



Diverse Teachers

Diverse Teachers Strategy Brief

The 4th Grade – 12th Grade Workgroup is proposing a four-part strategy aimed at increasing the recruitment and retention of diverse teachers in Kent County and we are proposing that we incorporate this strategy within the broader efforts to strengthen the teacher pipeline overall.

Strategy One: Inspire

- Grow efforts that create pathways for students of color within Kent ISD to become the teachers of tomorrow.

Strategy Two: Train

- Place a significant emphasis on pre-service education programs and professional development for the teacher workforce with an emphasis on preparing future teachers and continuing to equip current teachers to deliver high quality, culturally responsive instruction.

Strategy Three: Recruit

- Focus on first-year college students and staff in the education field such as paraprofessionals and long-term subs. Additionally, include alternative certification efforts that target professionals in other fields interested in shifting to teaching and those who may have retired from other fields and are looking for encore careers.

Strategy Two: Retain

- Prioritize ongoing training and professional development to equip all school staff in the areas of intercultural awareness and cultural competence. This will help to ensure that school climates in our community are conducive to retaining Teachers of Color. The development of peer-support networks would also be prioritized in this component.

Alignment with KConnect Vision

- Demonstrates a commitment to creating quality education opportunities for students in Kent County through broad network collaboration.
- Working to strengthen the teacher pipeline overall while focusing on the recruitment and retention of diverse teachers is an example of utilizing targeted strategies to reach universal goals.

Commitment to Equitable Outcomes

- This strategy emphasizes culturally responsive teaching and training in both pre-service curriculum and continuing professional development for all teachers. This will help to cultivate inclusive school environments for staff and students resulting in improved school climate for all and more holistic career readiness preparation for students.

Need

- In order for us to close the gap in Kent County we would need to hire 1,538 Teachers of Color including about 500 Black teachers and about 660 Latinx teachers.

Maximum Possible Benefit

- Based on a recent study from the state on teacher attrition, 8% of teachers leave the teaching workforce every year. Assuming that the attrition rate is similar for Kent County, that would mean about 630 teachers leave Kent ISD every year. If we fill half of those vacancies with Teachers of Color, we could close the gap between our county demographics and our teacher workforce demographics in 5 years.

Executive Summary

Proposal

The 4th Grade-12th Grade Workgroup is proposing a four-part strategy aimed at increasing the recruitment and retention of diverse teachers in Kent County and strengthening the teacher pipeline overall.

Strategy One: *Inspire – Grow efforts that create pathways for students within Kent ISD to become the teachers of tomorrow with a specific focus on Students of Color.*

Strategy Two: *Train – Place a significant emphasis on pre-service education programs and professional development for the teacher workforce with an emphasis on preparing future teachers and continuing to equip current teachers to deliver high quality, culturally responsive instruction.*

Strategy Three: *Recruit – Focus on first-year college students and staff in the education field such as paraprofessionals and long-term subs. Additionally, include alternative certification efforts that target professionals in other fields interested in shifting to teaching and those who may have retired from other fields and are looking for encore careers.*

Strategy Four: *Retain – Prioritize ongoing training and professional development to equip all school staff in the areas of intercultural awareness and cultural competence. This will help to ensure that school climates in our community are conducive to retaining teachers of color. The development of peer support networks would also be prioritized in this component.*

Background

The goal of the 4th-12th Grade Workgroup is to provide students with foundational skills to succeed in 4th-12th Grade and post-secondary careers. Our workgroup has focused on thinking about what skills and competencies students need to be ready for their next step after high school. We know that there are many factors that contribute to students being career ready and it is difficult to identify a comprehensive metric for career readiness. At this time, we are using the employment rate for young people ages 16 to 24 as a proxy measure for career readiness with the idea that employment is one outcome of being career ready.

In considering key indicators of Career Readiness, the Workgroup identified Culturally Responsive Instruction as a vital component. We want students to be college, career, and CULTURE-ready. Intercultural awareness and cultural competency are critical learning areas and our educators should model those skills in the classroom.

A group of 4th-12th Grade Workgroup members formed the Diverse Teachers Strategy Team and recruited additional stakeholders to participate in strategy development (Phase 4 in the KConnect Process Framework). The Diverse Teachers team includes the following members:

1. Dr. Susan Gunn, Davenport University
2. Dr. Brandy Lovelady-Mitchell, Kent ISD
3. Mel Trombley, Transitions Rehabilitation Services
4. Dr. Heidi Cate, Lighthouse and Hope Academies
5. Noah Kruis, Crossroads Anti-Racism Organizing & Training
6. Hannah (Tisa) Herbert, The Edge Urban Fellowship

Throughout the strategy development phase, this team examined research, analyzed data and gathered input from stakeholders. An overview of their findings and recommendations is included in the remaining sections of this document.

Rationale

A recent study released by the Kellogg Foundation and Altarum notes that 40% of Michigan's workers and consumers will be People of Color by the year 2050. If growth rates over the last ten years continue, Non-white students will be the majority in Kent ISD by the 2029-2030 school year. This is due to a 24% increase in the Non-white population over the last 10 years and a nearly 9% decrease in the White student population in Kent ISD. Our education systems must help ALL students learn how to respect and work with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. One way to help facilitate that learning is by exposing students to diverse teachers.

Currently, we are seeing drastic reductions in the teacher pipeline across the county. One indication of this is the decrease in college students enrolling in teacher education programs. In 2008-2009 there were over 23,000 enrolled in teacher prep programs in Michigan. In 2015-2016 there were less than 8,000. This is close to a 67% drop in less than 10 years. As a result, the overall percentage of teacher certifications issued in Michigan declined by 39% over the last five years. When you disaggregate this decline by race, the numbers of initial certificates issued to American Indian/Alaskan Native and Black/African American individuals have decreased much more, 56% and 60% respectively, over the five-year period.

Like many other places, Kent County is feeling the impact of this crisis. In response, there are numerous conversations and efforts taking place with a focus on strengthening the teacher pipeline and increasing teacher retention. As we collectively address this problem, we also recognize that we have an opportunity to focus on diversifying the teacher workforce in the process. We know that it is beneficial for all students to be surrounded by diverse people and perspectives. The benefits are often compounded for students of color who receive instruction from teachers who look like them.

Strategy Proposals

Inspire, Train, Recruit, and Retain Diverse Teachers

Increase the recruitment and retention of diverse teachers in Kent County and strengthen the teacher pipeline overall.

Background

Our current teacher workforce in Kent County is not reflective of the diversity within our community. For example, in Kent ISD, 18% of the students are Latinx and 14% are Black. When including students who identify as Asian, two or more races, and other, the student body of Kent ISD is about 41% Students of Color. However, 95% of our teaching staff are White.

As our workgroup considered these gaps, we identified the initial goal of having the racial and ethnic demographics of our teacher workforce match that of the county. About 26% of Kent County residents identify as People of Color. So, we would like to see our teacher workforce comprised of at least 26% People of Color as well.

To close the gap in Kent County we would need to hire 1,538 Teachers of Color including about 500 Black teachers and about 660 Latinx teachers. Because our teacher workforce is predominately White, many of our students go through their entire K-12 education experience without ever having a Teacher of Color. More than half of all districts and two-thirds of all school buildings in Kent ISD have no Black teachers. Furthermore, one third of all districts and two thirds of all school buildings in Kent ISD have no Latinx teachers.

Additionally, we recognize that the school climate impacts the way in which culturally responsive instruction is delivered and experienced. Having a diverse teacher workforce enhances the capacity for strong culturally-responsive instruction

by having classroom teachers who come from diverse backgrounds. Not only does a diverse teacher workforce enhance the learning environment for all students, but it has been tied to increased graduation rates for students of color as well.

Minority students have better test scores when exposed to a more diverse teaching staff, especially those teachers of the same ethnicity. These outcomes are based on the students seeing teachers of the same ethnicity as role models and the ability of the teachers to use more culturally relevant teaching. (Villegas & Lucas, 2004; Villegas & Irvine 2010) A recent John Hopkins Study found that Black students who had at least one Black teacher in 4th, 5th or 6th grade were 29% more likely to stay in school and 18% more likely to show interest in college. It also found that Black male students were 39% more likely to stay in school 29% more likely to show interest in college.

The benefits of having diverse teachers are not limited to Students of Color. Studies also suggest that all students, including White students, benefit from having Teachers of Color because they bring distinctive knowledge, experiences, and role modeling to the student body as a whole. We believe that all of this information makes a compelling case for the strategy we are proposing.

Area of Focus

Students, teachers, and potential teachers in Kent County with a specific focus on People of Color

Proposed Implementation Steps

1. Present data that demonstrates the current state to cross-sector partners
2. Identify a core planning team
3. Organize convenings with the goal of connecting various efforts and identify all partners who are working within the four components
4. Connect partners' efforts in a way that offers reciprocal support and allows school districts interested in doing this work to easily connect with tools and resources they need.

Associated Costs

- Facilitation & Project Management
- Space Rental and Refreshments for Convenings
- Data & Technical Support
- Consultation, Training & Materials

Possible Planning and Implementation Team

- Rusty Anderson, Kent ISD
- Dick Bulkowski, Steepletown Neighborhood Services
- Dr. Heidi Cate, Lighthouse and Hope Academies
- Daphne Cattenhead, Ceder Springs Public Schools
- Marcus Deja, Kent ISD
- K'Sandra Earle, Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative
- Dr. Susan Gunn, Davenport University
- Hannah (Tisa) Herbert, The Edge Urban Fellowship
- Noah Kruis, Crossroads Anti-Racism Organizing & Training
- Dr. Brandy Lovelady-Mitchell, Kent ISD
- Jo Ann Mundy, Eliminating Racism and Creating/Celebrating Equity
- Mel Trombley, Transitions Rehabilitation Services