<sup>16</sup>

### **EXAMPLE IN ACTION:**



**Boston Male Educators of Color and Women Educators of Color Executive Coaching Programs** both support, recruit and retain teachers of color. In 2014, Boston Public Schools created the Male Educators of Color (MEOC) Executive Coaching Program to focus specifically on male teachers of color. The program partners retired teachers and administrators of color with current male teachers of color to provide practical advice and professional support throughout the year. The success of the MEOC program led to the development of the Women Educators of Color (WEOC) Executive Coaching Program, which offers similar support to female teachers of color. In addition to the mentorship, participants of both programs complete coursework on leadership development and organizational change at the University of Massachusetts. The programs have begun to yield fruitful results with several program participants taking on leadership roles at the school and district level.<sup>17</sup>

**11** Dixon, D., Griffin, A. and Teoh, M. (2019) *If you Listen, We Will Stay: Why Teachers of Color Leave and How to Disrupt Teacher Turnover*, available at <https://teachplus.org/DisruptTeacherTurnover>; Simon, N. and Johnson, S.M. (2013) *Teacher Turnover in High-Poverty Schools: What We Know and Can Do*, available at <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6210/6fb22387ad72a41d26403ec6851b2f0fd71c.pdf>

**12** Simon, N. and Johnson, S.M. (2013) *Teacher Turnover in High-Poverty Schools: What We Know and Can Do*, available at <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6210/6fb22387ad72a41d26403ec6851b2f0fd71c.pdf>

**13** Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). *Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

**14** Simon, N. and Johnson, S.M. (2013) *Teacher Turnover in High-Poverty Schools: What We Know and Can Do*, available at <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6210/6fb22387ad72a41d26403ec6851b2f0fd71c.pdf>; Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). *Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

**15** Dixon, D., Griffin, A. and Teoh, M. (2019) *If you Listen, We Will Stay: Why Teachers of Color Leave and How to Disrupt Teacher Turnover*, available at

**16** Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). *Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

**17** Iasevoli, B. (2017) *Boston Program Supports Male Educators of Color* available at <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/04/26/boston-program-supports-male-educators-of-color.html>; Cray, C. (2016) *Boston Public Schools Launch a New Diversity Program to Empower Women Educators of Color*, available at <https://www.bostonmagazine.com/news/2016/06/16/women-educators-of-color/>

## **Implement comprehensive mentoring and induction programs.**

Well-designed mentoring and induction programs can improve teacher retention rates for all teachers.<sup>18,19</sup> Mentoring and induction programs include receiving support from a veteran teacher and can also include professional learning, coaching, feedback, and time to collaborate with other teachers.<sup>20</sup> Building strong relationships between mentors and mentees can foster trusting relationships, which are critical to retaining teachers of color.<sup>21</sup> In a trusting relationship, teachers feel comfortable enough to go to a peer/mentor/administrator to talk through issues they are having—both academic and personal, “like if you’re having a bad day.”<sup>22</sup> Mentoring also helps teachers adjust to their jobs and their school communities.<sup>23</sup> See guide on Induction and Mentoring.

### **EXAMPLE IN ACTION:**



**San Francisco Teacher Residency** was established in 2010 and is a partnership between the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), the University of San Francisco, Stanford University, and the local teachers’ union, United Educators of San Francisco. Residents complete a year-long apprenticeship teaching with an expert teacher in a high need school, while completing night courses and other training tightly integrated with their clinical placement in the district. Residents are guaranteed a job with SFUSD and two years of additional coaching and mentoring. Residents receive several financial incentives in exchange for committing to teach in SFUSD for at least three years. After five years, 80 percent of program graduates continue to teach at SFUSD. Sixty-six percent of graduates are teachers of color.<sup>24,25</sup>

**18** New Teacher Center website, retrieved from <https://newteachercenter.org/our-impact/>

**19** After implementing New Teacher Center’s induction program, Hillsborough County Public Schools increased the new teacher retention rate by 31% and 90% of experienced teachers who served as mentors and coaches in the program remained in the district after five years

**20** Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). *Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

**21** Dixon, D., Griffin, A. and Teoh, M. (2019) *If you Listen, We Will Stay: Why Teachers of Color Leave and How to Disrupt Teacher Turnover*, available at <https://teachplus.org/DisruptTeacherTurnover>

**22** Dixon, D., Griffin, A. and Teoh, M. (2019) *If you Listen, We Will Stay: Why Teachers of Color Leave and How to Disrupt Teacher Turnover*, available at <https://teachplus.org/DisruptTeacherTurnover>

**23** Dixon, D., Griffin, A. and Teoh, M. (2019) *If you Listen, We Will Stay: Why Teachers of Color Leave and How to Disrupt Teacher Turnover*, available at <https://teachplus.org/DisruptTeacherTurnover>

**24** Guha, R., Hyler, M. and Darling-Hammond, L. (2016) *The Teacher Residency: An Innovative Model for Preparing Teachers*, available at <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/teacher-residency>

**25** San Francisco Teacher Residency Program website <http://www.sfteacherresidency.org/>

## EXAMPLE IN ACTION:



**Boston Teacher Residency (BTR)** is an AmeriCorps program created in 2002. The program immerses candidates in the complex field of teaching, by placing them with experienced mentor teachers. Residents take courses taught by BTR faculty and receive coaching in their school settings. Forty-nine percent of BTR graduates are teachers of color, 35 percent are African-American or Latino, and 71 percent of graduates remain teaching in Boston Public Schools after six years.<sup>26</sup>

### *Proactively address the most common reasons teachers leave.*

Proactively address retention issues before they become a problem. Examples of these reasons include poor school cultures and working conditions; the absence of supportive administrators; insufficient teacher autonomy; lack of opportunities for teachers to contribute to decision-making in the school; and the absence of formal support for beginning teachers such as mentoring and induction programs.<sup>27</sup> Schools in which faculty have more decision-making influence and a greater degree of classroom autonomy have lower teacher turnover rates, particularly for teachers of color.<sup>28</sup> Other important conditions include creating a positive and encouraging culture and running schoolwide systems smoothly.<sup>29</sup> Surveys, interviews and other feedback methods may be used to gather educators' views regarding conditions in their schools (e.g. whether there are sufficient leadership opportunities or degree of autonomy). Where appropriate, LEAs may disaggregate the data by race/ethnicity as long as it does not compromise anonymity. For more information on surveying teachers and other stakeholders, see the how-to guide on surveying stakeholders.

<sup>26</sup> Guha, R., Hyley, M. and Darling-Hammond, L. (2016) The Teacher Residency: An Innovative Model for Preparing Teachers, available at <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/teacher-residency>; Boston Teacher Residency program website <https://www.bpe.org/boston-teacher-residency/about/impact/>

<sup>27</sup> TNTP (2012) The Irreplaceables: Understanding the Real Retention Crisis in America's Urban Schools, available at <https://tntp.org/publications/view/the-irreplaceables-understanding-the-real-retention-crisis>; Simon, N. and Johnson, S.M. (2013) Teacher Turnover in High-Poverty Schools: What We Know and Can Do, available at <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6210/6fb22387ad72a41d26403ec6851b2f0fd71c.pdf>; Burke, Paul F., Sandy Schuck, Peter Aubusson, John Buchanan, Jordan J. Louviere, and Anne Prescott (2013). Why do early career teachers choose to remain in the profession? The use of best-worst scaling to quantify key factors. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 62, 259–268

<sup>28</sup> Ingersoll, R & Henry, M. (2011) Recruitment, Retention and the Minority Teacher Shortage. CPRE Research Report # RR-69 available at <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED526355>

<sup>29</sup> Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

# Reflection Questions

- *Are there current initiatives focused on addressing the most common reasons teacher leave?*
- *What supports, if any, address the particular needs of teachers of color?*
- *Are there changes that can be made to existing programs to address the needs of teachers of color and help improve their retention?*







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