



## Policy Memorandum: Closing the Achievement Gap by Recruiting and Retaining Diverse Educators

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### Who We Are

We are education leaders with more than 30 years of combined experience, which has helped us understand the importance of recruiting, retaining, and sustaining high-quality, culturally diverse educators to teach students of color. Celia Garcia Alvarado leads the education efforts for the Cesar Chavez Foundation throughout the Southwest as the Executive Vice President of Education and Devon Teran is the Principal of DeLaSalle Charter High School in Kansas City, MO. Both of us serve under-resourced communities with high numbers of Latino students. We are also part of the National Institute of Latino School Leadership (NILSL) Fellowship with UnidosUS, which seeks to bridge the divide between policy and practice and train effective advocates for policies and reform efforts to strengthen educational outcomes for Latinos students.

### Background

The most recent Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization, the Every Student Success Act (ESSA), includes Title II, which supports mentoring and teacher and administrator training. Currently, money flows to states and districts to support these activities, but there is significant flexibility and minimal transparency on how these funds are used. As a result, there is no targeted support for or evidence that any funding is being used to develop and retain culturally diverse educators.

### Our Ask

- Require school districts and states to collect and report teacher racial and ethnic demographic data on ESSA state report cards.
- Require school districts to collect and report teacher retention rates by racial and ethnic demographic data on ESSA state report cards.

- Require schools and states to include plans to reserve 20% of their ESEA Title II funds in grant applications to support the recruitment and retention of culturally diverse educators.

Adding teacher demographic and retention data by race and ethnicity to ESSA state report cards will give states, schools, and communities the information they need to better tailor their strategies and partner with community organizations to strengthen and sustain the diversity of their teacher workforce. Moreover, this data is important in order for all districts to become proactive in meeting growing diverse student populations' unique needs, like Latino students, across the United States.

## The Need

All students benefit from a diverse teacher workforce that wants and is able to stay in the classrooms.<sup>1</sup> Latino students growing up in under-resourced communities are disproportionately affected by teacher shortages and by not having access to teachers who share their racial/ethnic background. This is particularly concerning given the historically lower educational attainment patterns of Latinos in comparison to their White peers.

### **Reporting annual teacher demographic and retention data by race and ethnicity is not required of districts or states under current ESSA guidelines.**

Current ESSA guidelines for state report cards require reporting data about educator qualifications that includes the number and percentages of inexperienced teachers, teachers teaching with emergency or provisional credentials, and teachers who are not teaching in the subject or field for which the teacher is certified or licensed.

While race/ethnicity and retention data are sometimes compiled by third-party researchers at the state and district levels, it is often incomplete and thereby insufficient. Reliable and timely data are needed to better inform diverse teacher recruitment, hiring, and retention practices, as well as efforts by school districts across all states.

### **COVID-19 is widening achievement gaps for Latino students due to distance learning inequities, and Latino students need teachers who can meet their academic, cultural, and linguistic needs.**

Latinos are the fastest growing student population in the United States, but their race/ethnicity is not mirrored in the diversity of our current teacher workforce. While Latino students account for more than 25% of K-12 students nationally, approximately only 9% of educators identify as Hispanic or Latino.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, this number is not evenly distributed across the country; according to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 40 states, Latinos are less than 3% of the teacher workforce.<sup>3</sup>

These numbers are alarming given that census data shows a shift in settlement patterns for Latinos, which presents new challenges for districts that are not prepared to meet their unique needs, especially in rural areas.<sup>4</sup> English learner (EL) populations have more than doubled between 2005-2015 in states such as Mississippi, South Carolina, Kentucky, Kansas, and Maryland.<sup>5</sup>

### **Latino students are disproportionately affected by teacher shortages and teachers of color attrition rates, which are challenging school districts across the United States, particularly those located in rural areas.**

Teachers of color are leaving the teaching profession at higher rates than they are being hired into it, and this dynamic directly contributes to teacher shortages and a lack of diversity in the teaching workforce. This is particularly concerning given that this group

is motivated to return to their own communities to teach and often finds placements in hard-to-staff schools.<sup>6</sup> Some estimates predict that there could be as many as 250,000 vacant teaching positions by 2025, and it is unclear how many of these will be vacated by Latino teachers. To illustrate the severity of this problem, the Learning Policy (LPI) Institute found that in California, which educates the largest percentage of Latino students in the country, there are rural school districts where all the teachers that were hired were emergency credential teachers.<sup>7</sup> This is highly alarming, given that this group of teachers is more likely to leave the profession.

## Impact

### **Latino teachers positively impact Latino student achievement and social growth and can play a pivotal role in addressing learning loss and socio-emotional effects due to COVID-19.**

Research suggests and supports that Latino teachers are better positioned than their non-Latino counterparts to meet the needs of Latino students. Benefits include stronger academic achievement and socio-emotional benefits as well as fewer unexcused absences and lower likelihoods of chronic absenteeism and suspensions.<sup>8</sup> These teachers can also serve as relatable successful role models because they share or may have a greater understanding of their students' culture.

Latino teachers can be leveraged to curb the learning loss and socio-emotional effects that Latino students are experiencing due to COVID-19. Culturally diverse teachers are able to communicate more effectively with families and share their needs so that schools can design better solutions. Schools that have staffs that resemble the demographic makeups of their communities are able to make better decisions that meet the unique needs of their students and families during the pandemic.

### **Improving the retention of culturally diverse educators addresses teacher shortages.**

While Latinos, as a group, are entering the teaching profession at an increasing rate, they are also exiting at higher rates than other groups.<sup>9</sup> Increased accountability and incentivized use of Title II funds to address both recruitment and retention of culturally diverse educators can keep more teachers in the classroom and reduce teacher shortages. Teachers of color are a resource for students in hard-to-staff schools because many report feeling called to teach in low-income communities of color. Latino teachers play an important role in filling vacancies in these schools, and whether they decide to remain in teaching has significant impacts on students.<sup>10</sup>

## Endnotes

- 1 B. Bond, E. Quintero, L. Casey, and M. DiCarlo, *The State of Teacher Diversity in American Education*, The Albert Shanker Institute, 2015, <http://www.shankerinstitute.org/resource/teacherdiversity> (accessed January 22, 2021).
- 2 Education Trust West, *Our Stories, Our Struggles, Our Strengths: Perspectives and Reflections from Latino Teachers*, Ed Trust, 2018, <https://edtrust.org/resource/our-stories-our-struggles-our-strengths/> (accessed January 22, 2021).
- 3 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Percentage Distribution of Public School Principals, by Race/Ethnicity and State: 2017-18," [https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/tables/ntps1718\\_19110501\\_a1s.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/tables/ntps1718_19110501_a1s.asp), (accessed January 22, 2021).
- 4 Kimberly Turner, Elizabeth Wildsmit, Lina Guzman, & Marta Alvira-Hammon, *The Changing Geography of Hispanic Children and Families*, National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families, 2016. <https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Emerging-Communities.pdf> (a).
- 5 U.S Department of Education, *English Language Acquisition Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Request*, 2019, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget19/justifications/g-ela.pdf> (accessed January 22, 2021).
- 6 Bond, et. al., *The State of Teacher Diversity in American Education*.
- 7 Desiree Carver-Thomas and Linda Darling-Hammond, *Teacher Turnover: Why it Matters and What We Can Do About It*, Learning Policy Institute, 2017, [https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Teacher\\_Turnover\\_REPORT.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Teacher_Turnover_REPORT.pdf) (accessed January 22, 2021).
- 8 Ana María Villegas and Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, "Diversifying the Teaching force: An Examination of Major Arguments," *Urban Review* 42, no. 3 (2010): 175-192.
- 9 Emma García and Elain Weiss, "U.S. Schools Struggle to Hire and Retain Teachers," Economic Policy Institute, April 16, 2019, <https://www.epi.org/publication/u-s-schools-struggle-to-hire-and-retain-teachers-the-second-report-in-the-perfect-storm-in-the-teacher-labor-market-series/> (accessed January 22, 2021).
- 10 Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, *Teacher Turnover*.