



Prioritizing Teacher Diversity & Equity Should be a Priority of the Newly Appointed Indiana Secretary of Education

By Educator Barnes – January 10, 2021

“When was the first time you had a Black teacher?” or “How many Black teachers have you had?” are questions that have been asked across social media multiple times. Regardless of whether the respondents had finished school decades ago or were recent graduates, many respondents have had no Black teachers or only a few. If this question is expanded to include other racial groups, the findings are similar.

These social media findings make sense because the majority of the American teacher workforce is white; however, the majority of students are not. Research has shown there are positive outcomes for academics and behavior when students of color have teachers of color, and white students also benefit. Andre M. Perry, author of “Know Your Price: Valuing Black Lives and Property in America’s Black Cities” wrote:

University researchers Alice Quioco and Francisco Rios argue that having a teacher of color is beneficial to students of all races. Because of the lived experience that comes with being a person of color, minority teachers are able to identify and deconstruct the racial and cultural biases present in school systems, making it more likely that classroom discussions include a social justice orientation. Reducing the number of Black teachers also robs White students of the opportunity to form critical relationships that could disrupt how racism is passed on to the next generation. Racist children become racist adults. Black teachers can help end the cycle.

“[Is Your State Prioritizing Teacher Diversity & Equity](#),” a report by Education Trust provides data for each state on their efforts. There were five overarching areas that were evaluated and four categories for each of the overarching areas to determine if the state earned a rating of meets criteria, partially meets, or does not meet, so [how did Indiana fare?](#)

Make educator diversity data visible and actionable to stakeholders – does not meet

According to the report, Indiana does not provide racial demographic information publicly for the school level workforce, preservice teachers in college education programs, preservice teachers who successfully complete their college program or school level retention. Sharing this data publicly, and by school, will help the state improve in this area.

Set clear goals at the state and district level to increase student access to diverse educators – does not meet

Indiana currently does not have a measurable, time-bound, and publicly shared goal to increase racial diversity in the workforce, nor is there a taskforce or role in the Indiana Department of Education to address increasing racial diversity. To improve in this area, the state needs to provide funding to support this goal and measure the progress, as well as, have a position and/or task force with a focus on this goal.

Invest in educator preparation programs to increase enrollment and improve the preparation of teachers of color – does not meet

Indiana did not meet the criteria for three out of the four areas which led to an overall rating of does not meet. What's going well is the scholarships and loan forgiveness available to teachers of color entering teacher preparation programs. To improve in this area, the state needs to have rigorous goals for recruiting teachers of color for teacher prep programs, check teaching licensing requirements for biases, and invest in programs that produce a higher number of teachers of color.

Target resources to districts and schools to support efforts to intentionally recruit and hire a diverse teaching workforce – partially meets

The cultural competency page on the IDOE's website, the professional development by Dr. Anthony Muhammed, and grow your own initiatives to increase teachers of color helped Indiana achieve a partially meets rating. What held the state back from obtaining the meets criteria rating was not investing in program collaborations between districts and college prep programs to increase the number of diverse candidates.

Invest in efforts to retain teachers of color including improving working conditions and providing opportunities for personal and professional growth for teachers of color – partially meets

Indiana has invested in high-retention alternative teaching programs to increase teachers of color and has also invested in a two-year mentoring program for teachers. What needs to improve is investing in programming that increases leadership opportunities for teachers of color and investing in providing guidance for professional development for cultural competency and anti-bias training.

Overall, Indiana is not doing well in its efforts to prioritize teacher diversity and equity. Dr. Katie Jenner is Indiana's first Secretary of Education. This appointed role replaces the previous role, Superintendent of Public Instruction, which was a role elected by Hoosiers. Jenner needs to review this report and work with the Indiana Department of Education Cultural Competency Advisory Council, in addition to other stakeholders to ensure Indiana is moving in the right direction when it comes to teacher diversity and equity.