

Prioritizing Educator Diversity Research

A Learning Journey of Reflection, Insights,
and New Possibilities

AERA – PRESIDENTIAL SESSION



Meet the RFA Panelists



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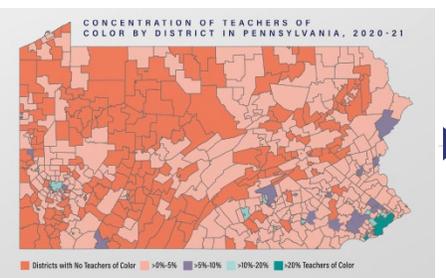
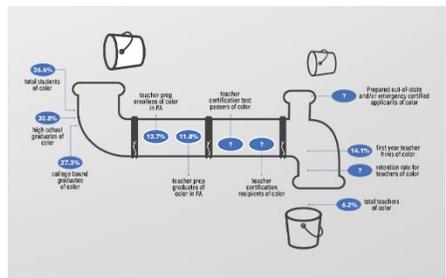




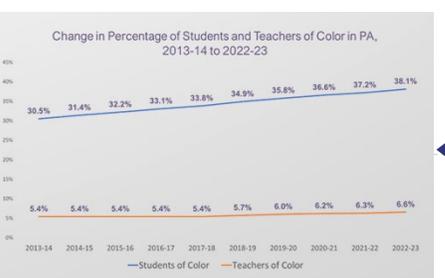
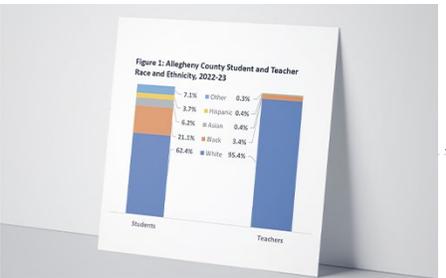
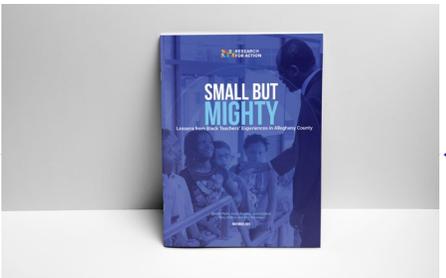
A Journey of Reflection, Insights, and New Possibilities

- Where did we start?
- Where have we been?
- Where are we going?

A Journey of Reflection, Insights, and New Possibilities



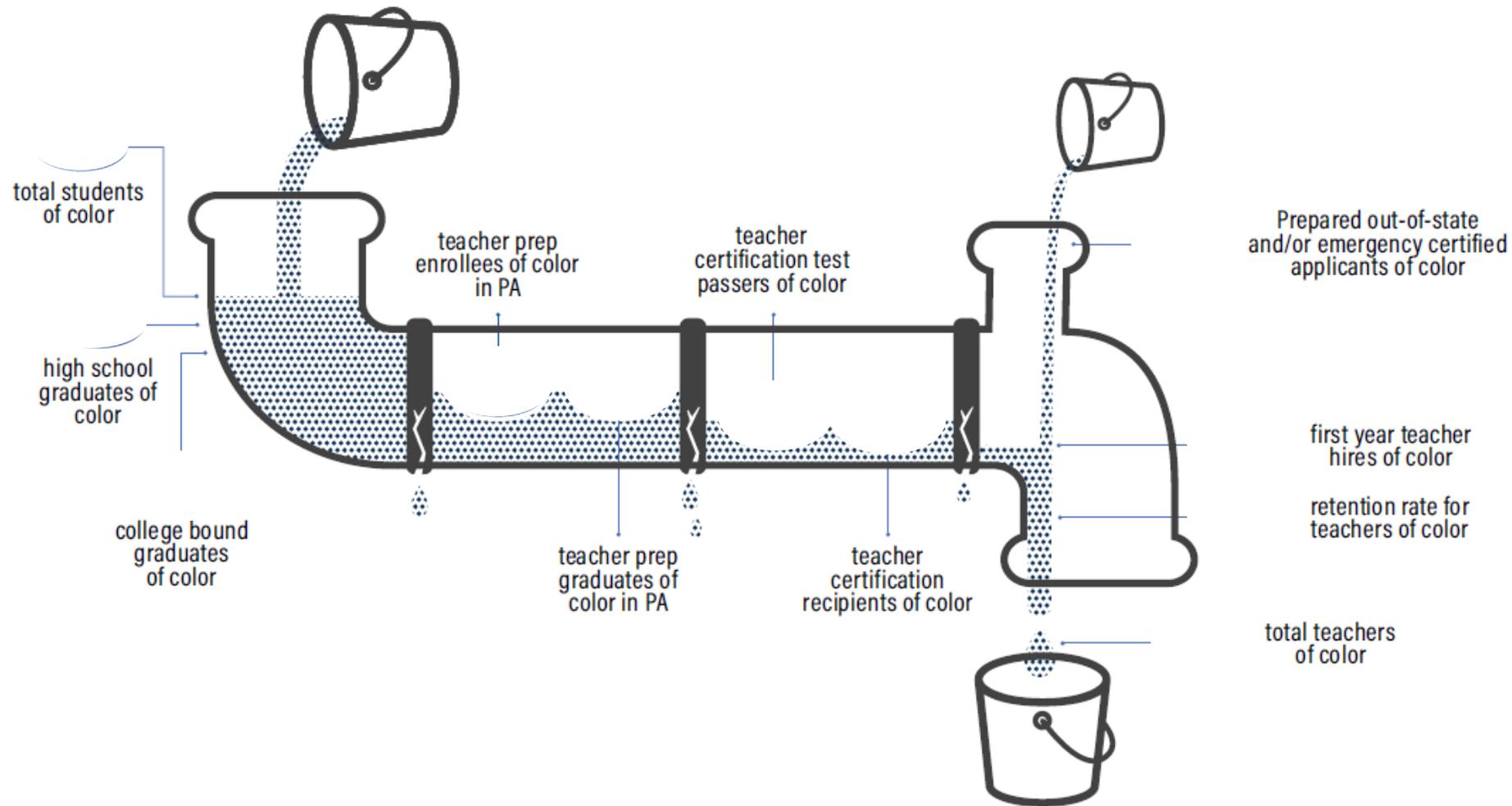
Y/PAR





**Where Did
We Start And Where
Have We Been?**

...Patching the Leaky Pipeline of Teacher Diversity in Pennsylvania...

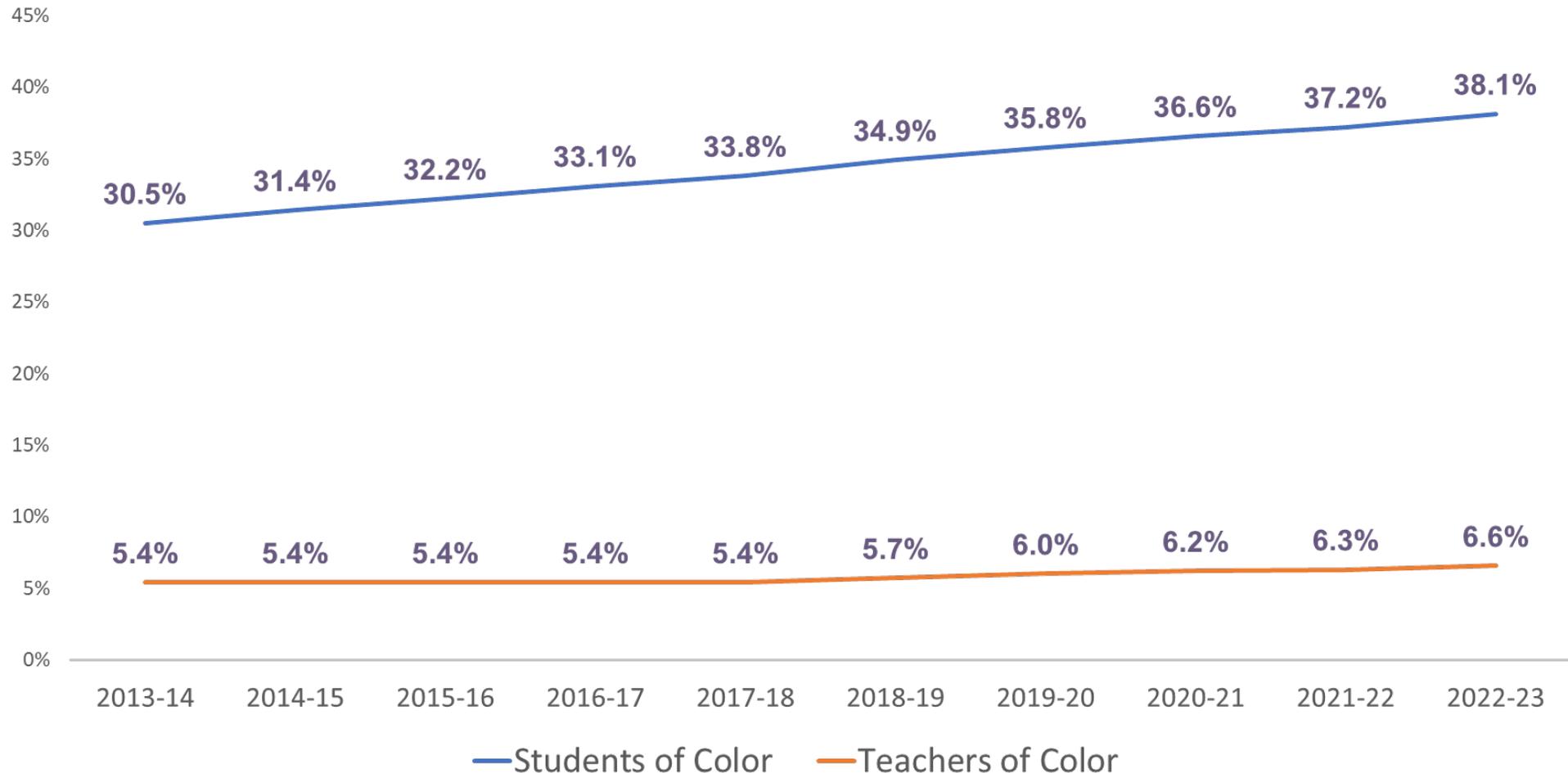




...adding in more
descriptive
analysis...

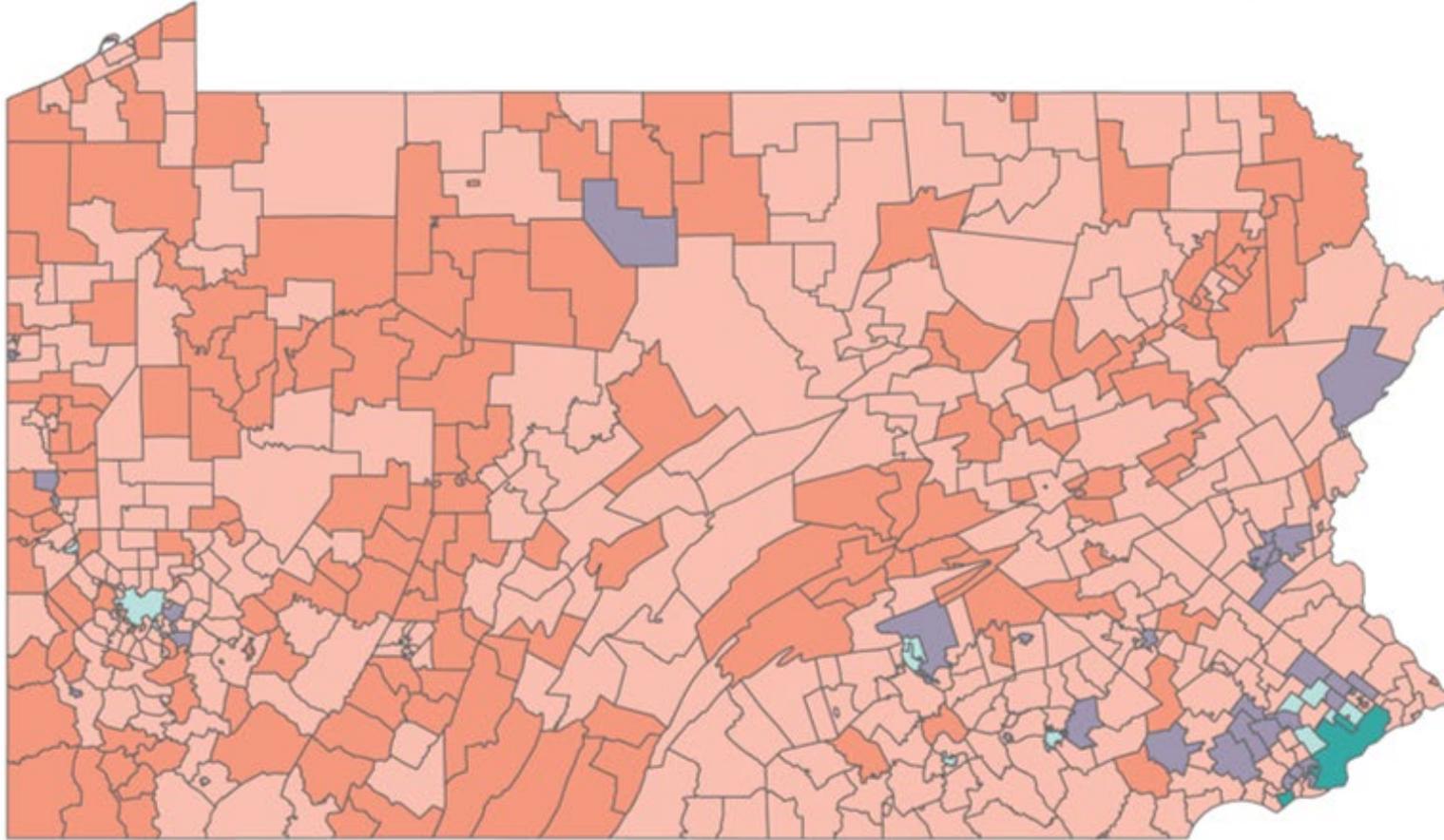
...Descriptive Analysis of Educator Diversity Data in PA

Change in Percentage of Students and Teachers of Color in PA, 2013-14 to 2022-23



...Descriptive Analysis of Educator Diversity Data in PA

CONCENTRATION OF TEACHERS OF COLOR BY DISTRICT IN PENNSYLVANIA, 2022-23



What does 6.6% TOCs look like?

Over 1,358 schools (46% of all schools) and 155 entire school districts employed zero teachers of color.

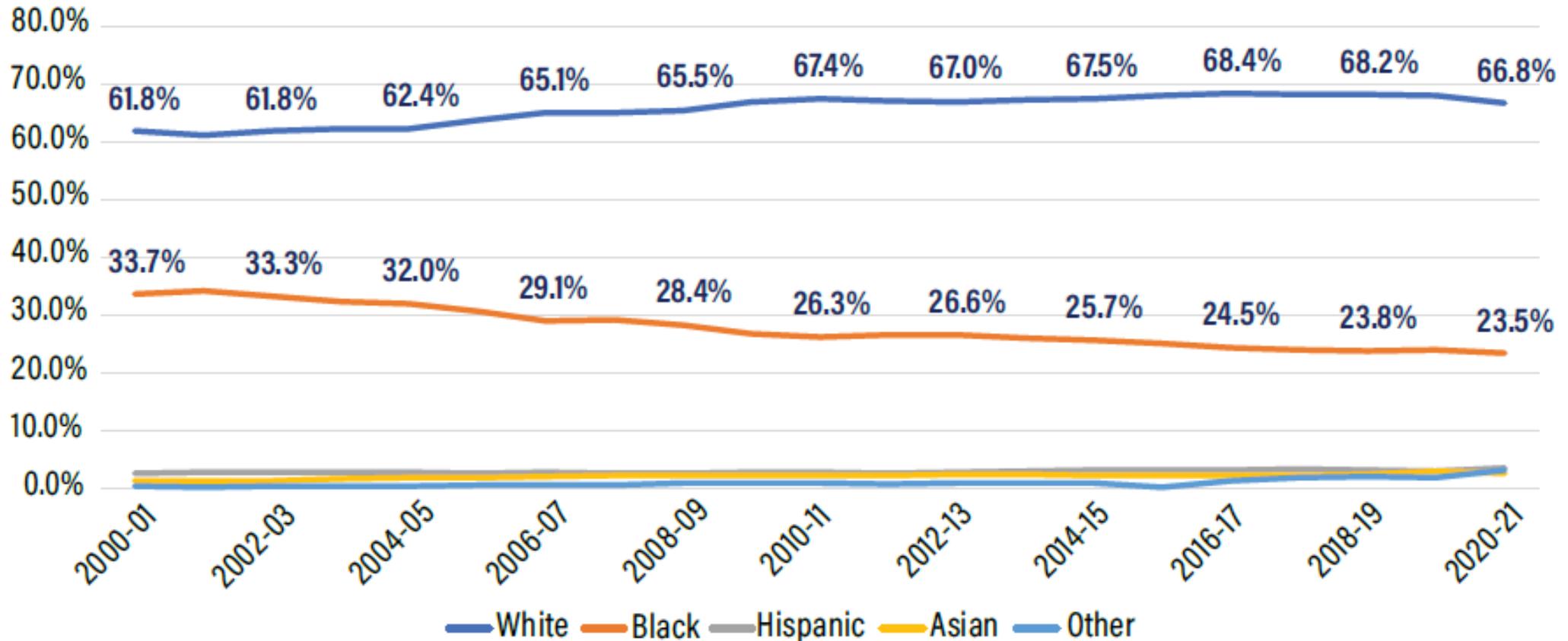
Nearly 600,000 students (including 103,621 students of color) enrolled in schools with only white teachers.

Legend: Districts with No Teachers of Color | >0%-5% | >5%-10% | >10%-20% | >20% Teachers of Color



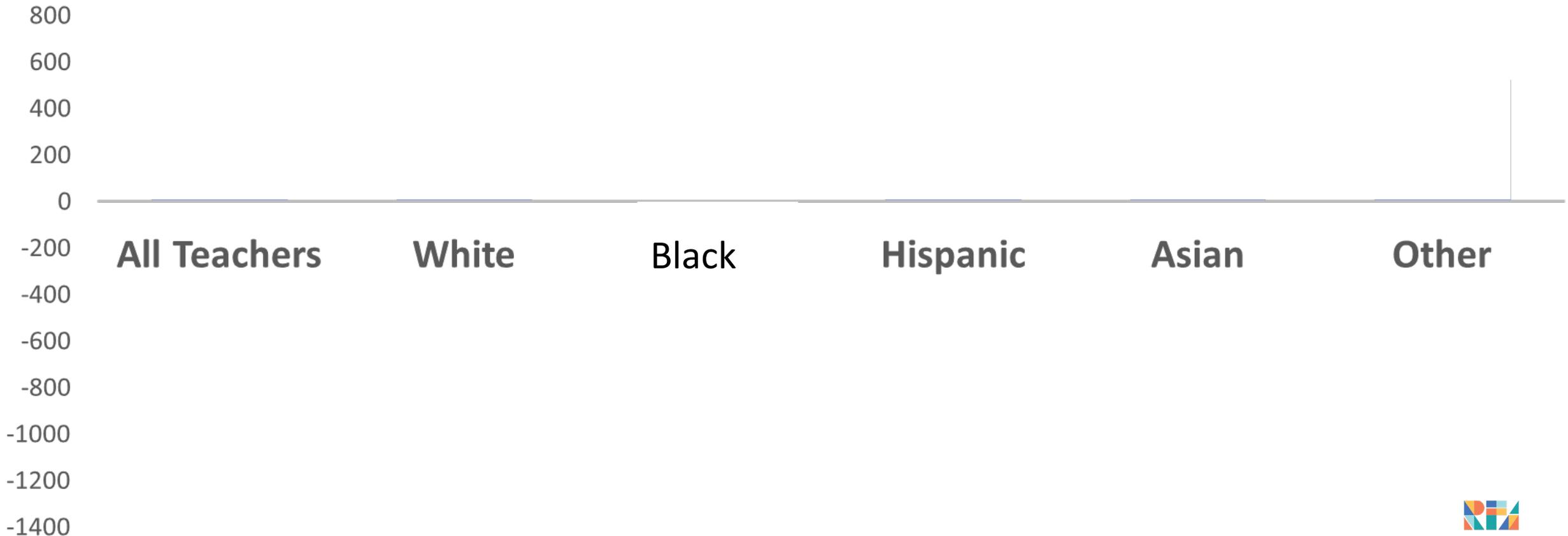
...Descriptive Analysis of Educator Diversity Data in PA (Philadelphia)

TEACHERS BY RACE OR ETHNICITY IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA, 2000-01 TO 2020-21



...Descriptive Analysis of Educator Diversity Data in PA (Philadelphia)

22 Year Change in **Number** of Philadelphia Teachers by Race or Ethnicity (2000-01 to 2022-23)



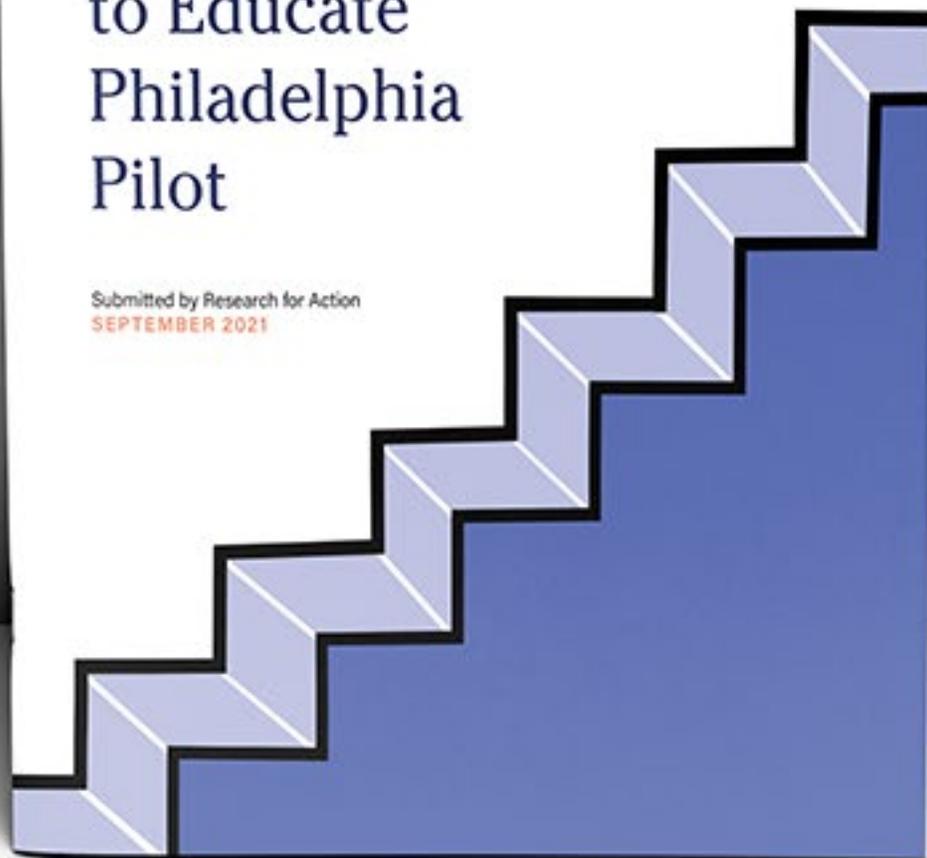


...adding in
program
evaluation...



FINAL REPORT:
Evaluation of
the Aspiring
to Educate
Philadelphia
Pilot

Submitted by Research for Action
SEPTEMBER 2021





...adding in
community
engagement...

**THE NEED
FOR MORE
TEACHERS
OF COLOR**



LEANA CABRAL

**THE NEED
FOR MORE
TEACHERS
OF COLOR**
END #BROTEACHER



...adding in
qualitative
methods...

“Worn & Weary”

Black Teachers’ Storied Experiences and Recommendations around their Attrition and Retention in Philadelphia Schools

NOVEMBER 2022

Leana Cabral, Lynnette Mawhinney, Jill Pierce,
and Carmina Hachenburg



Introduction

The United States’ educational system continues to face a teacher diversity problem—the shortage and loss of schoolteachers of color, and Black teachers specifically, has gained increased national attention and concern over the last decade (Rinke & Mawhinney, 2019; The Education Trust, 2016). Research for Action (RFA) has [found](#) stark disparities in the rates of students of color and teachers of color across Pennsylvania schools, including in Philadelphia. Several [reports](#) have [documented](#) that the *percentage* of Black teachers has declined in the School District of Philadelphia. RFA’s [recent analysis](#) also indicated a notable decline in the *number* of Black teachers in Philadelphia’s public schools, finding nearly 1,200 fewer Black teachers in the combined district and charter sectors today than there were two decades ago. Black teachers are the only group of educators experiencing declining numbers in Philadelphia schools, with teachers of all other racial or ethnic subgroups increasing in numbers or holding steady over the past two decades.

With support from the William Penn Foundation, RFA sought to further examine and understand Black teacher attrition and retention in Philadelphia, and promising strategies and initiatives that can promote the retention of Black teachers in the city and elsewhere. In totality, the project includes qualitative research that centers the perspectives of a small sample of current and former teachers in the Philadelphia area who identify as Black—which is the focus of this report—and a national scan of select teacher diversification initiatives and the particular strategies they employ.

The present report shares the storied experiences and actionable recommendations of a sample of 30 current and former Black teachers, organized by salient themes, providing clear and direct insight into factors that contribute to Black teacher attrition as well as ways to retain current teachers. This study makes key contributions to the existing body of knowledge on Black teachers’ experiences (e.g., The Education Trust, 2016) by focusing on attrition and retention in specific, expanding on and enriching recent research findings pointing to the disproportionate attrition of Black teachers in the unique context of Philadelphia, gleaned the perspectives of former as well as current teachers, and acknowledging and presenting Black teachers as experts on this topic—including sharing their recommendations on efforts that would help promote Black teacher retention in Philadelphia and in general.

Overall, the current and former Black teachers in our sample explained how the cumulative impact of racism—systemic and interpersonal, as well as racial microaggressions—serves as a major

Our Learnings

- ❑ The richness of these teachers' storied experiences is what really stood out.
- ❑ Teachers, who are most proximal to the issue and have a valuable vantage point have in most cases not been a part of exploring this issue nor in imagining solutions
- ❑ Teachers' critiques around their marginalization and deprofessionalization led us to consider alternative models and research methodologies for exploring this issue—methodological approaches that include their feedback on the questions we're asking and how we're asking them to methods that center their participation throughout the entire process.





SMALL BUT MIGHTY

Lessons from Black Teachers' Experiences in Allegheny County

Sicilia Parks, Kevin Burgess, Leana Cabral, Mary Edrins, and Atri Robinson

NOVEMBER 2022

Allegheny schools several contributions their identity

The experiences and perspectives shared by participants in our study demonstrate that Black teachers are uniquely positioned to support and educate Black students, as they bring specific approaches and practices that other teachers do not offer. This is because, as described in this section, every aspect of their role—including pedagogies and practices—is informed by both their Black identity and their purpose for choosing this profession. While several participants emphasized that they develop strong relationships with all students and work hard to ensure their entire classrooms are learning effectively, they expressed that their contributions to Black students' learning are important because other teachers are not able to teach Black students in the same way.

Problem & Purpose

Problem

- ❑ Similar to national trends, Allegheny County has seen significant decreases in the number of Black teachers between 2014 and 2020.
- ❑ Little research has been conducted to understand the causes and subsequent consequences of this decline.

Purpose

- ❑ This study was designed to learn directly from Black teachers in the region about the barriers to recruitment and retention in Allegheny County's public schools.



Research Design and Methods

Data collection

- Background research (literature review, media scan, background interviews with field leaders)
- Interviews and focus groups with current and former teachers
- One focus group with teacher diversity field leaders

Participant Sample

- Current and former teachers
- 23 Pittsburgh Public Schools
- 4 other Allegheny County Districts
- 4 Charters/charter networks



Community Engagement

Our research was advised by a Research Advisory Council (RAC) and Research Practice Learning Community (RPLC)

The RAC included members of the community who are involved with and lead educator diversity efforts, K-12 education, higher ed, and teacher education.

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These groups informed the research throughout the phases of the project.



Research Findings: Key Takeaway 1

Black teachers offer Allegheny County students and schools several unique and important contributions, which are informed by both their identity and their purpose for choosing this profession.

Special connections with Black students

Shared cultural backgrounds, experiences and communities

Intentional investment of time and energy

Representation and role-modeling

Unique pedagogies and practices

Culturally relevant pedagogies and practices

Maintaining high expectations

Alternative discipline strategies



Research Findings: Key Takeaway 2

Black teachers in Allegheny County face many challenges that impact their experiences as educators.

Participants shared that they experience both systemic and interpersonal racism.

- Racial microaggressions
- Harm caused by White colleagues
- Unjust treatment and retaliation from White district and school administrators
- Heavier workloads
- Racism toward students

Participants also described several major challenges that may be experienced by all teachers. Compounded with the challenges unique to Black teachers, they further impact Black teachers' experiences and contribute to Black teachers leaving the profession.

- Inadequate pay
- Restrictive district/LEA policies and mandates
- Lack of support from administration
- Lack of resources and support for students



Research Findings: Key Takeaway 2

Despite the numerous challenges they face, several current Black teachers expressed that they plan to stay in the profession in Allegheny County. The factors that contribute to their desire to continue teaching include:

- Love of students**, and the opportunity to play a role in students' growth and success
- Strong school leaders and positive school culture**, described as collaborative and team-oriented
- Supportive and affirming networks**, especially those created for Black educators
- Investment in their careers**, including both the time and money they've invested



Research Findings: Key Takeaway 3

Despite the numerous challenges they face, several current Black teachers expressed that they plan to stay in the profession in Allegheny County. The factors that contribute to their desire to continue teaching include:

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- ❑ **Strong school leaders and positive school culture**, described as collaborative and team-oriented
- ❑ **Supportive and affirming networks**, especially those created for Black educators
- ❑ **Investment in their careers**, including both the time and money they've invested



Community-Informed Recommendations

Current and former teachers indicated that the region should prioritize:

- Removing barriers to entering the profession
- Addressing the systemic and interpersonal racism that permeates most aspects of their experiences, as well as the experiences of their students
- Increasing support, mentorship, and training

RPLC-developed strategies to address teacher priority areas

- Informed by the teachers' priority areas
- Organized by key stakeholder groups
- Not exhaustive; intended as a starting place



FULL REPORT





RFA Teach-in: Wisdom to Action





...adding in
Participatory
Action Research
(PAR)...

PAR with Black Teachers

- Our PAR project centered the wisdom of Black teachers and positioned them as **designers** of the research and **experts** on the topic.
- The PAR process “brings people **together**, through **inquiry**... To make **meaning** of the condition under which we are living, **WITH** each other, for **our collective liberation**” (Galletta, 2019)
- Teachers, who are most proximal to the issue and have a valuable vantage point have in most cases not been a part of exploring this issue nor in imagining solutions



Our Team

- ❑ 10 teacher-researchers: 6 from Detroit & 4 from Philadelphia
- ❑ Mostly current teachers, 1 former teacher, and one assistant teacher soon to become a teacher
- ❑ Representative of different grades and content areas
- ❑ Mix of new, mid-career, and veteran teachers
- ❑ 4 RFA Staff members
- ❑ All self-identified as Black



Research Questions

Research Question 1:

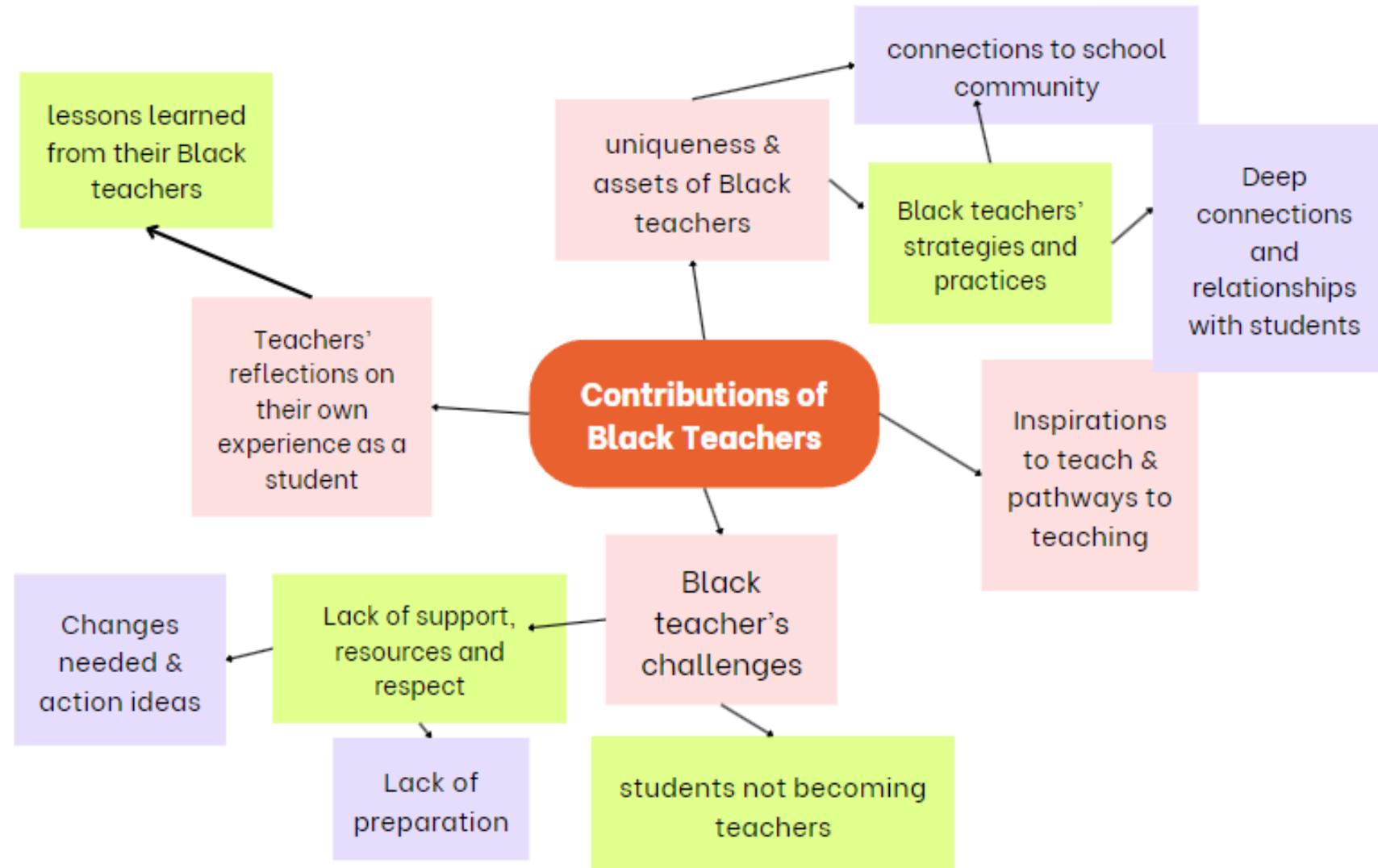
- ❑ How do Black educators in Philly and Detroit understand their role and their unique contributions to the teaching profession, now and in the past?
 - ❑ How are their unique contributions described among Black teachers and Black students in Detroit and Philadelphia?
 - ❑ How have/in which ways do current Black educators draw on the legacy of pioneering Black teaching practices and commitments?

Research Question 2:

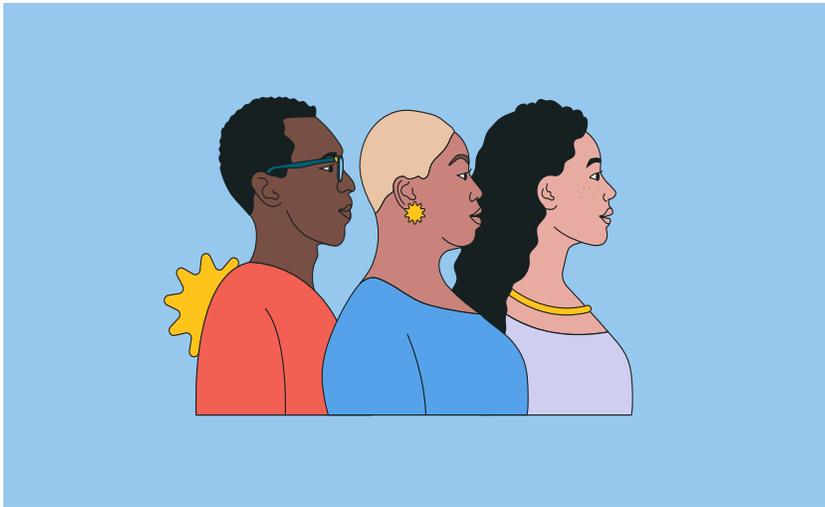
- ❑ How are Black educators (veteran and new) in Philly and Detroit making sense of the current state of the teaching profession?



PAR Study Findings



Lifting Teachers Voices



*“Because what I see is more and more white teachers are coming into our schools and teaching our kids, and sadly, **many of them are miseducating them.** And so what can we look forward to in the future **if we allow that to happen?**”*

*“I stay in the profession because **I love the connection that I have with students and I love the opportunity to impact their lives, and to know that that impact doesn't just end when they leave my classroom, that it goes on.**”*

*“I could really see the impact that I was having. And I grew up in **Philadelphia public schools with really good Black teachers, and so I knew that it was possible to become one.**”*



Listen to Teachers

- Black teachers in Philadelphia and Detroit spoke of giving teachers more voice, decision-making power, and influence. Teachers should shape the regarding from curriculum and they should also be a part of choosing school and district leadership.

“I think that when we talk about stakeholders, we need to actually treat people like stakeholders... because the teachers don't have as much of a say as they should. We know best what works with our kids... Giving teachers more of a say on what's happening in the school building where they do most of the heavy lifting.”

Our Actions



Teacher mentorship program: Our teacher researchers developed and presented a pitch for a new mentorship model that would employ veteran Black teachers as full-time mentors to new Black teachers for two academic years. The mentees would receive in-depth, hands-on coaching and mentorship on lesson planning; classroom management; IEP; & inclusion, time-management; work-life balance & teacher-wellness; system navigation; and support with racial microaggressions. It would begin with a pilot in Philadelphia & Detroit with 2-3 mentors in each city and expand with proven success.



Media campaign: We are creating a micro-site that will serve as the home for several products we are developing to share the findings from our study, including audio clips, blog posts, and other multimedia products. We are also planning to develop a 3-episode podcast that will explore the themes pulled from our data collection, our teacher-researchers' perspectives on the state of the profession for Black teachers, and the PAR approach.



National study: We are launching a PAR study that will engage up to 12 teachers in 4-5 new cities. 3 of the teacher researchers from our pilot study will return as advisors.



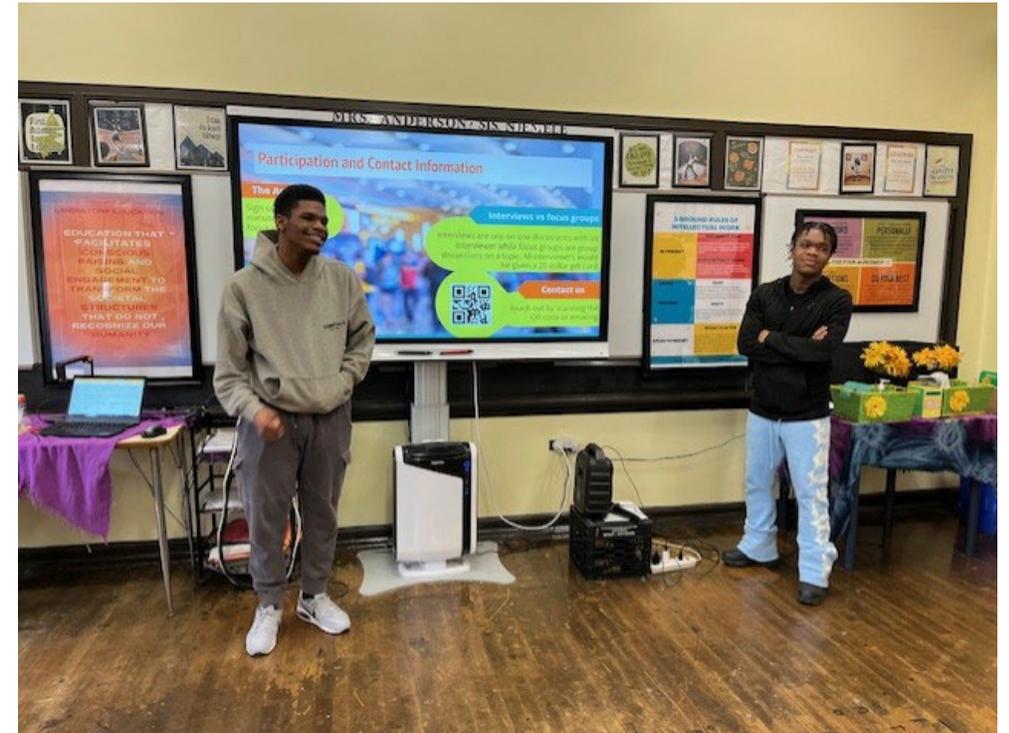
Youth Participatory Action Research

Project Goals

- To engage Black Philadelphia high school youth in a youth participatory action research project to center youth themselves in exploring Black high school students' interest in the teaching profession and the factors that drive, or prevent, that interest to pursue the profession.

Project Process

- Research for Action (RFA) partnered with the Center for Black Educator Development (CBED) to offer a paid internship program for 7 high school students in the Liberation Academy at a school in West Philadelphia. Students participating in the project are learning how to design and implement the research study focused on interest or lack thereof in the teaching profession. They will then plan action or advocacy based on the research findings.



Youth Participatory Action Research

Project Activities to Date

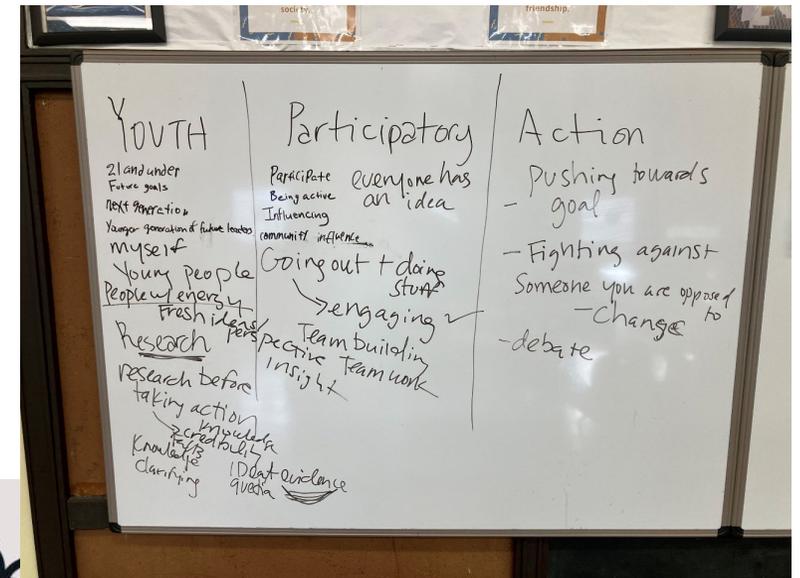
- Team Building
- Learning about YPAR
- Research Design
- Recruitment
- Instrument Design and Data Collection

Current Status

- Team Next Step! have designed a qualitative study using focus group and interview data collection methods. They are conducting data collection through the end of April. Planning for the “action” will begin in mid-April.

What have we learned as YPAR facilitators?

- Infrastructure is important
- Youth are excited to learn and to have their voices heard
- Youth researchers have valuable insights into peer attitudes





**Where are we
going?
(Where should
we be going?)**

Meet the Discussants



Sharif El-Mekki

*Founder, CEO, Center for Black
Educator Development*



Travis J. Bristol

*Associate Professor, Berkeley
School of Education*





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Thank You

THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS
HOWARD HEINZ ENDOWMENT • VIRA I. HEINZ ENDOWMENT



THE BARRA FOUNDATION

McELHATTAN FOUNDATION

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