

DRIVER RESEARCH BRIEF: BLACK MALE TEACHER RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, AND RETAINING

A research brief to maximize the success of African American male students

About this brief

This research brief brings to life Kingmakers of Oakland's driver research through a practitioner lens. With the goal of supporting, extending, and expanding collaborative equity work nationally, it will focus on the practices that make the greatest impact for African American/Black male youth.

The brief discusses timely implications of the research for application in classrooms, schools, and districts and provides reflection questions and resources for educators and community partners to use during professional learning and collaborative conversations. This research brief explores how schools and educators can work together to recruit, train, and retain Black male teachers.



2 Focus

5 Implications and Actions

6 Questions



Focus

Recruit, Train, and Retain

Increasing the number of Black male teachers — and building the positive, welcoming spaces that will make staying in the profession worthwhile long-term — is essential to improve outcomes for Black boys.¹ Black male students perform better academically and are more likely to stay in school when they have teachers of their race or ethnicity.² Research shows that having at least one Black teacher in third through fifth grades reduces a Black student's probability

of dropping out of school by 29 percent.³ For low-income Black boys, the results are even more striking: their chance of dropping out of school falls 39 percent. Yet, Black men makeup only two percent of public school teachers.⁴ In fact, the entire national public school teacher workforce does not mirror the student population: the majority of students in the US are of color, while only about 20 percent of teachers are of color.⁵ Research also shows that teacher diversity improves outcomes for all students, regardless of race or ethnicity.⁶



To better understand why Black male teachers do not enter the profession, and if they do, they leave at higher rates, it is necessary to understand the connection between the experiences of Black male educators and institutionalized racism.⁷ Simply put, increasing the number of Black male public school teachers will not fill the long-term need for representation in our nation's schools if those teachers do not stay in the field.⁸ For this reason, the Kingmakers of Oakland supports the implementation of a multifaceted, culturally responsive three-pronged plan:

Strategy 1: Multiple Pathways to Certification (Recruit and Train)

The research is clear: there are compelling, sustained academic and social-emotional benefits to having even one Black teacher for Black boys.⁹ Yet, about a quarter of all Black men in the US hold a college degree.¹⁰ Similarly, there is a 10-point discrepancy between Black and White adults (all genders) in the US who hold a bachelor's degree.¹¹ Nevertheless, the gap in attainment between Black and White adults

at the associate's degree level is rather small (i.e., only 1.0 percentage point).¹² These data provide important information to build degree pathways to the teaching professions for Black men.

The racial and ethnic gaps in bachelor's degree attainment result from systemic challenges and barriers: historical, economic, social, and educational. Likewise, the criminal justice system contributes to these unequal outcomes.¹³ Specifically, the school-to-prison pipeline refers to policies and procedures that create the conditions for many of our nation's schoolchildren to take a pathway that begins in school and ends in the criminal justice system. Research shows Black students are referred to law enforcement and arrested at higher rates than White students for minor school-related incidents.¹⁴ A significant body of research has identified marked racial bias in decisions to provide diversions, which means that youths are diverted away from the formal processing of delinquency cases referred to juvenile court. This disparity in diversion opportunities for Black youth is consequential since Black students are significantly more likely than their White peers to be arrested.¹⁵

To increase the pipeline of Black male teachers in public schools, Kingmakers of Oakland has begun the Early Literacy Kings program

A key component in recruiting Black men to the teaching profession is to create compelling incentives for them to begin a path towards earning a bachelor's degree. To address the pressing need to recruit and train Black male public school teachers, Kingmakers of Oakland is actively removing barriers and creating opportunities for Black men to get a free education post high school, including associate and bachelor degrees, to help them qualify for teaching certification programs.

Strategy 2: Early Literacy Kings (Recruit and Train)

To effectively create a pipeline of Black male teachers, recruitment and professional experience needs to start early. One study found that children taught by teachers of the same race, especially Black and Latino children develop better and learn and problem solve better by the time they turn seven years old. Before *Brown v. Board*, there were 82,000 Black teachers in American public schools. Following the ruling, 40,000 Black educators lost their jobs due to not being hired to teach in schools that were traditionally White. Over time, teaching came to be a profession dominated by White women. This remains true today.¹⁷

To increase the pipeline of Black male teachers in public schools, Kingmakers of Oakland has begun the Early Literacy Kings program designed to engage Black men in teaching early childhood-aged students reading, writing, and vocabulary. Traditionally, early childhood education requires community college credits and may be a beginning pathway to certification programs. This model also benefits early-aged students to potentially have their first male and Black teacher.

Strategy 3: Black Male Affinity Groups (Retain)

Recruiting, training and retaining Black male teachers, including providing welcoming and supportive spaces, is critical for Black boys and our nation's TK-12 students. Yet, Black male teachers turnover rates are disproportionately high.¹⁸ Many Black male teachers report feeling isolated. Moreover, Black teachers' experiences of racist microaggressions play a central role in why they leave the profession.¹⁹ Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color.²⁰ In a recent survey, about 97 percent of the educators of color questioned reported experiencing racial microaggressions on a regular basis.²¹ Additionally, studies show that Black male teachers are disproportionately viewed as disciplinarians and, therefore, often have classroom rosters with an increased number of students who may not have positive relationships with school.²² This causes an unbalanced classroom of behavioral challenges and puts the burden on Black men to fix the larger school climate and culture issues.



Due to the deep, pervasive, and longstanding structural systemic racism that continues to play out in schools via book bans and curriculum protests, Kingmakers of Oakland is committed to ensuring a greater diversity among teachers. Likewise, they are steadfast in their support of racial affinity spaces, where Black male teachers can find Black-centered fellowship and learn deeply, understand how racial identity impacts teaching and students, and advance social justice. For example, the Black Teacher Project (BTP) provides Black teachers an affinity space to lead and reimagine schools as communities of liberated learning. This affinity space directly translates to Black teachers staying longer in the classroom, increasing opportunities for leadership roles, and improving outcomes for Black boys.

Implications and Actions



Black male teachers matter. It is our collective responsibility to recruit, train, and retain Black male teachers to have a voice and space in our public schools. To increase the number of Black male teachers, institutions of higher education (IHEs), state and county departments of education, and school districts need to assess the current reality of access to teaching for Black men in their area and make strategic plans to increase the numbers of Black male educators and monitor progress towards this goal.

Actions for Educators

(teachers, support staff, administrators):

- Create safe spaces in schools and district offices where Black male staff are valued and heard (i.e., provide professional learning, create affinity groups)
- Commit to moving effective teachers into growth opportunities (i.e. teachers on special assignment, teacher leaders)
- Support Black male teachers through mentorship and sponsorship to excel in positions of leadership
- Provide relevant and timely professional learning for all staff to create and maintain positive and affirming classroom environments with Black students
- Create the time and space for racial identity affinity groups (i.e., Black, Asian American, Latinx, anti-racist)
- Invest in recruiting efforts for high school Black male students to earn degrees towards the teaching profession
- Hire a coordinator or dedicated position to coordinate between community colleges/ universities, the district office, and teaching candidates to ensure support to complete degree programs

Actions for Policy Makers (Boards of Education, Departments of Education, legislatures):

- Partner with IHEs and other teaching certification institutions to expand pathways to earn teaching certifications
- Create partnerships with community-based organizations that have relationships with Black males to expand the pool
- Expand relationships with Historically Black Colleges/Universities to recruit Black males into the TK-12 teaching force
- Increase salary allocations for public schools

Questions



1. In what ways are Black males represented throughout the school?
2. In what ways are non-teaching Black male staff encouraged and supported to become certified teachers?
3. Are Black male staff able to safely express their ideas and experiences to leadership?
4. What structured opportunities exist for Black male students to mentor younger-grade students (i.e., middle school students academically mentoring elementary school students)?
5. Are class rosters balanced (i.e., student grades, behavior, interests) across the school and across all teachers?

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