

Diversifying the Teaching Force: What We Have Learned From a Three-Year Partnership

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Abstract

This article features the creation of processes for developing a sustainable and viable recruitment and retention effort to diversify the teacher workforce between a school district and institution of higher education. The three-year journey of program development has resulted in numerous successes and powerful opportunities for aspiring educators and authentic learning for the partners. Data was collected from students-of-color focus groups and a network of Black male education professionals and informed an aspiring student group to consider teaching and education as a career choice. Researchers used the Community of Cultural Wealth framework as a guide to develop the program and categorize data. Team members reported data and used the findings for continued revisions and expansion of the program.

Keywords: partnerships, diversity, preservice teachers, teacher workforce, hope

Scholars and policy makers have been examining diversity in the American teacher workforce since the early 1980's. While progress has been made to attract people of color to teaching, barriers continue to stand in the way of reducing the demographic gap that seems to be growing between a predominantly white teaching population and an increasingly diverse student body. According to Carver-Thomas (2018), the percentage of teachers-of-color in the workforce has grown from 12% to 20% over the last thirty years. If this is the case, then why doesn't the workforce reflect the same diversity as the general population? The problem is a bit more complex. The diversity of the United States has grown rapidly with people of color representing about 40% of the population. In fact, the number of minority students has increased by 93%, so even though the U.S. is seeing diversity increase in the teaching workforce, it is not keeping pace with the overall growth of the diverse student population.

In the state included in this case study the percentages are even lower. Only small gains have been

made since the 1980's in terms of the recruitment of non-European teachers. From all years between 1982 and 1991, fewer than 2% were employed in public schools (Boser, 2014). In 2016, approximately 2,200 teachers of color and American Indian teachers across the state comprised fewer than 4% of the entire teaching force despite American Indian students and students of color representing 30% of the total K-12 population (Sanchez, 2015).

While the race or ethnicity of a teacher does not guarantee or even predict the teacher's success or failure, the lack of teacher diversity represents a significant opportunity gap for students of color and native American students. It also presents a missed opportunity for White students to learn from role models of color. While there are many causes, recrafting teacher education programs could significantly increase diversity in the teaching core.

This article presents a case study that documents the steps a school of education and public school district took to develop a grow-your-own (GYO) program to diversify the teacher workforce. This

partnership sought to (a) stimulate interest in teaching as a career choice, (b) encourage post-secondary education to be viewed as a way to impact communities, and (c) engage Educators Rising groups in the district. Our work delineates the partnership between a midwestern suburban school district and an urban-based liberal arts university that received funding from the Bush Foundation beginning in fall 2015 to develop an accelerated teacher education pathway to attract diverse candidates to seek a career in education. More specifically, the initiative's goal is to develop a grow-your-own approach where the school district graduates of color interested in teaching will participate in an accelerated teacher education program at the university and return to the school district for a year-long teaching residency.

The three-year journey of program development has resulted in powerful opportunities and successes for aspiring educators and authentic learning for the leadership team that launched it. The events and programs developed with Bush Foundation support reached university teacher education undergraduate students and nearly 150 students of color in the school district. The research, planning and implementation were developed with longevity and sustainability as the key goal for this important work. The team was committed to ensuring that Bush Foundation funds would launch meaningful and successful programs that could be supported through district and institutional resources into the future. The program, named University Education Scholars, has streamlined ten students of color in the last four years into this new pipeline. To some, this number may seem minimal; however, we view this as hopeful. This is ten more potential professionals that can impact the lives of learners. The number will continue to grow as we work together to encourage students of color to impact their communities and inspire those around them to make a difference in the lives of students and colleagues.

Review of Literature

What are the Benefits of a Diverse Teacher Core?

Essential role models for all students.

The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy (1986), through its task force on Teaching as a Profession, created the national report *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*, where they began

the call for creative and innovative programs that would recruit and train people of color as teachers. The authors assert that schools need more teachers of color because many teachers serve as role models to students, especially in lower socioeconomic status communities. Through having teachers who are teachers of color, students of color realize they can aspire to become a teacher. Mercer and Mercer (1986) confirmed this position and further argued that the racial and ethnic composition of the teaching force sends a strong message to students about the distribution of power in American society.

Often teachers of color believe they had an additional responsibility to give back. Johnson (2008) found data where new teachers overwhelmingly reported they were “exemplars of possibility” for students of color. If teachers are the role models, then researchers wanted to know what kinds of learning was influenced. Goldhaber, Theobald, and Tien (2015) have added additional rationales. They contend that there are at least three commonly cited theoretical rationales to support the teacher as role model advantage. First, it has been repeatedly documented that students of color benefit from seeing role models in position of authority. Secondly, some researchers argue that teachers of color have higher expectations for students of color. Finally, researchers argue that differences between teachers of different races have different cultural backgrounds which influence instructional strategies and interpretation of student behavior.

Potential to increase the academic outcomes for students of color. Significant research documents a match between the race/ethnicity of teachers and students that leads to better student success, particularly if students are in high poverty environments (Goldhaber, Theobald, and Tien (2015). Dee (2004) found that racial paring of teachers and students significantly increased the reading and math achievement scores of African American students by three to four percentage points. Villagomez, Easton-Brooks, Gomez, Lubbes, and Johnson (2016) reported increased reading and math scores and overall academic performance of students of color. Ingersoll, May and Collins (2017) and Carver-Thomas (2018) found improved academic outcomes for students of color because they held higher teacher expectations, used more culturally relevant teaching, used more effective

communication processes, developed more caring and trusting relationships with students, confronted issues of racism through their actual teaching of content, and served as advocates and cultural brokers for many students of color.

Hrabowski and Sanders (2015) found positive correlations between teachers of color to students of color through increased attendance, academic achievement math course selections, increased care for students, and more engaging teaching practices. Teachers of color can also influence the interest in teaching as a profession in students of color.

Reduce the acute shortage of educators in high minority, high poverty schools.

Ingersoll, Merrill, and Stucky (2014) examined the largest and most comprehensive source of data, the Schools and Staffing Survey where results showed that even though the teacher workforce is larger and more diverse, it is far less stable than it has ever been. Teachers of color leave the profession at much higher rates than their White peers. Many leave because of a school's organizational structure or because the staff is primarily White, yet Carver-Thomas (2018) contends that students of color experience social-emotional and non-academic benefits from having teachers of color and that they are a resource for students at hard-to-staff schools. Three in four teachers of color work in the quartile serving the most minority students, particularly in high poverty areas and these same schools are the ones that disproportionately suffer from general teacher shortages (Ingersoll, May and Collins, 2017). Fundamental constraints limit the potential supply of highly effective teachers of color (Ahmad and Boser, 2014). Ingersoll, May and Collins (2017) conclude that minority teacher shortage has resulted in unequal access to adequately qualified teachers and quality teaching in poor urban public schools serving minority students.

What strategies are proven to be effective to increase the number of teachers of color?

While research shows important progress has been made toward increasing the number of teachers of color number in the U.S., studies depict several

kinds of programs and strategies used to encourage more people of color into teaching. These approaches can be divided into three different areas: recruitment, retention, and the use of policies to open access to the teaching field.

Recruitment. In 2012, Villegas, Strom and Lucas reviewed recruitment policies and programs over the previous two decades. They found a span of varying policies, many focused at the state policy level and differed greatly from state to state. Nonetheless, in examining ten state policies, three themes of recruitment were evident: pre-college through teacher recruitment (AK, IL, KY, NC, SC, WA); two-year college students through articulation agreements with four-year colleges (CA, F, IL); and paraprofessionals through career-ladder programs with district-university partnerships (AK, CA, FL, IL, MA, MN).

In a recent Education Commission of the States Policy Snapshot, *Targeted Teacher Recruitment* (Aragon, 2018), experts argue that efforts to address teacher shortages should be less about recruitment and more about recruiting and retaining the right teachers for the right schools and subjects. States were shown to have enacted recruitment legislation in six major areas: research and data collection, state and district innovations, career pathways and grow your own programs, preparation and licensure, financial incentives, and providing incentives to retired teachers to return to the profession.

In Minnesota, legislation was passed that amends the alternative teacher professional pay system to fund grow your own programs. It also provides grants and encourages public school-higher education institution partnerships that would offer dual credit for induction to teaching/education courses. The same legislation also provided alternatives to teacher education and exemptions to licensure requirements. Scholarships and loan forgiveness were enacted to recruit teachers for high-need schools and subjects.

Retention. In 2017, Ingersoll, May and Collins analyzed the data from the National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and its supplement, the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) from 1987-2013. This longitudinal

analysis found similar discrepancies between states when legislation was adopted, some as a single policy and others as a package of three or four policies. They call for federal legislation that would clearly target recruitment of teachers of color. Upon current review of existing research on teacher loan forgiveness and service scholarship, Podolsky and Kini (2016) note high levels of success in combining the two.

Ingersoll, May and Collins (2017) noted minority teachers had a statistically higher (50%) turnover that did White teachers. Many teachers of color were more likely to leave a school if it had poor administration and/or organization. What is striking is that they found the relationship between organizational conditions and turnover was 12% at the best condition schools and 21% in schools with the worst conditions.

Policy for Pipeline Growth. In Minnesota, many of the administrators of color have been in schools since the early 1980s. As these professionals retire, there is no plan in how to replace them, let alone grow the numbers of administrators of color. By 2020, students of color will make up the majority of the students in the nation, yet teachers of color make up only 14% and administrators a mere 6% (Jackson and Kohli, 2016). There is little if any current research on pathways for teachers of color to become administrators of color. Carver-Thomas (2018), encourages schools to create a policy to “reclaim and employ” teachers from the same schools that need them today. These same policies should improve school leadership attrition rates by developing quality partnerships with higher education institutions and creating school wide professional development programs addressing explicit issues and concerns. Carver-Thomas (2018) recommends improving school leadership to improve school teaching conditions.

Research on Grow-Your-Own Models

Grow-your-own (GYO) models that are successful have recruitment models uniquely fashioned to attract non-traditional pools. Within the literature, two types of programs emerge: community and school pipelines or pre-collegiate pipelines. In a recent review of 64 existing programs, Gist, Bianco, and Lynn

(2018) found that there was little research on the intersection of grow-your-own program and teachers of color. They both recommend the use of Yosso’s (2005) Community of Cultural Wealth (CCW) conceptual framework throughout the recruitment, preparation and retention pipeline of teachers of color. Gist, Bianco, and Lynn (2018) further argue that the six forms of community of cultural wealth capital encompass the resilience teachers of color bring to the profession and relational capital greatly impacts preparation experiences in grow-your-own programs: (a) aspirational, (b) navigational, (c) social, (d) linguistic, (d) familial, and (f) resistant. Burciaga and Kohli (2018) contend the use of the CCW framework and the knowledge and skills cultivated within highlight the strengths and contributions teachers of color bring to the profession. However, as of this writing, there are no instruments to collect or measure any of the CCW framework knowledge and skills. More research integrating this framework into teacher education pathways is needed, and to that end, we integrated the CCW capital areas into the first year seminar.

Grow-your-own partnerships between school districts and university education programs can address the challenges of diversifying the workforce. Strong school district and university partnerships have the potential to “affect both small-scale and large-scale educational change” (Goodnough, 2004, p. 328). Partnerships can work successfully if they develop “relational trust and sustained long-term engagement” (Carlson & Strait, 2018, p. 381).

Method

The Partners

Located in an urban midwestern city, the university is a nationally ranked, private liberal arts institution with more than 3,000 traditional and non-traditional students. The university is known for community and civic engagement and service-learning. The mission of the service-learning/civic engagement center is to support the university’s efforts in its “pursuit of the common good” with a focus on spirituality, service, and social justice. The education program’s conceptual frame is the foundation for which its programs and partnerships are nurtured: promoting equity in schools and society, building communities of

teachers and learners, constructing knowledge, and practicing thoughtful inquiry and reflection.

The partnering school district is positioned just north of the metro area. The district serves students from seven suburbs and includes six elementary schools, three middle schools, two high schools, an alternative school, and an area learning center. The district serves more than 11,000 students and employs more than 1,400 staff. Known for its stellar academics and support of its staff, the district boasts a 98% graduation rate and ranks as one of the top 15 school districts in the state, according to the 2018 *US News and World Report*. Its mission is to educate learners through a broad range of programs that set high expectations and inspire outstanding achievement. Committed to and focused on high student achievement through a comprehensive approach, its community integrates the key components of learning: healthy learning climate; shared leadership and accountability; essential curriculum, delivered through the use of instructional technology/effective instruction, delivered with a personalized approach; meaningful family and community partnerships; financial oversight and stewardship of resources; and continuous improvement.

Team Members

The authors began the work by establishing a team of professionals from varying backgrounds and perspectives. We wanted to ensure that the university's and district's mission, values, the district equity promise, and the university's education program with a social justice focus were at the foundation of this important work.

University Leader 1 of the team has engaged in program development, curriculum planning, and innovation throughout her tenure at the institution. She has experience in implementing assessment practices, working with accreditation bodies, and collaborating with internal and external constituents. Her responsibilities were to co-facilitate all planning and process, communicate and collaborate with all facets of the university process including admission, program trajectory, and support throughout the college experience.

District Administrator 1 is the co-facilitator of the grant and has worked as an instructional strategies facilitator and curriculum coordinator bringing extensive knowledge on planning and directing the

improvement of the curriculum, interpreting the curriculum to the public and to the district school board, and fostering research activities. Her responsibilities in the partnership are to co-facilitate all planning, development, and operations within the district, including, recruitment of students, as well as communication and collaboration with administration, the two high schools, and staff.

District Coordinator 1 was invited as a member of the team. He is the creator and facilitator of a mentoring program that partners with teachers, parents, community members, and business leaders to create a safety net for students of color. Members meet twice a week to make, discuss and self-assess goals. His research on public schools that are closing the achievement gap, work with the diverse student populations in the district, and passion for helping youth provide necessary perspective and expertise in development of the pathway curriculum. He is also responsible for recruiting students of color who will provide social and historical experience, share future goals, and offer insight into the attractiveness of the pathway, and is a key liaison in communicating the benefits of the pathway with students.

Since the team was investigating alternative and innovative curriculum and pathways, District Coordinator 2, who is the district service-learning facilitator and district grant writer, was invited to join the team for his experience in working with young people interested in education and for his understanding of the principles of service-learning. His responsibilities on the team are to provide perspective and experience on service and civic engagement as university's vision and school district values align in this area.

University Leader 2 is a tenured professor of education and is skilled at working with at-risk undergraduate college students and is an expert in service-learning and was approached in the fall of 2016. This member is a strong and well-connected mentor, an administrative role that was requested by the a stakeholder group called the Brother's Network roundtable, a group of Black male school administrators from across the metro area. As an award winning teacher and a natural mentor, she often provides food and encouragement for students who need it and invites students to dinner who are in need of more support. She partnered with the service-learning facilitator and school of education staff member

to develop the Tomorrow's Teachers program, a mentorship program pairing undergraduate students with high school students interested in education, and teaches the new education themed freshman year seminar course that all university education scholars will be taking. She is also their academic advisor.

A school of education staff member was selected as a university representative due to her experience presenting and coordinating professional development workshops and presenting on dropout prevention and cultural proficiency. Her responsibilities were to partner with the service-learning facilitator and education professor to develop and support Tomorrow's Teachers. Using her expertise in cultural competency and certification by the National Dropout Prevention Center (2017), she engages in curricular planning, coordinates events, and maintains communication between constituents.

Procedures

The team convened twice monthly for the first six months to establish procedures and goals. In doing so, they employed the use of backward planning with the inquiry question, "What is keeping teaching staff homogeneous?" and follow-up questions:

1. What are the roadblocks?
2. What are the narratives within the communities?
3. What are the assumptions about teaching, schools and the educational system that make it an undesirable path?
4. What support and mentorship are needed for students to succeed as candidates in teacher education programs? As teachers?

To get to the heart of the issues, the team coordinated students of color focus groups from the district's two high schools to provide information, perspective, and historical experience with education and educators. We hired a local nonprofit research and evaluation group, Acme Research Company (a pseudonym) that works with industries to gather, interpret, and understand issues facing communities, for assistance in developing student focus group protocols, facilitating, and note-taking for focus groups with middle-school and high-school students of color from the school district. The firm was selected due to their familiarity with the topics of study: teacher training and diversifying the teaching profes-

sion as a strategy to close the opportunity gap. Acme also has experience conducting focus groups with diverse youth. They were asked to prepare a report highlighting the key themes from these discussions and provide the focus-group transcripts. The results provided data-driven decisions on the recruitment and retention for interested targeted students.

Members of the team from the school district assumed responsibility for recruiting adolescent participants of color from the two high schools. The university provided t-shirts and meals for all 36 participants, and university admissions were available to provide information on undergraduate opportunities and general information on applying to college.

Twenty three participants provided demographic information: seventeen males and six females. Of those, fifteen identified as African American, five Hispanic or Latino and three Asian American. Most participants indicated that they planned on attending a two-year or four-year school after graduation. A few shared interest in earning a master's, PhD, or MD. Fifteen indicated that at least one parent had attended college.

Four focus groups, two at each high school, were jointly facilitated by two Acme Research Company staff members in each group. Acme and the team developed questions posed to students during the focus groups to understand their perceptions of teaching and teachers:

1. When you think about what teachers do, what words come to mind? Why did you choose these words?
2. Think of a teacher that you really liked (or currently like) What was it about this teacher that you liked? What did/do they do?

Responses were documented and analyzed to identify common themes across the four groups. Acme Research Company provided a report articulating the results to the team, who, in turn, reached out the Brother's Network. After reading the focus group report, the team wanted to know more about the choices of people of color who chose a career in education. If the district's students of color, as indicated strongly in the report, were not interested in education as a career choice, what might be learned from those who did choose it?

In the spring of 2016, the team invited members of The Brother's Network to engage in an informal

discussion about their experiences as students and now as community leaders. Five males agreed to participate and responded to the guiding question, “What can be learned from your experiences that would encourage students from underrepresented populations to enter the field of education?” The roundtable discussion yielded information about the mindset of young people and perceptions of the profession. The discussion began with the question, “Why do our student think education is not for them?” Responses were palpable. For example, Respondent 1, a high school administrator, stated “Once students of color leave our schools they say – “I am not going back to that place. . . . There are no mirrors – everyone of color that I know has gone through some type of hell. . . .” Respondent 4, an Equity Coordinator, offered “Resources need to reflect yourself and your narrative and culture Black kids need to see the greatness.” We now realize, after the fact, that we were gathering capital; aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistance, from each of the five participants. This was also true in the discussion that follows.

Discussion data from this interactive dialogue was analyzed and color coded for themes by two members of the team. The codes were based on what the team could learn about what students and school leaders of color thought about entering the profession. The codes were first impression/open-ended Initial Coding (Saldana, 2013) developed authentically. The team coded for responses that indicated items to encourage young people to consider education as a profession.

Data-Driven First Steps

With this as a foundation, two themes emerged that gave the partnership team direction. The first theme shed light on how the partners might work together to encourage young people to consider education. If the district wished to diversify their teacher workforce, we wanted to know what encouraged the Brother’s Network roundtable participants to step into education.

Q: Why did you choose education?

A: Education chose me – someone showed me the playbook – I had to figure out a network for support.

A: I saw this as a way to make a difference in

the community.

A: Most of the African American males, that I know, that are in education...this was not our first choice. As we got older we realized that, hey, I can...make a difference.

The second theme, the necessity of mentoring was revealed when participants were asked how we shift the negative perception of teaching and spark interest in education as a career choice. Some of the responses included:

A: Don’t teach labels.

A: I remember growing up and I wanted to be President of the United States and I looked around the room, and I did not have the confidence from teachers saying, “You could do that.”

A: Be mindful in setting up buddies/mentors across departments . . . not one person but more of a mentoring network . . . Be intentional with mentoring.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the participants challenged the team to take action. We took up this challenge. The voices of the Brother’s Network round table and the student focus groups inspired the identification of a strong academic advisor, a caring educator and advocate leading their first college freshman course, and the mentorship group focused on service-learning called Tomorrow’s Teachers. They also influenced the design of two major events: Education Matters and Success Day, both of which are described below.

Data-Driven Next Steps

Data analysis informed the development of an event that would inspire participants to consider teaching and education as a career choice. It invited them to become a solution to the issues they may have faced in their academic lives.

The Education Matters event purpose was to: 1) energize interest in the field of education as a career choice; 2) encourage post-secondary education as relevant and important to impacting communities; and 3) engage the Educators Rising groups at the two district high schools. Ninety-three students from clubs and groups from the high schools represented the Latino, Hmong, Asian, and Somali

populations. Students Together Respecting the Importance and Purpose of Education in Schools (the mentorship program) comprised the largest groups attending. This group of young Black men focus on early college preparation specifically designed to teach students the necessary skills to be successful in their post-secondary education and beyond. Two male speakers of color: 1) the dean of a local community and technical college and 2) a district graduate in his senior year of college, encouraged participants to recognize the value of effective educators from all backgrounds and the value of education. Community members of color lead round table discussions and provided mentorship throughout the day long event.

Tomorrow's Teachers is comprised of the Educators Rising chapters, one per each of the high schools, and the university's undergraduate teacher licensure students. Tomorrow's Teachers purpose is to demystify the profession which is an essential component to improving the quality of the profession and the public perception of the teaching profession. These students engaged in college day shadowing, co-teaching opportunities (after school programs or during field experience hours), mid-year service day, and service-learning experiences. Tomorrow's Teachers will meet on the university campus for a Follow Day where Educators Rising high schools visited college classes and engaged in conversation with college students about university life. They met in spring 2018 for Public Schools: Behind the Scenes where they attended sessions to learn more about the profession:

- The role of the Union and teacher evaluation systems
- How district communications interface with teachers
- Curriculum processes and philosophy, including the purpose of data
- Equity and special services for students, including common special education issues
- District Leadership and how that interfaces with building leadership and culture
- The role of HR in a district and common pitfalls
- The healthy role of Tech in the classroom and in a district

A newly established girls group was launched. The school district has long invested in the mentor-

ship program composed of approximately 135 young Black males in the middle and high schools, but it was noted from many young Black females in the district that there is a need to support them in the same way. Thus, the team invested in developing girls' groups with similar foci and goals. The first group of young Black females from one of the middle schools, now called STARS, attended the Success Day event.

Recognizing the need to support any students who may be experiencing mental health issues, namely trauma, the team funded two colleagues, one from the district and one from the university's education program to become certified Trauma Responders, offered by the National Dropout Prevention Center. The two certified staff members provided training to their colleagues and future educators. For example, in the fall of year two, a presentation was conducted at the university student teacher Professional Development day where more than 50 student teachers learned how to identify who may be a "wounded student" (Hendershott, 2008). This typically extends beyond those labeled as "at-risk" and discussed strategies for supporting of all students as they work toward their goals.

The Success Day event was facilitated by District Coordinator 1, the district equity coordinator and hosted on the university campus in winter year three. Attending were approximately 100 young females and males invested in the female groups and the mentorship program. This program provides mentoring to approximately 180 young Black females and males from fifth through twelfth grade.

Success Day sought to surround the young females and males with positive, successful adults. The outreach coordinator for the Council of African Heritage was the keynote speaker. Roundtable group conversations included: (a) How do you navigate profession spaces and still be yourself?; (b) How to be true to yourself; and (c) What makes you successful? A panel of professionals of color (an attorney, a vice president of marketing, a tribal chief, and educators) responded to students' questions about success, decision making, and personal stories.

To provide more information about the University Education Scholars program, the team worked with a web designer to develop a website that will live on the university and school district sites. The website offers the following information: reasons to

teach, reasons to attend the university, district opportunities, and a link to the university admissions office.

A feature of the website includes a video of district students, staff, and faculty of color who share their educational experiences and articulate the need for more educators of color in the field of education. The video is accessible on the website, used in social media, and in educational contexts such as faculty meetings and education courses. The team purports that these individual voices that can inspire change, deepen understanding of working with diverse students, and shed light into how education matters and can make a difference in the success of a learner and colleague's life.

Findings - What We Have Learned

Over the three-year experience, we have established a team who cares about the success of students and the bigger picture of what this work means for communities. We recognize that successful collaboration takes many minds, hands, and hearts, and in this case reflects the CCW conceptual framework perfectly. These are the voices of the team sharing what they have learned from working together, toward the same goal. Team members were asked to respond in writing to the prompt: *What have I learned from this three year partnership experience?* Below is a sampling of their responses.

District Coordinator 1 leads district efforts in providing success for its students of color. His passion for student success and equity, and with his strengths in mentoring, he partners with teachers, parents, community members and business leaders to create a what he calls a "safety net" for students of color. He shared:

I have learned that the partnership between Higher Ed. and K-12 is more vital than ever before. Often times these two systems have worked independently of each other for years. I think this partnership has brought about clarity, and I have realized how similar both systems are. We both struggle with the same issues- graduation rates and how to get our students prepared when they leave us. This partnership will bare fruit as soon as one graduate heads out into the field of teaching and begins to tell [his or her] story. It boils down to opportunity and access.

This has held generations from certain populations back and continues to do so. In the world of teaching, this is the only way we can right our wrongs. We were not responsible for 38,000 teachers losing their jobs after Brown vs Board, but we will be responsible for not opening up the doors of access and opportunity in education when we had the chance. If [state] ever wants to change our current reality around creating a diverse teaching force, this is how you do it! I can speak firsthand about this because I was a part of the Teachers of Color program at [university name] and without this program, I wouldn't be here today to write this... (Written Interview Response, 2017, p. 1).

District Coordinator 2 is deeply invested in service-learning and initiated the Tomorrow's Teachers program. He is skilled at communicating and creating opportunities for teaching young people critical reflection. He described his experience:

Any such effort like this takes a lot of time to implement, as there needs to be a formal structure at both institutions to host/promote the opportunities. Marketed to individuals, such connections compete in an individual framework with other opportunities. Some kind of club or frat or fellowship is needed to firmly place the opportunities within the context of career and profession development, not individual development. It has been much easier to get buy-in on the high-school side because we have an existing professional pathway extracurricular club to locate interest and energy.

However, from what we have seen so far from prior events, there is considerable energy and benefit to be derived from peer-to-peer relationships centered on career preparation and exploration. I would suggest that we need a few more years of effort to quantify that impact in any way, but the energy and increased awareness that has to date come out of the events we've hosted suggests that this is a fertile resource that we've just begun to tap in any meaningful way.

The "golden rule" of community organizing,

in any context, is that those who are most impacted by an issue need to be part of the discussion and solution: in this case, bringing high school students and undergraduates interested in the teaching profession together to help figure out measures to increase equity in our public education system, and increase equitable participation in the profession itself, should be a given, but all too often, it isn't. Youth voice in such efforts should be an asset, not a wasted resource opportunity (Written Interview Response, 2017, p. 1).

University Coordinator 1 is experienced at presenting and coordinating professional development workshops and presenting on dropout prevention and cultural proficiency. Her experience with similar programs at other universities and her natural ability to build and maintain relationships were key to establishing presence with students and maintaining communication between constituents. She shared what she learned from the Team's three year commitment:

I would state that this program has reinforced my belief that collaborative efforts across K-12 and higher education are instrumental in getting potential first generation college students excited about college. Without this exposure and faculty/staff at both levels encouraging students, many may never take that next crucial step to college. The teamwork between [the school district] and [university] has given many students an opportunity to envision a future they may never have known possible.

The biggest learning for me is a deepened understanding about the issues that students of color face in a system that sets these students up to struggle and many to believe they fail. The life of a young person should be about dreams, goals, and aspirations all of which must be nurtured and supported with the realization that it is possible. I learned that we cannot do it alone. Districts and institutions of higher education must work together and while doing so, we must model how the diverse backgrounds of those involved can work together to achieve the same goal. No one person or

institution in can do it alone. We all must be allies, together, to and for and of children. (Written Interview Response, 2017, p. 1)

Significance of Findings

Three years of partnership work yielded growth in understanding of the issues, how to collaborate, and elements needed to provide opportunity and access for young people.

We learned from one another, from professional educators, professionals in other fields, and from the students in both institutions.

This work, although, we realize will be slow and steady, has already garnered some footing. The first year of partnership, the program yielded one candidate who is now entering her junior year in the education program. The team gathered data from current students in the two high schools and professionals in the field. The second year was focused on communicating and advertising the opportunity to students and building the Tomorrow's Teachers program. The third year of the partnership drew five interested candidates, all were accepted into the university with four committing to begin the program. Additionally, four local districts have inquired about partnering and instituting the same opportunity for their students.

The most compelling theme to reveal itself in this work is our understanding that we must do this work together. It is how we can make the difference and model collaborative efforts that will change systems and climates. Two different educational institutions, many different backgrounds, experiences, races and cultures came together to encourage, support, mentor, and inspire the young people of color who participated in the events.

What began with a University Leader 1 and a District Administrator 1, grew to be six (the team), then became a cohort of eleven (Brother's Network), then grew to a group of twenty-five (Education Matters), and finally into a team of forty-one (Success Day). As this partnership continues toward the goal of diversifying the field of education, we know that number will grow because there are passionate engaged people who recognize that must do it together.

Our future directions include continued recruitment to increase the size of the program, working

out the partnership signatures, having more linkages with other school districts. The biggest surprise has been the larger community buy-in. We have been contacted by four more local districts to expand the program.

Conclusion

A deliberate and sustainable plan is necessary to create access and opportunity for diverse learners to have diverse educators in their preK–12 school career. What we learned from a three-year partnership is that with a focus on and commitment to equity, social justice, and service-learning along with a strong support system embedded in the program, district and university partnerships “can make teaching even more appealing to these potential candidates” (El-Makki, 2018, p. 60). We hope this research and work will improve the lives of learners and preserve hope in potential teachers and administrators.

As an externally funded opportunity to develop the program and pathway, we were conscientious to ensure that the programs and practices are institutionalized. Sleeter and Milner (2011) contend that programs that become institutionalized not only last but also positively impact recruitment and retention efforts. Thus, the partners have committed to recruitment events like Education Matters and Success Day, the Tomorrow’s Teachers program, new girls’ group and supporting University Education Scholars through mentorship. These efforts will sustain hope and be a catalyst for community commitment to the field and its schools.

The Bush Foundation supported an opportunity for two educational institutions to come together, be goal driven, and develop a relationship and pathway to provides opportunity and access. The pathway for the district’s students of color and American Indian students to enter the profession as a University Education Scholar and explore teaching as a career will positively impact the lives of all young learners and their communities. This partnership was built from hope; however, as Freire reminds us that “hope is necessary but not enough” (p. 2). Sustained community partnerships like this pathway show that hope can lead to action and action can lead to change.

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