

The Landscape: Educator Diversity in North Carolina

In the 2015-16 school year, North Carolina’s public school student population became “majority-minority” for the first time as the number of students of color exceeded the number of white students. However, this change in the makeup of the student population has not been reflected in the teaching workforce. [Data from the 2018-19 school year](#) indicate that while 53 percent of students are nonwhite, this is true of only 22 percent of educators.

All of North Carolina’s 115 local education agencies (LEAs) have a [greater share of students of color](#) than educators of color, and for over three quarters of districts, this difference is greater than 20 percentage points. Two LEAs employ zero educators of color, and 23 LEAs do not employ a principal or assistant principal of color. Only eight LEAs in North Carolina have higher percentages of principals of color than students of color. This lack of diversity of educators and school leaders is reflective of North Carolina’s difficulty recruiting, preparing, supporting, and retaining educators of color.

STUDENT AND EDUCATOR DIVERSITY IN NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 2018-19



[Data Source](#)

A NATIONAL CONCERN

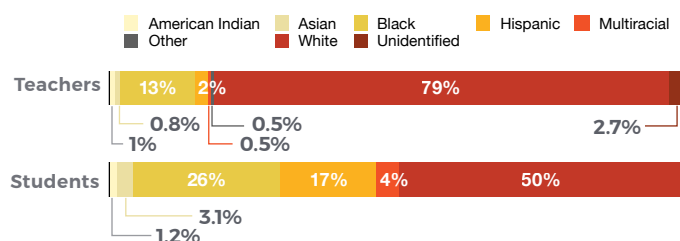
This is not an issue that is unique to North Carolina. According to the [2015-16 School Staffing Survey from the National Center for Education Statistics](#), 80 percent of our nation’s teacher workforce is white. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Education released a [report](#) analyzing the state of racial diversity in the teacher workforce and found that while the diversity of the teacher workforce is slowly increasing, the student population is diversifying at a much faster rate. Barring significant intervention, the gap between the racial and ethnic makeup of students and teachers may increase further.

Analyzing teacher diversity through generational cohorts adds another layer of concern for the issue of educator diversity. Despite millennials being the [most diverse generation to date](#), baby boomer and Generation X teachers are [actually more diverse](#) than their millennial counterparts. This highlights the need for increased intervention as these more diverse cohorts are inching closer to retirement.

RECRUITMENT AND PREPARATION OF RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE EDUCATORS IN NORTH CAROLINA

Recruiting a diverse pool of applicants has proven to be a challenge for educator preparation programs across the country. Within undergraduate institutions of higher education (IHE) nationally, [colleges of education are less diverse](#) than other departments in higher education. This [trend holds true in North Carolina](#), where **81 percent of students enrolled in educator preparation programs in 2018 were white and 86 percent of those who were licensed through an educator preparation program that year were white.**

STUDENT AND EDUCATOR DIVERSITY IN NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 2016-17⁵



DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS BY EDUCATOR PREPARATION PATHWAY IN NC, 2018

Race	4-Year IHE Preparation	Alternative Preparation
White	81%	55%
Black	12%	36%
Hispanic	3%	3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1%	1%
American Indian	>1%	2%
Two or more Races	2%	2%

[Data Source](#)

Alternative certification programs, which allow professionals with degrees in non-teaching fields to become certified through a short, intensive training process, are more diverse, with prospective educators of color constituting 45 percent of those enrolled. However, across North Carolina's various educator preparation pathways, 70 percent of all students enrolled are white.

SUPPORT AND RETENTION OF NORTH CAROLINA'S EDUCATORS OF COLOR

Both nationally and in North Carolina, school districts struggle with supporting and retaining educators of color. From 2004 to 2014, the retention rate among Black educators in elementary and middle schools in North Carolina was nearly 4 percentage points lower than that of white educators.¹ Research suggests this is partially due to educators of color being placed in hard-to-staff schools that have higher proportions of underperforming students and are located in lower socioeconomic areas more frequently than their white peers. However, Black educators were more likely than their white counterparts to stay in schools that had a higher population of Black students, and if they did leave their school for another, they tended to go to schools with an even higher proportion of Black students.^{2,3}

THE NEED FOR DISAGGREGATED DATA

A significant challenge in understanding the scope of the issue of educator diversity is the lack of publicly available data in North Carolina and nationally. The most recent available national data regarding teacher demographics is from the 2015-16 school year. In 2019, the [Washington Post](#) attempted to amass state-reported teacher demographic data to better understand the state of teacher diversity; however, they found that states vary in how they collect and report teacher demographic data, and some don't collect it at all. North Carolina only publicly shares teacher race and ethnicity in the categories of Black, white and other, marginalizing North Carolina's Hispanic, American Indian, and Asian American populations and making it difficult to directly compare the racial and ethnic diversity of students and teachers.

Further, the state does not publicly release pertinent disaggregated data that are critical in identifying points along the educator pipeline where intentional support may be needed. These include a lack of disaggregated data regarding enrollment and completion within educator preparation programs, new teacher placement, years of teaching experience, or teacher turnover. Even when obscuring some data points to protect the privacy of those who make up a small percentage of the pipeline in their school or district, these descriptive statistics at the state or district level could offer tremendous insight into nuances of the issue of teacher diversity.

The History: Educators of Color in North Carolina

Prior to the landmark civil rights case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, educators of color who taught in and led segregated schools were faced with low salaries, inadequate funding, old textbooks, and inferior facilities. Due to the intentional efforts by the state to disproportionately fund Black schools, communities of color in North Carolina relied on northern philanthropic organizations like the Rosenwald Fund and the Anne T. Jeanes Fund to build schools and train and pay Black female teachers, respectively. With many states, including North Carolina, attempting to thwart the Court's mandate to desegregate "with all deliberate speed," integration did not begin in earnest until the early 1970s. States did not want to allocate the resources required to update the facilities of Black schools, leading to school closures and the firing of Black staff.^{4,5} **It is estimated that the number of Black educators in the United States decreased by 31.8 percent as a result of desegregation.** In fact, approximately 38,000 Black educators across the South lost their jobs following the *Brown v. Board* decision. Principals faced a similar trend, as an [estimated 90 percent](#) of Black principals in the deep south states lost their positions.

North Carolina's decline in the number of educators of color was not tied solely to educators being replaced in newly integrated schools. The advent of new certification and licensure procedures all but explicitly discriminated against Black educators.⁶ Beyond the increased barriers to entering and remaining in the teaching profession, Black educators sought employment opportunities outside of the education sector due to the *1964 Civil Rights Act* which prohibited racial discrimination in employment.

Prior to integration, American Indian students attended schools with Black students. American Indian educators were able to use North Carolina's pro-segregation stance to garner funding for the Haliwa-Saponi Indian School in 1957. For over a decade, American Indian students were able to learn from primarily American Indian educators in a school that served as a rallying point for the community. However, with the inevitable integration of all schools in North Carolina, American Indian educators faced the same realities as their Black peers.

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS OF COLOR AND TEACHERS OF COLOR BY LEA, 2018-19

In all 115 of North Carolina's LEAs, the share of students of color exceeds the share of teachers of color. The percentage point difference between student and teacher diversity in these LEAs ranges from 6 to 58 percentage points.

LEA	% Teachers of Color	% Students of Color	Percentage Point Difference	LEA	% Teachers of Color	% Students of Color	Percentage Point Difference
Clay County	0%	12%	12	Tyrrell County	13%	62%	49
Graham County	0%	22%	22	Kannapolis City	13%	68%	55
Ashe County	1%	15%	14	Whiteville City	13%	61%	47
Yancey County	1%	17%	16	Cabarrus County	13%	49%	35
Avery County	1%	15%	15	Onslow County	13%	44%	30
Alleghany County	1%	27%	26	Pamlico County	14%	37%	24
Madison County	1%	7%	6	Rowan-Salisbury	14%	42%	28
Jackson County	1%	28%	27	Hickory City	14%	59%	45
Transylvania County	1%	20%	19	Union County	15%	39%	24
Mitchell County	1%	15%	13	Lee County	15%	63%	47
Cherokee County	2%	15%	13	Craven County	16%	50%	35
Yadkin County	2%	32%	30	Montgomery County	16%	61%	44
Wilkes County	2%	24%	23	Chatham County	17%	49%	32
Haywood County	2%	14%	12	Greene County	17%	71%	54
Davidson County	2%	18%	16	Gates County	18%	38%	21
Surry County	2%	30%	28	Martin County	18%	63%	45
Caldwell County	2%	22%	20	Richmond County	19%	57%	38
Macon County	2%	23%	21	Sampson County	19%	63%	43
Watauga County	3%	15%	13	Person County	19%	50%	31
Alexander County	3%	20%	17	Alamance-Burlington	19%	57%	37
Stokes County	3%	12%	9	Wake County	20%	54%	34
Lincoln County	3%	23%	20	Pitt County	22%	64%	42
Davie County	4%	27%	23	Harnett County	22%	54%	32
McDowell County	4%	22%	18	Caswell County	22%	50%	28
Randolph County	4%	29%	25	Perquimans County	24%	34%	9
Burke County	4%	32%	28	Duplin County	24%	67%	43
Polk County	5%	24%	19	Franklin County	24%	56%	32
Carteret County	5%	23%	18	Lenoir County	25%	65%	40
Mount Airy City	5%	37%	32	Chapel Hill-Carrboro City	26%	49%	23
Henderson County	5%	35%	30	Winston-Salem/Forsyth	27%	63%	36
Buncombe County	5%	31%	25	Clinton City	28%	76%	48
Rutherford County	5%	28%	23	Wilson County	28%	70%	42
Catawba County	5%	35%	29	Bladen County	29%	63%	34
Newton-Conover City	6%	54%	48	Wayne County	30%	64%	35
Stanly County	6%	32%	26	Anson County	31%	68%	37
Dare County	6%	25%	18	Nash-Rocky Mount	31%	70%	39
Swain County	7%	34%	28	Thomasville City	32%	79%	47
Hyde County	7%	45%	38	Jones County	33%	53%	19
Mooreville City	7%	36%	28	Lexington City	34%	78%	44
Pender County	8%	34%	26	Charlotte-Mecklenburg	36%	72%	37
Camden County	8%	21%	13	Cumberland County	37%	71%	34
Asheville City	8%	37%	29	Guilford County	38%	68%	31
Currituck County	8%	20%	12	Edgecombe County	40%	71%	31
New Hanover County	8%	39%	31	Pasquotank County	41%	60%	19
Cleveland County	8%	40%	32	Scotland County	42%	71%	29
Elkin City	9%	31%	22	Durham County	43%	81%	38
Moore County	9%	37%	27	Granville County	45%	58%	13
Roanoke Rapids City	10%	40%	31	Hoke County	54%	75%	21
Iredell-Statesville	10%	35%	25	Vance County	60%	84%	25
Rockingham County	11%	39%	28	Robeson County	64%	87%	24
Orange County	11%	46%	34	Northampton County	64%	90%	26
Brunswick County	11%	35%	24	Hertford County	67%	87%	20
Gaston County	12%	43%	32	Warren County	68%	86%	18
Asheboro City	12%	70%	58	Washington County	68%	88%	20
Johnston County	12%	46%	34	Bertie County	71%	87%	16
Beaufort County	12%	54%	42	Halifax County	86%	96%	10
Columbus County	12%	49%	36	Weldon City	91%	97%	6
Edenton-Chowan	13%	57%	44				

Data Source

The Imperative: Why Having a Diverse Educator Workforce Matters

Extensive research has found that a diverse educator workforce is beneficial to all students, but especially students of color.

Multiple studies have indicated that test scores improve in both math and reading in early grades when students are taught by an educator that reflects a student's racial identity; this is especially true for lower-performing Black students.⁷ Educators typically assess same-race students more positively, leading to a higher rate of placement in gifted classes for students of color when they have an educator or principal that reflects their racial identity.^{8,9} This benefit continues at the high school level where students of color are more likely to enroll in a higher-level math course after geometry if they previously had at least one math educator who was Black.¹⁰ Having one Black educator in third, fourth, or fifth grade leads to a decrease in dropout rates among Black males and an increase in likelihood that they will aspire to attend a four-year college.¹¹

Beyond increases in academic achievement, studies also support the positive disciplinary impact of a diverse educator workforce. Non-Hispanic white educators are more likely to negatively assess externalizing behaviors (e.g., arguing in class, being disruptive) of Black students than an educator of color, leading to increased rates of exclusionary discipline practices.¹² **An analysis of student-level administrative data in North Carolina found that students served by educators of color exhibited increased attendance rates and fewer instances of exclusionary discipline, especially among Black students.**¹³

Educators of color often cite the importance of shared experiences that connect them to their students as a driver of their success.¹⁴ By developing these connections with students with whom they share a racial and ethnic identity, educators can establish bonds with both students and their families. These connections manifest in student associations, as students in urban districts reported more positive perceptions of race-matching educators in terms of feeling cared for, that their schoolwork is interesting, and that there is meaningful communication and guidance offered by educators.¹⁵

While the most obvious impact of a diverse educator workforce pertain to students of color, the benefits of a diverse educator workforce extend to all students. In an increasingly multicultural world, racial and ethnic diversity across the educator continuum demonstrates to all students that knowledge and authority are not exclusive to one group.¹⁶ **Experts suggest that simply taking a class with an educator of color leads white students to challenge previously held racial stereotypes, thus creating a more accepting and tolerant atmosphere for all students.**¹⁷ Students of all races also tend to rate educators of color more positively than white educators, with students reporting that Black educators hold them to a higher standard than educators of other races.¹⁸

Citations

- 01 Sun, M. (2018). Black Educators' Retention and Transfer Patterns in North Carolina: How Do Patterns Vary by Educator Effectiveness, Subject, and School Conditions? AERA Open.
- 02 Ibid
- 03 Hanushek, E. A., Kain, J. F., & Rivkin, S. G. (2004). Why public schools lose educators? *Journal of Human Resources*, 39(2), 237-354.
- 04 Fultz, M. (2004). The Displacement of Black Educators Post-Brown: An Overview and Analysis. *History of Education Quarterly*, 44(1), 11-45.
- 05 Fairclough, A. (2004). The costs of brown: Black educators and school integration. *The Journal of American History*, 91(1), 43-55.
- 06 Tillman, L. (2004) (Un)intended consequences? The impact of the Brown v. Board of Education decision on the employment status of black educators. *Education and Urban Society*.
- 07 Dee, T. (2004) Educators, Race, and Student Achievement in a Randomized Experiment. *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 86, no. 1: 195-210. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3211667>
- 08 Ouazad, A. (2014, July 17) Assessed by an Educator Like Me: Race and Educator Assessments. *Education Finance and Policy* 9, no. 3: 334-72.
- 09 Grissom, J., Rodriguez, L., and Kern, E. (2017, February 10) Educator and Principal Diversity and the Representation of Students of Color in Gifted Programs: Evidence from National Data. *The Elementary School Journal* 117, no. 3: 396-422.
- 10 Klopfenstein, K. (July 2005) Beyond Test Scores: The Impact of Black Educator Role Models on Rigorous Math Taking. *Contemporary Economic Policy* 23, no. 3: 416-28.
- 11 Gershenson, S., Hart, C., Hyman, J., Lindsay, C. and Papageorge, N. (2017, March) The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Educators. Institute of Labor Economics.
- 12 Bates, L. A., and Glick, J.E. (2013, September) Does It Matter If Educators and Schools Match the Student? Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Problem Behaviors. *Social Science Research* 42, no. 5: 1180-190.
- 13 Lindsay, C., and Hart, C. (2017, September) Exposure to Same-Race Educators and Student Disciplinary Outcomes for Black Students in North Carolina. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 39, no. 3: 485-510.
- 14 Achinstein, B., Ogawa, R. T., Sexton, D., & Freitas, C. (2009, April). The socialization and retention of new educators of color: Promises and challenges. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.
- 15 Egalite, A., and Kisida, B. (2018, March) The Effects of Educator Match on Students' Academic Perceptions and Attitudes. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 40, no. 1: 59-81.
- 16 Zumwalt, K., and Craig, K. (2008) Who Is Teaching? Does It Matter? In *Handbook of Research on Educator Education: Enduring Questions in Changing Contexts*, edited by Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Sharon Feiman-Nemser, and D. John. McIntyre, 404-19. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.
- 17 Frankenberg, E. (2009). The Segregation of American Educators. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 17, 1.
- 18 Cherg, H.S., and Halpin, P. (2016, October 1) The Importance of Minority Educators. *Educational Researcher* 45, no. 7: 407-20.