

TEACHER DIVERSITY EXPANDS LATINO EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

A diverse teacher workforce is critical to expanding educational achievement for Latino* students. Recent studies show that having a teacher of color in a classroom boosts students' test scores and decreases absences and suspensions.¹ As a growing population, Latino students make up one in four public school students and are projected to comprise nearly 30% of the student population by 2027.²³ English Learners (ELs), another emerging subgroup, account for nearly five million students, three out of four of which primarily speak Spanish.⁴

Yet despite the fact that Latinos comprise a large share of the student body, only 9% of teachers are Latino and only 24% of Teacher Preparation Programs (TPP) train elementary teacher candidates to support ELs.⁵ This teacher diversity gap and lack of proper EL training harm Latinos' academic achievement. As such, federal funds should focus on increasing teacher workforce diversity and improving EL training quality, specifically through evidence-based practices and programs that encourage people of color to enter and stay in the teaching profession.

Latino teachers are more likely to leave their profession than their non-Latino peers.

Latino teachers are entering the workforce at growing rates, but they are also more likely to leave their profession than any other racial or ethnic group.⁶ From the 1987 to 2016 academic year, the percentage of first-year Latino teachers in the workforce increased by 7% (from 4% to 11%).⁷ However, in the 2012-13 academic year, Latino public school teacher retention rates were lower than their White peers (79% vs. 85%).⁸

Latino teachers' lower retention rates are partially attributed to school environments and teacher preparation programs. In a recent survey, teachers of color were more likely to cite lack of administrative support, classroom autonomy, and influence over school policies as reasons for exiting their profession.⁹ Another reason Latino teachers are more likely to leave their profession is teachers of color are more likely to enroll in alternative certification programs, which tend to provide shorter trainings. As such, they are more likely to have higher turnover rates than their traditionally certified counterparts. In the 2014-15 academic year, 20% of teachers of color were enrolled in an alternative certification program, compared to 10% of White teachers.¹⁰ Furthermore, teachers are not sufficiently trained to support ELs' academic outcomes. Recent surveys report that more than 55% of teachers will have at least one EL in their classroom, yet fewer than a third of those teachers have had even a modest level of relevant training.¹¹ Adding insult to injury, due to President Trump's termination of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), an estimated 20,000 immigrant educators face an uncertain future.¹²

* The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race.

Latinos' low enrollment and completion rates within the teacher pipeline widen the teacher diversity gap.

Latinos face a widening teacher to student gap, larger than it is for other racial and ethnic groups. Research suggests that student outcomes, such as test scores and attendance, improve when there is a demographic match between teachers and students.¹³ However, as Latinos go through the teacher pipeline, their enrollment and completion rates plummet, presenting a barrier to creating a diverse teacher workforce. In 2008, Latinos made up 11% of teacher preparation candidates, compared to 69% of White candidates.¹⁴ Four years later, 10% of Latinos in the 2008 cohort graduated with a bachelor's degree and 7% earned a degree in education.¹⁵ Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) provide an important opportunity to increase the teacher diversity pool. Compared to predominately White institutions, MSIs are more likely to have a diverse teacher candidate pool and graduate teachers of color with a bachelor's degree in education.¹⁶

Growing student debt and low teacher pay add barriers for Latinos to enter and stay in teaching.

Rising student loan debt among Latinos discourages students from pursuing education careers with relatively low wages. Even once aspiring Latino teachers make it into the profession, low teacher compensation paired with a growing percentage of teachers with significant student debt discourages retention. A majority (82%) of Latinos take out federal student loans for training programs, which are increasingly out of reach for low-income, first-generation students of color.¹⁷ Overall, the average student debt for teachers with a graduate degree is \$50,000, while the average starting salary for teachers in the academic year 2017-18 was \$39,249.^{18,19} While teachers may be eligible for debt relief through the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, less than 1% of applications have been approved, leaving teachers with fewer opportunities to tackle their debt.

Recommendations to Strengthen Teacher Quality and Diversity

To create a strong teacher workforce that benefits Latinos, a reauthorized HEA should include the following recommendations:

- **Increase Investment for Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) grant program.** Increasing the grant award would allow more students of color to access teacher preparation programs and increase diversity in the teacher workforce.
- **Maintain and Improve Management of Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program.** This program serving low wage earners would eliminate the remaining student loan debt balance of teachers working in the public sector after 10 years of repayment.
- **Strengthen the Department of Education's Oversight Over TPPs.** Strengthening oversight over TPPs will build highly effective teachers, equipped to support a more diversified student body.
- **Mandatory Funding for TPPs at Minority Serving Institutions (MSI).** Increasing support for TPPs at MSIs will assist students of color complete their degree and prepare them for working in challenging schools with high turnover rates.
- **Establish Grant Programs to Fund Development of TPPs to Train Teachers on Evidence-Based EL Instruction.** Strengthening teaching programs that provide teaching candidates with the skills to serve ELs will improve students of colors' educational outcomes.
- **Increase Investment in Teacher Quality Partnership Grants (TQP).** Increasing teacher quality partnership grants will expand and prepare a diverse profession-ready teacher pipeline for students in high-need schools.

Endnotes

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