

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Creating Conditions for Success:

**How Districts Can Build and Sustain a Stronger
and More Diverse Educator Workforce**



1MTC
ONE MILLION
TEACHERS OF COLOR

For young people to succeed in school and beyond, they need strong academic experiences. As ample research and data show, a high-quality, diverse educator workforce—including teachers, principals, and other school leaders—delivers strong learning opportunities and increases students’ sense of belonging during their K-12 experience. While federal and state policy and practice are critical in shaping the systems to recruit, hire, and retain a quality, diverse educator corps, what takes place at the district level has a tremendous impact on the K-12 educator workforce and, ultimately, students’ experiences.

This report seeks to better understand the local conditions that impact educational leaders’ ability to build and sustain a strong and diverse educator corps. To generate actionable insights for local education officials—such as superintendents, local school board members, and other district and charter network leaders—we asked 30 classroom, school, and system-level leaders—including teachers, principals, district superintendents, and central office staff—from small to large districts across the country, to share their knowledge, expertise, and wisdom on four key questions:

Why does educator diversity matter?

We heard unequivocally from the educational leaders who participated in our interviews and focus groups that strengthening and diversifying the educator workforce go hand in hand. And, indeed, their insights affirm decades of research showing:

- ▶ **Insight 1:** Educators of color improve academic achievement and attainment for all students, equitably improving overall school performance.
- ▶ **Insight 2:** Educator diversity can help school systems promote consistent access to rigorous, grade-level coursework for all students.
- ▶ **Insight 3:** Educator diversity is an effective strategy for reducing exclusionary and inequitable discipline.

What challenges have you experienced when it comes to strengthening and diversifying the educator workforce?

Teaching and leading our schools is intellectually challenging, emotionally demanding work that is ultimately deeply rewarding for the educators with whom we spoke. At the same time, interviewees and focus group participants shared that educators of color face additional challenges on the job stemming from several inconvenient and undeniable truths:

- ▶ **Challenge 1:** There are sizable financial barriers that discourage people of color from entering teaching, and that hinder their ability to build long-term, sustainable careers in education.
- ▶ **Challenge 2:** Difficult working conditions and political contexts exact a disproportionate toll on educators of color.
- ▶ **Challenge 3:** Structural and interpersonal racial bias can exist in education talent systems—and when it does, it negatively impacts everyone, regardless of one’s racial identity.

What bright spots are leading to better systems and solutions for diverse educators?

Despite formidable challenges, interviewees and focus group participants expressed steadfast commitment to transforming our schools and school systems to better support and sustain educators of color at every stage of the talent pipeline. They are especially energized by a few critical developments:

- ▶ **Bright Spot 1:** Addressing systemic bias is helping to create concrete reforms and more inclusive systems in some districts.
- ▶ **Bright Spot 2:** Promising initiatives and partnerships with entities that influence talent pipelines (e.g., higher education and private sector entities) are positioning school systems to increase educator diversity in the years ahead.
- ▶ **Bright Spot 3:** There is growing recognition that school systems alone cannot tackle the complex social, economic, and political dynamics that profoundly shape our educator workforce.

What are the most important steps local education officials can take to increase the strength and diversity of their educator workforce?

We asked classroom, school, and system-level leaders to identify the most critical and pressing steps local education officials can take to make the educator workforce more representative of the students and communities our public school system serves. Their responses highlighted five key action steps:

- ▶ **Action 1:** Leverage data to emphasize the importance of diverse educators in improving student outcomes and invite stakeholders to help make their communities a thriving place for educators of color.
- ▶ **Action 2:** Establish clear goals and timelines, along with shared accountability and support, for increasing teacher and school leader diversity.
- ▶ **Action 3:** Regularly assess how welcoming, inclusive, and culturally affirming your classrooms and schools are to educators, students, and families of color—and take meaningful action based on that data.
- ▶ **Action 4:** Invest in your educator talent pipeline early and holistically, and forge partnerships with preparation providers and community organizations that can help advance teacher and school leader diversity goals.
- ▶ **Action 5:** Prioritize personal and professional development and support to sustain and retain educators of color currently serving your students and communities.