

WISDOM ACTION

Recommendations for Recruiting, Retaining, and Sustaining Black Teachers

For State Policymakers and District and Charter School Leaders:

To directly address the barriers to entering the profession, the allegheny county RPLC recommends that policymakers and district and charter leaders:

- **Conduct thorough audits** of teacher examination and certification policies, then revise these policies accordingly to ensure that Black candidates do not face additional barriers throughout the certification process.
- **Conduct audits of their hiring practices and policies**, then revise as appropriate, to ensure that Black candidates receive fair treatment and equal opportunities throughout the hiring process.
- **Design pipeline programs for students** who have an interest in the teaching profession that will provide support and lead to a teaching placement. Prioritize partnering with teacher education programs at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and with existing Black teachers to offer these programs.
- **Create a program for paraprofessionals to develop teaching skills** and experience, and eventually secure teaching placements. Prioritize matching Black paraprofessionals with Black mentor teachers.
- **Ensure that school funding is adequately and equitably distributed** to all schools, including schools that serve students of color at high rates.

To address issues of systemic and interpersonal racism, the RPLC recommends that policymakers and district and charter leaders:

- **Participate in continuous education/training** to learn about developing safe environments that are conducive to recruiting, supporting, and retaining Black educators.
- **Develop and implement systemic and infrastructural improvements and supports** to recognize, elevate, and harness Black teachers' unique contributions to their students and schools.
- **Implement a mandatory and research-informed racial equity training** for teachers and school leaders of all racial/ethnic identities.
- **Conduct a third-party audit of salaries** and adjust accordingly to achieve pay equity.

To address the lack of support, mentorship, and training for black teachers, the RPLC recommends that policymakers and district and charter leaders:

- **Establish mentorship/ supervision programs for school leaders**, to ensure they are consistently offering effective and equitable support to their teaching staff.
- **Create and maintain mentorship programs for new teachers** that extend beyond their first year and offer multiple touchpoints throughout the school year, including observations, discussions based on feedback, and modeling. Position experienced and veteran Black teachers as lead mentors.
- **Create affinity spaces** where Black teachers can connect with other Black teachers, both within the county and beyond.

For Communities Within Allegheny County:

To hold districts and LEAs accountable for implementing changes and to offer models of effective support for Black teachers, the RPLC recommends that members and groups within the communities that Allegheny County districts/LEAs serve:

- **Develop and participate in collectives** that include individuals and groups that represent families, local businesses, community leaders, and grassroots organizations. These collectives would be responsible for:
 - *Identifying needs and advocating for policy changes*, including legislation, that could improve recruitment, retention, and support of Black teachers.
 - *Attending school board meetings* and other events to voice concerns and suggest changes.
 - *Community organizing*, when necessary, to draw public attention to issues that have not been addressed by districts and LEAs.
- **Develop spaces for Black teachers to connect and network** with each other, students and their families, and other community members.
- **Recognize, acknowledge, and celebrate** Black educators within their respective communities.

For Existing Teacher Diversity Initiatives:

To further address the issues identified by study participants, members of our Research Practice Learning Community expressed that existing teacher diversity initiatives and programs in the area would be able to better serve the region through increased collaboration. The RPLC recommends that initiatives dedicated to increasing teacher diversity in Allegheny County (including but not limited to Teach Plus and the Equity Leadership Institute, Pittsburgh Promise Scholarship, FAME, and Teaching is My Favorite Color), participate in a collective that would collaborate on:

- **Supporting their participants in moving through the process of becoming a teacher**, as some programs begin in high school and others support teachers with securing placements and remaining in the profession.
- **Partnering with the Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium (PEDC)**, a grassroots organization that exists to bring together organizations and individuals in PA who are dedicated to increasing teacher diversity, to build on the momentum PEDC has generated in the region and garner additional support.
- **Strategic mapping of teacher diversity initiatives in the region**, with a specific focus on initiatives that support Black teachers. The completed maps could be distributed to several stakeholders, including other teacher diversity initiatives, prospective teachers, colleges and universities, and community organizations.
- **Securing multi-year funding** that will support teacher diversity work well into the future.
- **Building support for alternative pathways to certification** and advocating for legislation that supports these pathways.