

KConnect's 360° Educators of Color Model

Built for Impact, Designed for Scale

Advancing Economic Mobility Through an Inclusive Educator Pipeline

Through community engagement with students, families, and education partners, as well as analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, we identified a clear gap in educator diversity and access to high-quality pathways into the teaching profession. This gap not only impacts student outcomes but also limits economic mobility for individuals from historically underrepresented communities. To address these gaps, KConnect launched the **360° Educators of Color Model** to Inspire, Train, Recruit, and Retain local talent, aiming to double the number of educators of color by 2033.

Inspire

students of color currently in Kent County to become teachers of tomorrow

Shades of Strength Collaborative

Train

future teachers of color in college programs that are high quality and culturally responsive

Educators of Color Network
Grand Valley State University

Recruit

teachers of color to fill open teaching positions in Kent County schools

Retain

teachers of color by ensuring the Kent County and the community are places where people from all backgrounds can find belonging



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 FOUR

Retain

Prioritize ongoing training and professional development to equip all school staff in 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.

The early successes from this model, listed below, demonstrate that intentional, community-rooted strategies can yield tangible results while laying the groundwork for statewide scale.

INSPIRE

Laid the groundwork to spark early interest in teaching among students of color in West Michigan.

- Conducted research and student-led focus groups to identify key motivators such as mentorship, representation, compensation, and alignment with personal interests.
- These insights informed the development of a responsive communications campaign, slated to launch in the near future.

TRAIN

Supported future educators through high-quality, culturally responsive teacher training.

- Partnered with Grand Valley State University to support 29 students in a peer-mentoring Educators of Color Network.
- Secured a national fellowship to strengthen program design.

RECRUIT

Collaboratively expanded access to tuition-free certification and career pathways.

- Partner with and provide technical assistance to West Michigan Teacher Collaborative, which recently secured \$19M to go toward tuition-free teacher preparation across three counties.

RETAIN

Developed infrastructure to ensure educators of color thrive in their profession.

- Created the Shades of Strength Collaborative, now with 115+ members (72% self-identify as Black/African American).
- With educator input and partnership, designed mentorship, networking, and leadership opportunities.
- Activated KConnect's community-affirmed Shared Policy Agenda, specifically around teacher pay, credentialing, and retention supports.

These early wins affirm that KConnect's community-rooted, data-informed approach is both effective and adaptable. With the infrastructure, partnerships, and proven strategies already in place, KConnect is uniquely positioned to scale this work statewide, bringing this model to more regions, educators, and students across Michigan.



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