

Recruiting a diverse pool of applicants has proven to be a challenge for educator preparation programs (EPPs) across the country. [Overall enrollment in EPPs has seen a marked decrease](#) nationwide while postsecondary enrollment has been trending upward. Further, within undergraduate institutions of higher education (IHEs), [colleges of education are less diverse](#) than other departments in higher education. This trend holds true in North Carolina, where white students make up a disproportionate percentage of students that enroll in and complete educator preparation programs. In 2018, [86 percent](#) of those who were licensed through an IHE-based educator preparation program in North Carolina were white.

This troubling lack of interest in the profession begins at the high school level, where a 2015-16 survey of college bound and non-college bound students found that [less than four percent](#) of high school students aspire to be educators. Further, based on data from the [ACT's pre-test student questionnaire](#), interest in pursuing a degree in education declined among high school graduates who were "very" or "fairly" sure about their college major from 2007-2017. With diminishing interest in pursuing a career in education among high school students writ large, North Carolina must be thoughtful in its approach to strengthening the entry points to the educator pipeline for aspiring educators of color.

Barriers to Recruitment

Unfortunately, prospective educators of color often encounter their first barrier before they graduate from high school. Students of color are more likely to attend schools that are underfunded, low-performing, and staffed with less effective educators, resulting in [a lower likelihood that students of color will matriculate into postsecondary institutions](#). Enrollment and graduation rates for postsecondary education are [significantly higher for white students than other racial groups](#). For those who do enroll in college, students from low performing schools are more

likely to adopt a negative association with education from their own K-12 experience, leading them to avoid a career in teaching.¹ For many highly qualified candidates, teaching simply [lacks the prestige](#) of other career opportunities available to them.

In the 2017-2018 school year, [ACT administered additional survey questions](#) to gauge student interest in, and perceptions of, the teaching profession. Salary and career advancement were by far the most significant factor in students' decision to avoid the profession. Nearly two-thirds of students who were "not interested" in teaching cited pay as one of their top three reasons, and 43 percent of this group cited a lack of career advancement opportunities. On this same survey, students who were "potentially interested" or "not interested" reported being only somewhat familiar with the teacher salary schedule. By informing students about

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS OF COLOR ENROLLED IN NORTH CAROLINA EDUCATOR PREPARATION PATHWAYS IN 2018



PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ASPIRING TO BECOME TEACHERS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

White	4.4%
Hispanic	3%
American Indian	3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.6%
Black	2%

Source

NATIONAL POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION OF FOUR-YEAR DEGREE PROGRAMS, 2016

RACE	POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT RATE	POSTSECONDARY SIX-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Black	36%	40%
Hispanic	39%	54%
American Indian	19%	39%
White	42%	64%

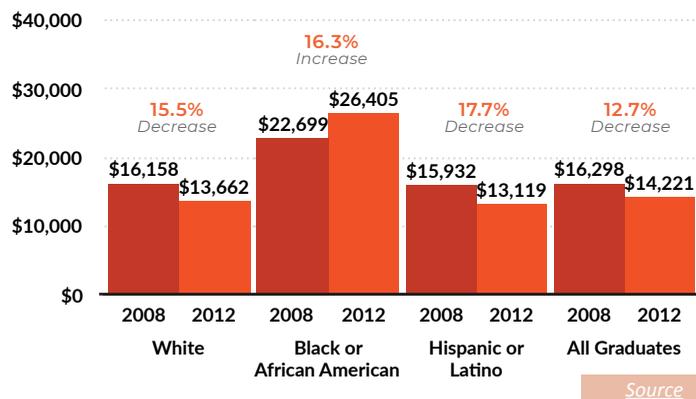
Source

financial incentives for new teachers and teachers with certain certifications like STEM, CTE, or special education, as well as the potential for salary growth throughout their career in teaching, states and districts may be able to increase interest and alter the mindset about teacher salary.

Student loan debt represents another hurdle for prospective Black and Hispanic educators as they are more likely to take out federal student loans to finance their undergraduate and graduate education. Black students in particular are [likely to owe significantly more in college debt](#) than their peers. Educators of color often lack the generational wealth afforded to their white colleagues, and thus [face an uphill battle](#) in paying back their student loan debt. This generational wealth gap exacerbates the issue for those who shoulder additional responsibility of supporting family members. The limited long-term earning potential and higher chance of student debt [may keep educators of color from entering the profession](#).

MEDIAN STUDENT LOAN DEBT DIFFERENCE BY RACE AMONG STUDENTS WHO TRAINED AS EDUCATORS, 2008-2012

Student loan debt for white and Hispanic students who graduated with a degree in education in 2008 and applied to teach was lower four years after graduation; however, their Black peers saw an increase in loan debt over the same four year period, indicating that they were not making progress in paying off their student debt.



LESSONS FROM THE FIELD | HIGHLIGHTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS NATIONALLY AND IN NORTH CAROLINA

At every level, recruiting a racially and ethnically diverse educator workforce requires intentional effort and resources from schools, districts, educator preparation programs, and the state. By investing in programs that work to overcome the numerous barriers to entry for aspiring educators of color, policymakers can develop a multifaceted approach that widens the pipeline at the primary point of entry.

Rethinking Recruitment within IHEs

Attracting diverse candidates to educator preparation programs has proven to be a challenge nationwide. By prioritizing representation among faculty and staff and setting enrollment goals for students of color, programs can be deliberate in embedding diversification in their recruitment efforts. In 2017, the University of North Carolina at Pembroke introduced its [First Americans' Teacher Education \(FATE\) Program](#), which subsidizes the costs of bachelor's or master's degrees in education for 36 American Indian students over a three-year period. The [program](#) provides financial assistance to American Indian students from neighboring counties to earn their degrees and obtain certification in order to increase representation within counties with significant American Indian populations.

Expanding Recruitment at the High School Level

Effective recruitment of educators of color begins long before these prospective teachers set foot on a college campus. Programs that offer opportunities for college credit, paraprofessional certifications, and focus on college readiness skills have had success in strengthening the pipeline of educators of color.

Pathways2Teaching | In 2010, the University of Colorado at Denver launched the [Pathways2Teaching \(P2T\) program](#), which introduces high school students to the teaching profession by offering concurrent enrollment and college credit for coursework that focuses on tangible field experiences in local elementary schools and building college readiness skills. By emphasizing the role of teachers in advancing social justice and recruiting exclusively among students of color in low-performing schools that lack representation within the staff, this program supports students from historically marginalized backgrounds and who are often first-generation college students. Additionally, students earn a Pathways2Teaching Paraprofessional certificate which enables them to seek employment within their district immediately after high school graduation.

Pathways2Teaching in North Carolina

Some districts in North Carolina are implementing a similar model, including [UNC Asheville's Pathways2Teaching](#) program and the [Edgecombe County Scholar Teachers Program](#).

South Carolina Teacher Cadets | Through a dual credit curriculum, South Carolina has been able to expose over 71,000 high school juniors and seniors to the insights of teaching in its [Teacher Cadets](#) program over the past 34 years. A key goal of this program is to challenge students throughout their courses while also instructing them in critical issues of teaching and public education in general. The program currently has 22 college partners based in South Carolina. In 2018-2019 the program had 2,991 completers, 34 percent of whom were students of color.

North Carolina Teacher Cadets

Previously funded through state dollars, the North Carolina Teacher Cadet program is currently maintained by the North Carolina Foundation for Public School Children (NCFPSC). The program has continued to revise its curriculum and support schools currently implementing Teacher Cadets but lacks the funding for more deliberate expansion and data collection. According to Marca Hamm, Executive Director of NCFPSC, while Teacher Cadets does not have the expressed purpose of recruiting educators of color, an internal survey of schools still implementing the program found that 42 percent of participants are students of color.

University of North Georgia's Grow Your Own Program | The University of North Georgia and Hall County Schools collaborated to create the [Realizing Inspiring Successful Educators](#) (RISE) program. For each cohort of heritage, Spanish-speaking graduating seniors, the school district covers the cost of undergraduate tuition at UNG's College of Education. While they are in school, these students are given positions within the school district as paraprofessionals. The goal is that when these students graduate, they will find employment in Hall County and further the district's goals of employing more dual-language teachers.

Diversity Innovation Planning Grant Program | Established by the Tennessee Department of Education, the [Diversity Innovation Planning Grant program](#) provides \$100,000 of initial funding to three high-need districts seeking to implement a Grow Your Own program, with an opportunity to earn two subsequent years of funding. The focus is to increase candidate diversity by recruiting high school students through new course offerings and partnerships with groups that provide mentorship and training to students interested in teaching.

Overcoming the Affordability Gap

To help mitigate the rising costs of postsecondary education for aspiring educators of color, a number of states offer scholarships and other financial aid to recruit an ethnically and racially diverse educator workforce. [Florida](#), [Kentucky](#), [Missouri](#), and [Tennessee](#) all have state-sponsored scholarship programs specifically designated for aspiring educators of color. Each program offers between \$3,000-\$5,000 annually and requires recipients to maintain good academic standing and teach in that state for a designated period of time. Recognizing that this is a national issue, states could also advocate for the Department of Education to add additional incentives for educators of color to its current public service loan forgiveness programs.

District Scholarship Opportunities

While North Carolina does not currently have a comparable state scholarship in place, some districts are using a similar incentive at the local level. The [Duplin County Schools Minority Teachers Scholarship-Loan](#) program offers a scholarship for five graduating seniors who plan to enroll in a community college or university with an intended major in education. These students receive \$5,000 annually for a maximum of four years to pursue their degree, and in exchange agree to teach in Duplin County for four years upon graduation.

North Carolina Teaching Fellows

From 1986 to 2015, the [North Carolina Teaching Fellows](#) program offered scholarships for students to attend an approved North Carolina university to pursue a degree in education in exchange for teaching in the state for four years. The program included a goal that 20 percent of scholarships would be awarded to candidates of color. However, over the near thirty-year life of the program, [only 17 percent of recipients](#) were racially and ethnically diverse. The current iteration of the Teaching Fellows program does not include a goal for diverse recipients and does not partner with any of the state's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Participants in the program continue to be overwhelmingly [white and female](#). [Some state leaders have called for expanding the program](#) to HBCUs to increase the diversity of recipients of this scholarship.

RECRUITMENT AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

In addition to expanding opportunities for aspiring educators to enter the profession, schools and districts must recruit racially and ethnically diverse educators to serve in their schools. For rural districts that lack the amenities to draw young educators to the less densely populated corners of the state, recruiting a representative workforce is a tall order. This is especially true when differences in available salary supplements mean that more affluent districts are a more enticing option.

Fostering Partnerships | To effectively recruit racially and ethnically diverse teachers, schools and districts must actively commit the necessary time and resources. An analysis of successful recruitment programs found that schools were successful when they developed their own teacher pipelines to increase the pool of available teachers of color. Creating authentic connections with communities of color through informal relationships with “connectors” like the business community and faith-based organizations, and establishing partnerships with “human capital pipeline organizations” were key in this undertaking.² By pursuing such relationships with HBCUs, Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), districts can develop a reliable local pipeline for educators of color.

The [Teach Tomorrow in Oakland](#) (TTO) program is a multi-faceted recruitment approach created in partnership with the Oakland mayor’s office and Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). The program works with Bay Area universities, drawing on culturally diverse residents of the community with college degrees—and some without degrees—who can be molded into effective teachers. TTO recruits participants from current district students and support staff, OUSD Alumni, and student teachers, as well as Oakland civic, community, and faith-based organizations. Grants from the state, district, and local philanthropic organizations subsidize professional development, test preparation, supplies, and tuition for aspiring educators. In its first five years, Teach Tomorrow in Oakland placed 125 teachers and had a 69 percent teacher retention rate.

Reforming District Hiring Practices | Finally, districts must [reform their hiring processes](#) to root out racial biases and actively prioritize recruitment of a diverse staff. By committing to increasing the representation of the educator workforce and establishing tangible plans to do so, school districts can strategically approach this issue. A significant element is including current educators of color in the hiring process in meaningful and collaborative ways. Some districts have also found success in recruiting international teachers to ensure their staff is racially and ethnically diverse, especially for dual-language teachers.

Recognizing the impact of a diverse educator workforce on eliminating racial disparities in student achievement, Pinellas County Schools in Florida included increasing its percentage of teachers and administrators of color over the next decade as part of its [comprehensive strategic plan](#). As part of this plan, district leaders set a goal of increasing the district’s percentage of black teachers by an average of one percent each year until it meets or exceeds the enrollment percentage of black students, and release quarterly reports on the various action steps related to this goal. Similarly, it seeks to ensure that the rate of administrative hires also reflects the diversity of its student body. While Pinellas County Schools has seen a [net increase in educators of color](#), it has only increased the percentage of educators of color by 0.8 percent in the first two years of its implementation.

Citations

- 01 Ocasio, K. M. (2014). Nuestro Camino: A Review of Literature Surrounding the Latino Teacher Pipeline. *Journal of Latinos & Education*, 13(4), 244–261. <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.duke.edu/10.1080/15348431.2014.887467>
- 02 Simon, N.S., & Johnson, S.M. (2015). Teacher turnover in high-poverty schools: What we know and can do. *Teachers College Record*, 117, 1-36.