



— RESPECTING **EDUCATOR-ACTIVISTS OF COLOR**

THE ANTI-RACIST GUIDE TO TEACHER RETENTION

CONGRATULATIONS

School leaders, you may be looking at this guide because you have successfully recruited (or plan to recruit) educators of color.

The ultimate success of your recruitment efforts will be measured by the success of your retention efforts and the extent to which the educators of color can reach their full potential and help their students reach theirs.

The value educators of color bring to schools has been well documented, but so too have their exits from the profession—departure rates that are significantly higher than those of their white colleagues.

There is substantial research on all the reasons why educators of color stop teaching, often leaving schools that need them the most. Less known and discussed are strategies for keeping educators of color in the profession based on all this knowledge.

DESIGNING FOR ANTI-RACISM

This toolkit grew out of the work of the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Aspiring to Educate (A2E) initiative to diversify the educator pipeline in Pennsylvania by attracting and retaining people of color into the teaching profession. The Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium (PEDC) is a product of the A2E pilot and consists of original A2E partners as well as additional educator preparation programs, nonprofit organizations, schools and school districts, and public sector leaders committed to increasing educator diversity.

We developed this guide to help districts and schools build highly qualified faculties that reflect students' racial identities, cultural backgrounds, life experiences and worldviews. Research has proven that this mirroring effect has the potential to vastly improve student academic outcomes and projected life success.

We reviewed teacher retention resources, only to find most were focused on retaining white teachers in white school cultures, or materials assumed a misleading race-neutral approach. We did not find widely shared materials that are

anti-racist, intentionally designed to eradicate educational inequities and social oppression. Thus, we relied on what educators of color, educator-activists, thought leaders and researchers from our community have shared about teacher retention in creating easy-to-pilot ideas and initiatives.

We welcome your critiques, recommendations, insights and stories for improving this guide—one of the first of its kind in the nation designed specifically for educator-of-color retention. We invite those better equipped and more knowledgeable to develop retention efforts that are anti-racist and culturally-powered for all educators of color as this guide focuses primarily on the retention of Black educators.

Together, we can create a blueprint to energize the transformational power that educators of color hold for all students, especially students of color. In doing so, we also seek to demonstrate the transformational power that a career in education holds for educator-activists of color.

Send your comments to Sharif.El-Mekki@thecenterblackened.org. Share your challenges, progress and recognitions using [#BlackTeacherRetention](https://twitter.com/BlackTeacherRetention).

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INTRODUCTION



The Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium

The Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium (PEDC) grew out of the Aspiring to Educate (A2E) program, an initiative of the Pennsylvania Department of Education. A2E, which was funded from 2019 to 2020, aimed to diversify the educator pipeline in Pennsylvania by attracting and retaining people of color into the teaching profession. The initial pilot funded six Philadelphia-area university educator preparation programs and the Center for Black Educator Development for one year to create pathways into teaching for youth from the School District of Philadelphia.¹

PEDC is an outgrowth of the A2E program and includes not only original A2E members but over 40 organizations representing school districts, charter school operators, teacher preparation programs, institutions of higher education, non-profits, educational organizations, and government entities across Pennsylvania. The Consortium aims to increase the diversity of the teacher workforce in Pennsylvania as well as the cultural competence of prospective and current educators of all races. PEDC member institutions work individually and collectively to further these goals, and the Consortium meets monthly to collaborate, share best practices, and strategize about scaling the work.

While many PEDC members' programs initially focused on recruitment of new prospective teachers into the profession, the Consortium recognized that exploring retention of teachers of color was also critical. This toolkit, led by Sharif El-Mekki of the Center for Black Educator Development, is a starting point for educational leaders dedicated to transforming their school cultures into ones that affirm and support both teachers and students of color.

The Need to Focus on Retention

Any effort to diversify the educator workforce that does not attend to retention of teachers of color will be futile. While a growing body of research clearly demonstrates the benefits of teachers of color for all students, particularly for students of color, teachers of color currently leave the workforce at higher rates than their white counterparts.² In one study,³ the most common challenges teachers of color cited that caused them to leave included:

- Experiencing an antagonistic school culture
- Feeling undervalued
- Being deprived of agency and autonomy
- Navigating unfavorable working conditions
- Bearing the high cost of being a teacher of color

As of 2019-20, only 6% of Pennsylvania's teachers were persons of color, while 36% of students were persons of color. According to Research for Action (RFA), Pennsylvania's gap between students of color and teachers of color is more than twice the national average. In fact, 50% of Pennsylvania public schools and 37% of all school districts did not employ a single teacher of color in 2019-20.⁴

If we want these numbers to change, we need to not only add more future educators of color to the pipeline; we need to create the conditions in schools that will keep them there.

1. Pennsylvania Department of Education (2019). *Aspiring to Educate*. bit.ly/A2EOverview.

2. Kaput, K. (2019). *Why Do Teachers of Color Leave at Higher Rates Than White Teachers?* <https://www.educationevolving.org/blog/2019/07/why-do-teachers-of-color-leave-at-higher-rates-than-white-teachers>.

3. Teach Plus & Education Trust (2019). *If You Listen, We Will Stay: Why Teachers of Color Leave and How to Disrupt Teacher Turnover*. <https://teachplus.org/DisruptTeacherTurnover>.

4. Shaw-Amoah, A.; Lapp, D.; & Kim, D.Y. (2018). *Teacher Diversity in Pennsylvania from 2013-14 to 2019-20*. bit.ly/RFATeacherDiversity.

"For It is not light that is needed, but fire;
It is not the gentle shower, but thunder.
We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake."

—FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Purpose and Audience of the Retention Toolkit

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide resources and tools for individuals and institutions working to retain educators of color by creating anti-racist school communities. We hope that it is used by principals, teacher leaders, district leaders, and other education and policy leaders committed to transforming our educational system into one that nurtures and affirms educators of color and the students they serve.

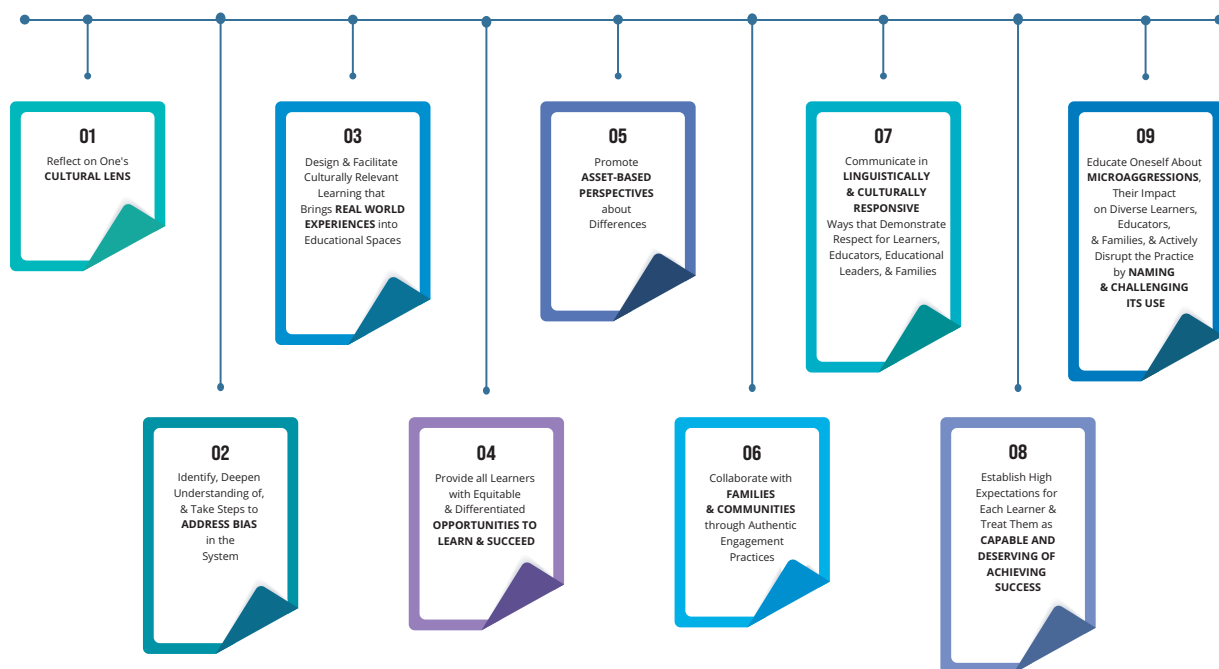
Toolkit Organization

This toolkit is organized into chapters that each focus on a different aspect of or consideration for creating culturally affirming, anti-racist school environments. Within each chapter, you will find worksheets to complete to help you reflect, plan, and put into practice concrete strategies for retaining educators of color.

Connections to the Culturally Relevant & Sustaining Education (CR-SE) Competencies

PEDC developed the Culturally Relevant & Sustaining Education (CR-SE) Competencies to describe the characteristics, habits, and actions of culturally relevant and sustaining educators. The competencies are intended to guide the pre-service and ongoing training of Pennsylvania educators of all backgrounds. These competencies are inextricably linked to the resources and strategies you will find in this toolkit.

Culturally Relevant & Sustaining Education (CR-SE) Competencies



CHAPTER 1

WHAT'S YOUR WHY?

District and school leaders engage in hiring and retaining educators of color for various reasons. Understanding what motivates you in this life-saving and community-transformative endeavor will help you secure the buy-in and support you need from your educators, students and families.



“Education can't save us. We have to save education!”

— Dr. Bettina L. Love, Professor,
University of Georgia

WORKSHEET 1

TOP REASONS FOR EDUCATOR-OF-COLOR RETENTION

Your district may be mandating greater diversity in your faculty. Yet, there are many other compelling reasons for promoting, designing, building and sustaining teacher-of-color retention beyond this directive.

After reviewing the following list of reasons for educator-of-color retention, prioritize the ones that are most important to your efforts. Feel free to add your own. There is no right order, nor is there one right reason. This exercise is meant to be reflective and prospective.

We suggest using the reasons you prioritize as talking points as you begin organizing and planning your educator-of-color efforts.

SCHOOL NAME: _____

#

To address a crisis in educational equity.

Nationally, more than 50% of our public school children are students of color, but less than 20% of their teachers are people of color.⁵ Among Pennsylvania public school teachers, 6.3% are teachers of color.⁶ In 2019, 50% of public schools and 37% of all school districts in Pennsylvania employed only white teachers. For the last seven years, 1,078 public schools and 138 districts have employed only white teachers. In a dozen of these schools, 80% or more are students of color.⁷

from low-income households, their on-time high school graduation rate soars by nearly 40%.⁸

Studies have found that learning from teachers of color is associated with higher attendance rates, reading and math test scores, and enrollment in advanced courses, and lower dropout rates and suspension rates.⁹ Greater effects were found for Black male students and students of color who are economically disadvantaged.¹⁰

#

To propel student-of-color achievement. Students of color do better when they have teachers of color. One study showed Black students who have just one Black teacher by 3rd grade are 13% more likely to enroll in college. With two Black teachers in the mix early on, that statistic jumps to 32%. For Black boys

#

For the benefit of all students. Research shows all students benefit from increased educator diversity.¹¹ An educator corps that better reflects society brings more opportunities for school experiences that counter racism and negative stereotypes and promote intercultural understanding, preparing all our children for an increasingly diverse and complex world.

5. The National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/>

6. *Keystone Crossroads. Research For Action Half of Pa. schools still don't have a single teacher of color - WHY?*

7. Shaw-Amoah, A., Lapp, D. & Kim, D. (2020). *Teacher Diversity in Pennsylvania from 2013-14 to 2019-20. Research for Action.* <https://www.researchforaction.org/publications/teacher-diversity-in-pennsylvania-from-2013-14-to-2019-20/>

8. Gershenson, S., Hart, C., Hyman, J., Lindsay, N. & Papageorge, N. (2018). *The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers.* National Bureau of Economic Research. https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w25254/w25254.pdf

9. Villegas, A.M. and Irvine, J.J. (2010). *Diversifying the Teaching Force: An Examination of Major Arguments.* *Urban Review*, 42: 175-192.; Holt, S.B. and Gershenson, S. (2015). *The Impact of Teacher Demographic Representation on Student Attendance and Suspensions.* IZA Discussion Paper No. 9554.

10. Sources: Egalite, A.J., Kisida, B., and Winters, M.A. (2015) *Representation in the classroom: The effect of own-race teachers on student achievement.* *Economics of Education Review*, 45: 44-52.; Dee, T.S. (2006). *Teachers, Race, and Student Achievement in a Randomized Experiment.* *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 86, (1): 125-210.

11. Villegas, A.M. and Irvine, J.J. (2010). *Diversifying the Teaching Force: An Examination of Major Arguments.* *Urban Review*, 42: 175-192.

"The schools we go to are reflections of the society that created them...Nobody is going to teach you your true history, teach you your true heroes. If they know that, that knowledge will help set you free."

—Assata Shakur, Civil Rights Activist



Because retaining educators of color reflects a core school value. We believe educators of color can be important role models for all students, especially for students of color. We believe educators of color can significantly enrich and transform school culture into one that is more reflective of an increasingly diverse and complex world.



Because the cost of teacher attrition is too high. A report from the Learning Policy Institute estimates that each teacher who leaves can cost a district, on average, as much as \$20,000.¹² The cost of losing a quality educator of color for students, especially students of color, is immeasurably high with possible lifelong impacts.

In Pennsylvania schools, teachers of color left a school or the profession altogether at higher rates than did white teachers, between school years 2017-18 and 2018-19.¹³



To fuel the student-to-educator-activist pipeline.

Studies show that Black students are under-expected to achieve and over-disciplined by majority white teachers.¹⁴ So, it is no surprise that Black students do not want to become teachers—perpetrators of a system that oppresses them.¹⁵



To reflect the racial identities, life experiences and worldviews of Black students, as well as mirror bright futures for them.

With more educators of color whose life experiences and social-political views mirror their own, our students of color can feel validated, their potential to academically achieve and succeed in life asserted; as a result, increased teacher diversity could motivate them to also become educator-activists.



To right a historical wrong. Nationwide Black teachers were removed following the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education decision and, later, the 1964 Civil Rights Act. As white schools integrated Black students, Black educators lost their jobs, got demoted or were denied tenure, while new Black teachers were simply not hired.

12. What's the Cost of Teacher Turnover? Learning Policy Institute. (2017). <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/the-cost-of-teacher-turnover>

13. Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color (learningpolicyinstitute.org)

14. Beady, C. H., & Hansell, S. (1981). Teacher Race and Expectations for Student Achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 18(2), 191–206. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312018002191>

15. Douglas, B., Lewis, C., Douglas, A., Scott, M., Garrison-Wade, D. (Winter-Spring 2008). *The Impact of White Teachers on the Academic Achievement of Black Students: An Exploratory Qualitative Analysis*. Educational Foundation. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ839497>

16. Graham, A., & Erwin, K. (2011). "I Don't Think Black Men Teach Because How They Get Treated as Students": High-Achieving African American Boys' Perceptions of Teaching as a Career Option. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 80(3), 398-416. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41341142>

CHAPTER 2

START WITH YOURSELF

“An educator in a system of oppression is either a revolutionary or an oppressor.”

—Lerone Bennett, Jr., Social Historian

Students instinctively know if their teachers are disingenuous or arbitrarily treating students unfairly. Similarly, people will know if you’re just going through the motions in your efforts to retain educators of color.

Doing it right—authentically—requires continual self-reflection, a willingness to assess one’s own biases, prejudices and cultural blindspots, along with a curiosity about the perspectives, expertise and experiences of others.

You are in a position to model the kinds of new thinking and behaviors you seek in others—all of which begins with and insists on a continual self-introspection and willingness to learn.

WORKSHEET 2

SELF-REFLECTION SCORECARD

Consider the following statements about yourself. Based on your self-reflection, give yourself a score for each. Higher scores mean that you have experienced deeper learnings that support anti-racist behaviors and school cultures.

Use your scorecard results to further challenge yourself to learn about your biases, prejudices and cultural blindspots.

YOUR NAME: _____

	Never (0 pts)	Once (1 pt)	Twice (2 pts)	Few Times (3 pts)	Often (4 pts)
1. Hidden biases and prejudices. I've read, heard, watched or discussed something that made me question my own biases and prejudices about educators, students or others in my school community.					
2. Cultural insights. I've learned something significant when I was mistaken about someone or a group of people because of my cultural misunderstanding.					
3. “Minority” experiences. I've had experiences feeling uncomfortable because I was in the clear minority. As a result, I've learned a lot from these experiences.					
4. Anti-racist praxis. I've tried to put into place anti-racist practices at my school, and I've learned a lot from these efforts.					
5. Building trust through sharing. I've collaborated with others who are also trying to put into place anti-racist educational practices.					
Total (out of a possible 20 points)					

Now, identify someone who you believe has a good idea of your efforts to improve educator-of-color retention and implement anti-racist practices at your school. Ask them to fill out the following score sheet on you from their perspective.



WORKSHEET 3

ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

Thank you for completing this exercise that's designed to help me get a better understanding of my biases, prejudices and cultural insights—all to be better prepared to put into place anti-racist practices at my school. I understand how you score me is entirely subjective, but your opinions are valuable to me.

Consider the following statements about me. Based on what you know about me, please give me a score for each, giving me more points for deeper learnings that could support my anti-racist behaviors and school-culture changes.

REFERENCE NAME: _____	Never (0 pts)	Once (1 pt)	Twice (2 pts)	Few Times (3 pts)	Often (4 pts)
1. Hidden biases and prejudices. Educator has read, heard, watched or discussed something that made them question their own biases and prejudices about educators, students or others in their school community.					
2. Cultural insights. Educator has learned something significant when they were mistaken about someone or a group of people because of their cultural misunderstanding.					
3. "Minority" experiences. Educator has experienced feeling uncomfortable because they were in the clear minority. As a result, they've learned a lot from these experiences.					
4. Anti-racist praxis. Educator has tried to put into place anti-racist practices at their school, and they've learned a lot from these efforts.					
5. Building trust through sharing. Educator has collaborated with others who are also trying to put into place anti-racist educational practices.					
Total (out of a possible 20 points)					

CHAPTER REFERENCES

- *Implicit Association Test, Project Implicit.* <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
- *Professional Development: Test Yourself for Hidden Bias, Teaching Tolerance.* <https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/test-yourself-for-hidden-bias>

CHAPTER 3

DON'T GO IT ALONE

WORKSHEET 4

EDUCATOR-OF-COLOR RETENTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE PLANNER

SCHOOL NAME: _____

"We all must work together to tear down the barriers that keep our talented teachers of color from staying, growing, and thriving in their profession."

—Roberto J. Rodríguez, President and CEO, Teach Plus

An advisory committee can help ensure diverse perspectives on concepts and strategies in advancing teacher-of-color retention efforts. How often, where and how the committee meets depends on what is needed and feasible.

Use this chart to help identify the best candidates for the committee.

#	NAME	TITLE/ROLE	AFFILIATION	PERSPECTIVE	EXPERTISE	INFLUENCE
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						

“Whoever controls the images controls your self esteem, self respect, and self development. Whoever controls the history controls the vision.”

—Dr. Leonard Jeffries, Jr., former Chairman, Black Studies Department, City University of New York

NUMBER

Membership needs to be limited to a manageable size. We recommend committees of five or seven in order to reach majority decisions.

TITLE/ROLE

Members shouldn't be limited to just educators. A concerted effort must be made to recruit other stakeholders as well, including parents, community leaders, administrators and key decision makers.

AFFILIATION

Members don't all need to be affiliated with your school. Reach beyond to seek people of color for guidance and feedback.

PERSPECTIVE

Insist on a group with a shared goal—educator-of-color retention—but also a group whose individual members bring incredibly divergent perspectives of our school community. The more diverse the better. This differentiation can be defined by gender, racial identities or cultural insights.

Members could also provide family and community perspectives, as well as those of recently retired educators and student alumni insights.

EXPERTISE

Consider all that is needed to design and implement educator-of-color retention strategies, including securing community buy-in. Then identify people who will bring that expertise to the table, including those with expertise in cultural pedagogy, education policy, community engagement, strategic communications and school fundraising.

INFLUENCE

Identify people in the community or in the education field with influence, the power to encourage and sway others to adopt new anti-racist practices and school culture shifts. These could be social media influencers, but also people who are highly respected, irrespective of their formal titles or positions.


CHAPTER REFERENCES

- REMOTE RECRUITING & HIRING TOOLKIT: Staff Involvement in Virtual Recruiting. Developed in partnership with: Pennsylvania's System for LEA/School Improvement, Lancaster-Lebanon IU13, The Urban Schools Human Capital Academy and TNTP. https://info.iu13.org/hubfs/Statewide%20Initiatives/Toolkit_StaffInvolvementinVirtualRecruiting.pdf

CHAPTER 4

SET USEFUL GOALS. PLAN, IMPROVE & SHARE.

How is your school defining success for educator-of-color retention efforts? While goals and metrics will vary across schools, it's important to identify them at the outset to guide and gauge your progress in planning and implementation. We offer several for your consideration.



"Intent alone is no longer good enough...until diversity, equity and inclusion evolves from a DEI statement to tangible Key Performance Indicators... intent will not translate into progress."

—Kai D. Wright, Author and Lecturer

WORKSHEET 5

SAMPLE GOALS AND METRICS FOR EDUCATOR-OF-COLOR RETENTION

GOAL 1: Greater educator diversity.

TIMEFRAME: _____

METRICS: Expected changes in the percentages and respective tenure of Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous and other marginalized groups of educators at the school.

GOAL 2: Teacher-student parity.

TIMEFRAME: _____

METRICS: Expected changes in the percentage of teachers whose racial and gender identities match those of the student body.

GOAL 3: Educator satisfaction.

TIMEFRAME: _____

METRICS: Expected changes based on specified survey results and interview responses.

GOAL 4: Educator attrition.

TIMEFRAME: _____

METRICS: Expected changes in educators leaving the school disaggregated by demographic groups, separating those who are retiring or changing roles.

GOAL 5: Student performance.

TIMEFRAME: _____

METRICS: Expected changes in the grades, standardized test scores, attendance, suspension, expulsion, dropout, on-time graduation and college matriculation rates of all students, cross-referenced by teachers' demographics, tenure, etc.

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

– African Proverb

WORKSHEET 6

EDUCATOR-OF-COLOR RETENTION GOALS AND METRICS

SCHOOL NAME: _____

GOAL 1:

TIMEFRAME:

METRICS:

GOAL 2:

TIMEFRAME:

METRICS:

GOAL 3:

TIMEFRAME:

METRICS:

GOAL 4:

TIMEFRAME:

METRICS:

GOAL 5:

TIMEFRAME:

METRICS:

TIPS FOR EDUCATOR-OF-COLOR RETENTION PLANS

Share your learnings frequently within and outside of your school community. Find the best mechanism for doing that, for example, through blogs or social media posts.

- Bankston, K. (2019). Strategies to Increase Teacher Retention at Your School. Better Lesson. <https://blog.betterlesson.com/strategies-to-increase-teacher-retention-at-your-school>
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- Pennsylvania Equity and Inclusion Toolkit. Pennsylvania Department of Education. <https://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/K-12/Safe%20Schools/EquityInclusion/PA%20Equity%20Inclusion%20Toolkit.pdf>
- Proven Strategies for Increasing Teacher Retention Rates. Recruiting.com. <https://www.recruiting.com/blog/the-best-strategies-for-increasing-teacher-retention-rates/>
- Reitman, Galit C.; Karge, Belinda Dunnick. (2018). Investing in Teacher Support Leads to Teacher Retention: Six Supports Administrators Should Consider for New Teachers. Multicultural Education, v27. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1250205>
- Teacher Retention Planning Guide. TNTP. <https://tntp.org/teacher-talent-toolbox/view/teacher-retention-planning-guide>
- Teacher Retention for Districts and Schools. Education Elements. <https://www.edelements.com/teacher-retention-guide>
- Teacher Turnover and Access to Effective Teachers in the School District of Philadelphia. Institute of Education Sciences. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midatlantic/pdf/REL_2020037.pdf
- Waddell, J. (2010). Fostering Relationships to Increase Teacher Retention in Urban Schools. Journal of Curriculum and Instruction. <http://www.joci.ecu.edu/index.php/joCI/article/viewFile/45/80>

CHAPTER 5

SEEK OUT EDUCATOR-ACTIVISTS

Our goal in preparing this guide is to help you retain educators of color, especially educator-activists-of-color who believe that teaching can be a form of activism, every lesson plan is a political document, and every classroom interaction a political statement. Educators who understand their role as freedom seekers and fighters fueled by their love for each and every one of their students.

As you design, implement and continually improve your retention efforts, you need to continue recruiting educators of color. You cannot just fire at will and build a great institution of learning. You need to hire and coach extremely well, making tough decisions and changes to your school culture so that it attracts and cultivates the educators of color you need leading our classrooms.

SEEK:

Those who see in all our students the potential to succeed in school and life. And those who can also help our families manage increased responsibilities for home learning.

Those who understand the extra stress and burden that the pandemic has wrought on marginalized communities—where parents and grandparents don't have the luxury of working from home. Where families struggled more than ever to keep their children fed, housed, safe and healthy. Where people are outraged about systemic inequities and healthcare disparities made them more vulnerable to COVID-19 and its consequences.

Those who know schools have historically not offered refuge from racist ideologies that sanctioned the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and countless other Black and Brown people. The teachers you seek recognize that schools have too often served as incubators of these cruel and violent forces.

Those determined to change the unjust narratives by stepping up and into classrooms—their chosen venue for righting what's wrong—because schools must be the safest place to practice healthy defiance.

EDUCATOR-ACTIVIST

An educator whose viewpoints and teachings are based on the understanding that educational justice and racial justice are intertwined.

EDUCATION ACTIVISM

A practiced commitment to liberating education from the racism inherent in America's institutions, including our schools, that continues to deny educational equity and prescribe compromised learning and academic outcomes for Black students and, as a result, compromises the humanity of all.



WORKSHEET 8

CHECKLIST FOR RECRUITING EDUCATOR-ACTIVISTS-OF-COLOR

SCHOOL NAME: _____

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do they reflect the students they will serve, not just in terms of racial identities, but experience and worldviews? Do they offer not just windows to the world, but powerful, empowering mirrors to bright futures?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do they know the difference between schooling and education? How to break the institutional racism that has dictated lower expectations and harsher discipline for students of color? Are they activists who can simultaneously teach and inspire, rather than assume the role of a missionary or warden?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do they hold themselves accountable for what their students learn (and don't learn)? The best educators don't shirk this sacred responsibility and know just the right formula for providing student support while setting high expectations. As subject experts, they also possess the ability to help their students care and be curious about their own learning.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do they know how to operate as problem solvers who earn the trust of those in their charge? Someone who earnestly asks students and their parents about their aspirations, and the rules, regulations and values they live by—rather than insisting on their own?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are they compassionate and committed to supporting students, their academic success, and their full potential? If you think they would ever say something like "we're not a social service agency," then don't hire them. The ones we want are the educators who see students as having higher-order needs, too often tied to sustained traumatic stress, that can only be met by someone who knows to ask students "what happened to you?" and not "what's wrong with you?"</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are they someone who strikes you as having both courage and humility? Will they hold not only themselves accountable, but also their colleagues and school leaders?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do they embrace Black history and Black pedagogy? Do they connect the fight for educational justice with racial justice? Do they strive to correct the teaching of our community's past from the prism of victimization and oppression to one of resilience, resistance and revolution?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Will they help us address the challenges educators of color face to persist through the student-activism pipeline to become the best educators they can be?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> Will they interrogate their own mindsets about Black and Brown children and communities? Are they willing to dive deep into assumptions of race, class and privilege?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> | |

CHAPTER REFERENCES

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<https://xqsuperschool.org/rethinktogether/anti-racist-new-school-hires-recruiting/>

CHAPTER 6

GET A CLEAR READ ON YOUR SCHOOL **CULTURE**

School leaders make bold promises to families that cannot be honored without hiring and keeping the right people. But this may require schools to change their culture to be able to recognize, effectively recruit, sincerely welcome and actively support the success of educators of color.

Every school has a culture. There's no such thing as a culture-neutral school—too often, this is just code for a white-centric school.

“You’re under a ton of scrutiny and you are made to feel like you don’t know what you’re doing and that your education is subpar.”

—Teacher of Color,
2015 Study of Minnesotan Teachers

WORKSHEET 9

SNAPSHOT OF SCHOOL CULTURE

What is your school culture like? Is your school culture the kind educators of color would want to be a part of? A school where they would want to cultivate themselves as educator-activists?

Before reading through the rest of this section, write a brief description of your school culture, or just jot down phrases you believe best capture your school culture.

SCHOOL NAME: _____

How would you grade your school culture's reflection of the racial identities, cultural backgrounds, life experiences and worldviews of your students? How did you determine this grade?

GRADE: _____ **DATE:** _____

WORKSHEET 10

SCHOOL CULTURE ASSESSMENT

Before putting together a vision for your new school culture, conduct this assessment with your advisory committee and other school community stakeholders. Get as many diverse perspectives as possible.

SCHOOL NAME: _____

THE WHOs of our school culture

1. Leadership confidence.

Educators, students and families have full confidence in our leadership to advance the changes we need to recruit and retain educator-activists of color.

NONE	LITTLE	SOME	A LOT	100%
1	2	3	4	5

2. Educator-student parity.

Educators mirror the students they teach in their racial identities, life experiences and worldviews.

NONE	LITTLE	SOME	A LOT	100%
1	2	3	4	5

3. Family and community engagement.

Families and other school community members feel welcome and valued.

NONE	LITTLE	SOME	A LOT	100%
1	2	3	4	5

Discussion Questions

Who are the leaders? How would you describe their leadership style? How do they hold themselves accountable to student success and educator excellence?

To what extent do they represent the students, families and communities they serve? How do they take into account divergent perspectives and opinions in making major decisions?

How do they provide opportunities for educator leadership and voice, and which educators are involved in these opportunities?

Who makes up your educator corps? How would you describe your faculty and staff? What is the breakdown by racial identity, gender, sexual orientation and age range? By grade and subject matter? By experience, expertise and tenure? By salaries/benefits? By turnover rates?

What percentage are educator-activists?

To what extent do they represent the racial identities and cultural backgrounds of your school's students, families and communities? How likely is it for a student at your school to go through all grades at your school and not have a teacher of color? A Black teacher?

Who outside of administration and faculty are prominent representatives of your school culture? How do you continuously create opportunities for voices from the margins to be included in the design process for new protocols and systems for your school?

To what extent are families and community members an integral part of your school culture? How do you actively communicate, engage and partner with them? How do you involve them in major decisions that impact them? What have you done recently to further engage families and communities?

“My biggest challenge being a Black female educator is when I see something is wrong, when I speak up, when I bring something to my school leader, I get told a lot to watch how I speak. I’m super passionate and whenever I feel something needs to be said, I say it, but I’m always told to tone it down. I feel like I’m allowing them to put me in a box.

But everyday I’m telling my kids to speak up, advocate for yourself. This is how you live in this world. It’s okay if you speak up. It’s okay if you share your opinion. This is what you should do and that’s what the world needs right now. For you to be an advocate for yourself and for others. But then in the same sense, behind the scenes, I’m allowing people to make me small. That’s the hardest part for me. Trying to teach something on one end and allowing the system to make me everything I don’t want my students to be.”

—Kindergarten Teacher, School District of Philadelphia

THE WHATs of our school culture

4. Shared beliefs and values.

What your school believes and values is known to your educators, students and families.

NONE	LITTLE	SOME	A LOT	100%
1	2	3	4	5

Discussion Questions

What are the shared beliefs and values of your school community? If you had to prioritize them, what would they be? How did you determine these? To what extent are they well known and understood by your school community? How do you know this?

5. Cultural pedagogies and content.

Your school insists on continual learning, modeling for your students a curiosity to learn new approaches to, as well as perspectives and interpretations of, all that is taught and how everything is taught.

NONE	LITTLE	SOME	A LOT	100%
1	2	3	4	5

Beyond subject matter, what kinds of books, references or sources are most commonly used?

To what extent do you ensure different cultural approaches to and interpretations of history and literature as well as mathematics, the sciences and the arts?

How do teachers at your school instruct their students? To what extent do they explore different pedagogical approaches that are consistent with their students’ cultures?

How does your pedagogy ensure equity in resources? Material, technology and home resources? How do you achieve this? What processes have you put into place?

6. Healthy racial identity development.

All students’ racial identities are encouraged, their development safeguarded and valued.

NONE	LITTLE	SOME	A LOT	100%
1	2	3	4	5

In what specific ways do you authenticate and cherish the racial identities and cultural backgrounds of all students at your school beyond the celebration of select holidays?

How do you create opportunities for students to embrace different cultures that are represented within the school community and beyond?

THE HOWs of our school culture

7. All-student potential.

Your school believes in and supports every student's limitless future.

NONE	LITTLE	SOME	A LOT	100%
1	2	3	4	5

8. Support for educators of color.

You have thoughtfully designed and instituted protocols, procedures and programs—from hiring to retirement—that encourage educators-of-color to become great educator-activists whose students excel at our school.

NONE	LITTLE	SOME	A LOT	100%
1	2	3	4	5

9. Expectations of educators of color.

Your school values the expertise of educators of color and supports their growth as educator-activists, without assuming they should take on disciplinary responsibilities.

NONE	LITTLE	SOME	A LOT	100%
1	2	3	4	5

10. Fairness and equity for educators of color.

Your school has made concerted efforts to ensure fairness and equity in the achievement, promotion and leadership of educators of color.

NONE	LITTLE	SOME	A LOT	100%
1	2	3	4	5

Discussion Questions

How does your school demonstrate your belief in every student's full potential to do well in school and life? How do you recognize and encourage this?

How do you ensure Black and Brown students are not under-expected to achieve academically while being over-disciplined?

How do you oppose racist assumptions about the basic potential of students based on their racial identities and language competency?

How do you (or how will you) ensure educators of color will succeed at your school? How are educators of color supported to become educator-activists?

How are they welcomed and onboarded? How are they respected and cared for? How do you value the expertise of educators of color? How do you demonstrate this?

How and when do you check in with educators of color to learn their views on school climate and conditions, and their plans for the next school year?

How are they provided with high-quality and meaningful coaching or mentoring support, as well as professional development and fellowship opportunities?

How do you not overburden educators of color with expectations of their taking on additional disciplinary roles and, as a result, overpopulate their classes with students who have disciplinary issues, as well as academic needs? How do you provide them with the autonomy to excel at their work?

If someone is the only educator of color at your school, how do you ensure that educator is not frustrated from persistent, unrealistic expectations and negative interactions?

How are the achievements of educators of color recognized and celebrated?

How are they promoted with full transparency based on merit? How do you provide educators of color with access to influence and decisionmaking at your school? How are they given opportunities to lead and take part in major school decisions?

How does your school ensure educators of color do not receive lower salaries and fewer advancement opportunities than their white colleagues tied to unfair expectations, and inequities in responsibilities, support and evaluation? How do you hold administrators accountable to fair practices?

THE HOWs of our school culture

11. Healing from trauma, including racial trauma and other systemic forms of trauma.

Your school demonstrates its understanding that teaching and learning are difficult when traumatic stress is not recognized as a normal reaction to conditions and circumstances that should not be normal (e.g., poverty, racism, violence and social oppression).

Your school recognizes and encourages a wide range of ways to heal from trauma.

NONE	LITTLE	SOME	A LOT	100%
1	2	3	4	5

Discussion Questions

How does your school support trauma healing? Beyond being trauma-informed, to what extent does your school understand the causes and symptoms of sustained traumatic stress so they can help students, faculty and others heal from trauma, making it possible for them to focus on learning and teaching?

How does your school continually strive to build rapport and gain the trust of educators and students of color by taking the time to discuss their experiences with microaggression, discrimination, prejudices, and racist violations—including those possibly tied to your school—especially when they are hurting and struggling with the series of state-sanctioned brutality and murder committed against Black and Brown people?

How do you ensure your school does not retraumatize, nor stigmatize, educators and students of color? That they do not face racial discrimination, prejudice and isolation in your school? How does your school determine and eradicate individual and systemic bias against educators of color?

12. Anti-racist school culture.

Your school continually demonstrates a commitment to build an anti-racist school culture.

NONE	LITTLE	SOME	A LOT	100%
1	2	3	4	5

How do administrators, educators and students continue to actively evolve in their cultural understandings, including the language used to talk about diversity, equity, inclusion, racial identities and cultural references?

What staff trainings do you have planned in building a school culture that is anti-racist and empathetic?

To some extent, culture evolves naturally. But it can also be designed.

To liberate education by hiring and retaining educator-activists of color, we need to advance school cultures where more see their own activism as central to the struggle in fighting the educational injustices that have wronged children from marginalized communities.

Strive to achieve a school culture that would attract and keep educators of color by having a clear idea of what kind of culture you want for your school.

SCHOOL CULTURE VISION

- What is your vision for your school after making significant progress in educator-of-color retention as measured by the goals and metrics you have set?
- What is different about your school as a result of this progress? How will educators, students, parents and other stakeholders experience these changes? What will these changes mean to them?

- *ED School Climate Surveys, National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, U.S. Department of Education Office of Safe and Healthy Students, American Institutes for Research.* <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/edscls>
- *Pennsylvania School Climate Survey, Pennsylvania Department of Education (login required).* <http://www.paschoolclimatesurvey.org/Beta.aspx>

CHAPTER 7

CONDUCT STAY INSIGHT INTERVIEWS

Retention toolkits often recommend holding “stay” interviews with teachers. While there may be usefulness to these, we suggest holding **insight interviews** with educators of color to improve their retention.

Stay interviews focus on convincing an educator to commit to the school by making that one educator feel valued and an important member of their school community. In comparison, **insight interviews** are designed to gather information from educators of color about how the school can become not only a place where they feel valued, but one that embraces a culture and community that align with their values.

What are signs that an anti-racist school culture has been achieved from what school leaders learn from these **insight interviews**?

Schools are no longer hostile and toxic environments for educators of color. They stay in allegiance and solidarity not only with their students and parents, but also with the administration who is likewise committed to achieving an anti-racist school culture.

Through **insight interviews**, schools have the opportunity to work with educators of color in understanding what’s working and what’s not based on their experiences and perspectives. Schools need their vital insights, not necessarily to convince them to stay, though that may be a great result, but to become more aware of the changes needed to build a school culture that would significantly boost educator-of-color recruitment and retention.

Educators of color are your best source for the information you need to achieve your educator-of-color retention goals. **Insight interviews** provide the essential qualitative information you need to leverage schoolwide opportunities for respect (discussed next) in retaining your educators of color.

That is, as long as you’re willing to truly listen to what they have to say.

“Real radicalism implores us to tell the whole ugly truth, even when it is inconvenient.”

—Dr. Brittney Cooper, Associate Professor,
Rutgers University



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- *What K-12 HR Leaders Need to Know About Stay Interviews, Power School*. <https://www.powerschool.com/resources/blog/what-k-12-hr-leaders-need-to-know-about-stay-interviews/>

WORKSHEET 12

INSIGHT INTERVIEW PREP CHECKLIST

SCHOOL NAME: _____

- ☐ **Goals.** *You've made the purpose clear.*

Insight interviews focus on listening to educators of color for their recommendations, including on the resources and support they need to succeed and for creating a school culture that is welcoming and respectful to all.

- ☐ **Structure.** *You've determined the best approach.*

Insight interviews are not exit interviews or tied to performance reviews, but interactive discussions to learn from educators of color to advance an anti-racist school culture.

- ☐ **Interviewer.** *You've carefully selected the interviewer(s).*

Who you choose to be the interviewer can make all the difference in holding honest, meaningful and insightful discussions. Are they experienced interviewers? Will they be viewed by educators of color as someone who can be trusted to represent what they share in the way it was intended?

- ☐ **Confidentiality.** *You've determined all the ways we can ensure trust in the interview process.*

Schools need to think through how to build trust in a process that will not cause any negative repercussions from sharing insights. Start by clearly explaining the purpose of these insight interviews and how information and findings will be used and shared.

Detail how their identity will be presented (if at all). Let them know there are no right or wrong answers because you want to learn from their experiences and perspectives.

- ☐ **Engagement.** *You've structured engagement to be considerate and respectful.*

After getting an educator's agreement to participate, schedule the interview when it's most convenient for them. Thank them at the end of the interview.

If there are no educators of color at the school, see if there are those who turned down a position at your school—or those who teach at nearby schools—who would be willing to participate.

- ☐ **Script.** *You've prepared an outline of the interview script and questions.*

Expert interviewers know not to read the script verbatim, but it's helpful to use an outline as a guide.

- ☐ **Compensation.** *You've determined the best ways to show respect in compensating educators of color for their time and expert insights.*

Insight interview findings could inform school strategic plans and operational efforts. As such, this expert input should be, if not compensated, formally appreciated. Be sure to end the interview with how you will follow up with this compensation or acknowledgement.

INSIGHT INTERVIEW SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

SCHOOL NAME: _____

Listed below are general groupings of questions we suggest asking educators of color during insight interviews.

1. Respectful experiences

- From the recruiting, hiring and onboarding process through more recent experiences at our school, have you felt respected as an educator?
- If so, tell me about those experiences. What happened? When was this? Who or in what ways were you made to feel respected?
- If unsure, have you ever felt valued for what you bring to the school, your students and their families? Your expertise as an educator? Your ideas, opinions, perspectives and worldviews?
- If not, in what ways have you felt disrespected? By knowing as much as you're willing to share, and with your help, we'd like to improve things.

2. Personal affinity

- How would you like to feel every school day morning about coming to work? How would you like to feel when you leave the school each day?
- If your current experiences don't reflect this, how can we implement changes to make things better?
- What is your most memorable experience of working here? Best? Most inspiring? Worst experience, wish it never happened? How can we change things to make more positive experiences for you?

3. School culture

- What are the words you hear yourself most often use when describing our school to others? What would you tell other educators of color who are thinking about teaching at our school about what it's like to work here?
- If there were policies, procedures, opportunities, people, ideas or anything else you could change about our school, what would they be?

4. Colleagues

- How would you describe the collaborative nature of your experiences at our school (in and outside of the classroom)? Have you worked with small teams of educators to co-plan, peer-coach and model instruction for each other? Any co-learning that leads to a sense of ownership and classroom autonomy?
- How can we improve collective learning, peer-based critical thinking and the cross-pollination of concepts, strategies, experience and insights? How can we demonstrate our appreciation for what our educators

can contribute, especially when it comes to furthering a school culture that is anti-racist and reflective of our students's racial identities, cultural backgrounds, life experiences and worldviews?

5. Leadership opportunities

- Who at our school, another school or elsewhere models the type of leadership you respect? What do you admire about this person?
- To what extent (if any) have you had opportunities at our school for professional growth and promotion, leadership roles or otherwise extending your influence in meaningful ways?
- How would you describe your level of autonomy in your classroom pedagogy and instruction? How would you describe responses and feedback to your input and suggestions beyond your classroom? We would appreciate any ideas from different perspectives to improve how we receive, implement, recognize and compensate for recommendations that advance school goals.
- Would there be new roles or additional responsibilities you feel you'd want to take on at our school (or a school like ours if this is an exit interview) that would benefit your professional development and your goals as an educator?
- How can you help us build a school culture that is anti-racist and reflective of our students's racial identities, cultural backgrounds, life experiences and worldviews? How can we help you help us? Examples: coaching from educator-activists of color, conferences, workshops or digital learning on cultural pedagogy, etc.

6. Greater impact

- How do you feel about your work as an educator at our school? What would help you become an even better educator? What resources, support or new mindset would help you make an even greater impact on your students?

7. Future plans

- Where do you see yourself professionally in the next few years? How can we be supportive of your growth and aspirations?
- What motivates (or what would motivate) you the most to stay as an educator at our school? If not at our school, then in the education profession?

CHAPTER 8

LEVERAGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BELONGING RESPECT


The reasons why educators of color leave their school, if not the profession altogether, are well researched and documented, but strategies for their retention are largely based on strategies for white teacher retention; as such, these strategies may in effect contribute to educator-of-color attrition rather than retention.

White teacher retention, for example, focuses on identifying, building and leveraging opportunities for belonging: experiences that make educators internalize their role in the school community as a part of their professional, if not also their personal, identity. Research supporting these strategies suggests that reports of higher sense of belonging are directly linked to improvements in job performance and retention.

Less clear is if a retention strategy focused on belonging would yield the same results for educators of color in schools where the administration, faculty and culture are predominantly white.

- *If educators of color leave their schools because the school cultures did not reflect who they were, why would their “belonging” to such a school culture make them want to stay more?*
- *Could they feel less themselves if they stayed?*
- *Would they have to compromise who they are to fit in? Perhaps even deny, or worse, sell out their racial identities, their culture and worldviews just to belong?*
- *Would they be able to show up as themselves—their authentic, unapologetic selves—with no need to change who they are, something that educators cannot take for granted, unlike their white peers?*

Presumably, strategies focused on belonging would work as intended once you have established a school culture that is welcoming, built on diversity, equity and inclusion, where the faculty's racial identities and cultural backgrounds mirror that of the student body and surrounding community.



“Teachers don’t want thanks from politicians...They want a professional wage, respect, and to be treated as the experts we are when it comes to education and children.”

—Rodney Robinson,
2019 National Teacher of the Year

Since most schools have not achieved this type of culture, we encourage school leaders to focus on opportunities for respecting and valuing all educators rather than trying to increase the sense of belonging for educators of color in your faculty.

What we’re advocating for and recommending are not two different approaches for white educators and educators of color, where the former is focused on belonging and the latter on respect. Rather, we’re recommending strategies for respecting and valuing all educators so that you can create a school culture to which all educators would want to belong.

NEXT STEPS:

Based on your findings from conducting the **insight interviews** with educators of color, identify opportunities for building and leveraging the level of respect experienced by your educators of color.

Once you’ve identified these experiences, create strategies for implementing the changes into your school operations.

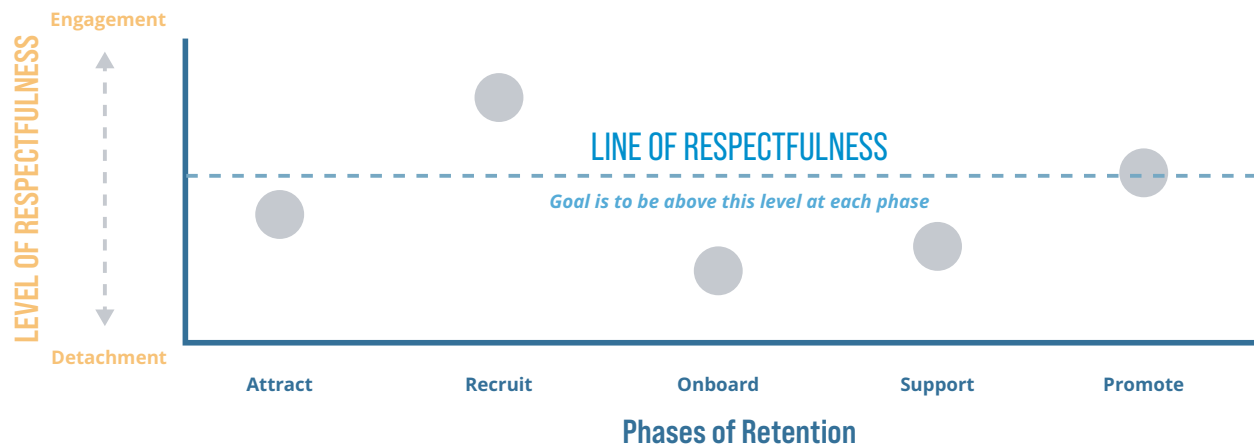
WORKSHEET 14

MAPPING EDUCATOR-OF-COLOR RETENTION BY LEVELS OF RESPECTFULNESS

Creating a school culture based on genuine respect, where authentic identities are expressed and valued, is difficult, especially for a school that perpetuates a conformist culture. Use findings from your **insight interviews** to discern more opportunities for demonstrating respect in each phase of retention. Map your progress using this chart (adapted from “Teacher Engagement by Phase” by Education Elements).

SCHOOL NAME: _____

TEACHER ENGAGEMENT BY PHASE (SAMPLE DISTRICT)



In every phase, create experiences that present opportunities to demonstrate respect for educators of color.

ATTRACT

What is your school's "brand" or reputation among educator-candidates of color? If positive, emphasize this in recruitment communications. If negative, then focus on changes, and communicate how you're improving things.

RECRUIT

Use every step in the recruitment process (from calls and emails to interviews and hiring notifications) as an opportunity to demonstrate respect. Consider these often first direct interactions with your school less as transactions, and more as demonstrations of a school culture that is respectful of educators of color.

Review all touchpoints. Who is doing the recruiting, and what are their racial identity and possible biases? What questions and language are used during interviews? How does your

school reach out to promising candidates to keep them interested throughout the recruitment and hiring process, and how could you leverage your current educators in these efforts? How do you practice fair and equitable assessments of new candidates?

ONBOARD

Research shows that the sooner new hires feel welcomed and prepared, the sooner they will succeed in their teaching, as well as contribute to and stay at their new school.

How do you currently welcome educators of color? How do you plan to show your respect for who they are and what they can contribute? How does your school onboard educators of color with resources and support to make them feel truly welcome, ready and challenged to improve their teaching? How do you ensure a close or closer alignment of values?

SUPPORT

How does your school leadership show respect for educators of color in the ways that support and provide clear opportunities for different cultural pedagogical approaches, diverse content in what is taught, and the continual professional growth of educators of color as educator-activists?

How do you connect educators of color with people who can guide, coach and mentor them—expert, experienced educators who mirror their racial identities, cultural backgrounds and worldviews?

How does your school collect feedback from educators—and disaggregate by demographic groups—to learn how effectively they are supported? For example, what do you know about the effectiveness of your mentoring program?

PROMOTE

How do you incentivize educators of color to stay and their continual growth as educator-activists? How does your school recognize, award and promote educators of color? How are educators, staff and students alike celebrated equitably? (See the HONOR EDUCATOR EXCELLENCE section of this guide for ideas.)

How do you transparently present and follow through on pathways to leadership roles within and beyond classroom instruction? How do you ensure input from your educators of color in decision-making processes?

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<https://www.edelements.com/teacher-retention-guide>

CHAPTER 9

INSIST ON STUDENT, FAMILY & COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

SOCIETY:

Who taught you to hate yourself?

BLACK STUDENTS:

My school.

WORKSHEET 15

RECENT INSIGHTS FROM STUDENTS, FAMILIES & COMMUNITY

SCHOOL NAME: _____

What have you learned recently from your school community members that has surprised you? What is making you consider changes, both big and small? Specify what you've learned and what you're changing as a result.

How can you communicate to stakeholders in the school and community about the ways you are using their input to inform decisions? Doing this can help boost the amount and depth of future input from these stakeholders.

If you haven't recently listened to your stakeholders, consider holding discussions and forums to get the insights you need. The more mechanisms for this kind of input and feedback are integrated into your school calendar, the more they become a part of your school culture (expected, regular interactions), and the more quickly you can achieve an anti-racist school culture.

From students of color?

- What have you learned?
- What are you changing?

From families of color?

- What have you learned?
- What are you changing?

From community members of color?

- What have you learned?
- What are you changing?

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POWER UP CULTURAL PEDAGOGY

"We strive to improve the reading skills of all our young scholars by reinforcing identity, community and purpose."

WORKSHEET 16

CULTURAL PEDAGOGY OVERVIEW

SCHOOL NAME: _____

What is your school's dominant cultural pedagogy? How do you know this? Describe it as completely as possible, detailing the ways you have determined it and how your school members put it into practice.

"I love being Black."

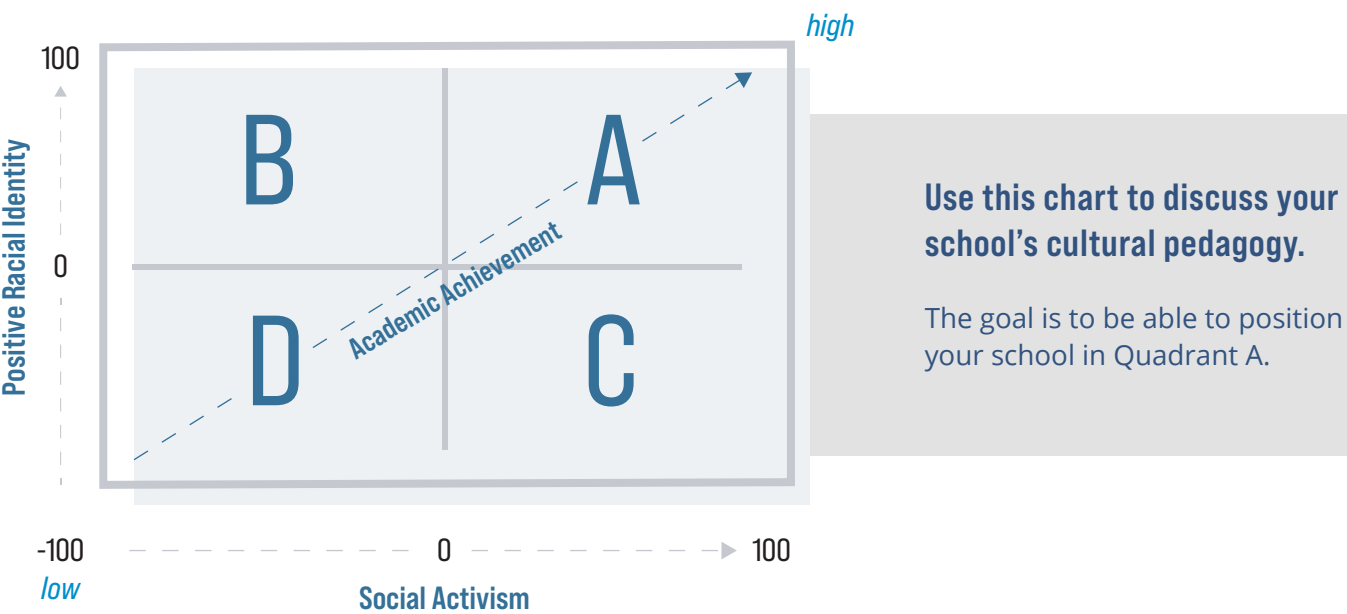
—Young scholars and their educators, Freedom Schools Literacy Academy

CHARTING CULTURAL PEDAGOGY FOR ALL-STUDENT IMPACT

Educator-activists of color are interested in schools that embrace a cultural pedagogy that propels all-student achievement, positive racial development and agency around social activism and social justice. A school whose student body is predominantly white could still benefit from assessing their school's cultural pedagogy, especially if they are invested in recruiting and retaining educators of color.

SCHOOL NAME: _____

What and how a school teaches reflect a school's cultural pedagogy, which in turn corresponds with educator-of-color recruitment and retention efforts. The greater a school's cultural pedagogy aligns with the racial identities of its students, as well as their potential agency in social activism, the greater the likelihood of attracting and retaining educator-activists of color.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHART EXERCISE:

1. ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

What is the purpose of an education? What does it mean to be educated? Who gets to be educated? Throughout history, questions like these have been debated by philosophers, politicians, educators, community members and many others.

Presuming we agree that a defining purpose of a public education is to help ALL children achieve, explore their talents and gain confidence in their abilities and worldviews so they can have the best chance at life success and liberation, we must then take to heart the research that says the cultural pedagogical approach a school decides to take (rather than asserts without being aware or by default) can make a significant difference.

“What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves.”

—Paulo Friere

2. POSITIVE RACIAL IDENTITIES

The more students can see themselves mirrored, not only in who teaches, but in what and how everything is taught, the more likely students will engage in their learning as they experience meaningful connections in their education.

Educators of color can play a critical role in this mirroring effect as they can bring to bear their racial identities, cultural backgrounds, life experiences and worldviews in their teaching and the school's culture. But so, too, can their white allies in laying the groundwork for important shifts in the cultural pedagogy of a school.

Leverage everyone and everything. Consider what is taught in every grade and subject for opportunities, not just for integrating content that honors different cultural sources and traditions, but also for exploring different approaches to teaching and structuring lessons and assessments.

3. SOCIAL ACTIVISM

Education is a political act. Done right, a liberating education can upend white supremacy and a racist history of using education as an oppressive social force and schools as oppressive social enforcers.

With the right cultural pedagogical approach(es), education can encourage social activism, not just academic achievement and positive racial-identity development. The ability of students (and other members of a school community) to recognize, understand and critique educational and other social inequities. Their sense of empathy and agency to change the world for the better in ways they define and direct.

Effective cultural pedagogies take into account that teaching and learning are intertwined with power dynamics, including racially charged ones, and educational equity cannot be taken for granted. Success is buoyed by hard work and an educational context that is consistently fair to everyone.

Effective cultural pedagogies also recognize that families and communities are assets in student achievement, valuable in supporting students to overcome their bias, discrimination and prejudices. Everyone has a role to play. Collective responsibility is encouraged because we all lift as we climb.

WORKSHEET 18

SAMPLE LISTING OF CULTURAL PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

LOW/LOWER RATES

- Incorporate multicultural content with indifference to student learning.
- Decorate classroom for history and heritage months without engaging in any meaningful learning about Black history, Hispanic heritage and Asian culture.
- Only talk about race after an incident or scandal.
- Teach “social justice” and use rhetoric without referencing racism and other forms of social oppression.
- Try to build self-esteem without referencing racial identities, cultural backgrounds and community relationships.
- Build a sense of community at every opportunity in and outside the classroom throughout the day and school year.
- Connect classroom instruction to real-world happenings. Help students grapple with racial dynamics and politically charged events (in ways that are developmentally appropriate). Address the traumatic stress they may be experiencing as a result.
- Practice social activism as a classroom assignment allowing for different levels and types of student-directed engagement.
- Invite families and community members to take part in teaching, co-creating lessons, sharing stories and different approaches to learning.

HIGH/HIGHER RATES

- Continually find ways to hear from marginalized voices in the school community, including those that are mischaracterized and negatively stereotyped by mass media.
- Find meaningful connections between required curriculum and students’ racial identities, cultural backgrounds, life experiences, expansive empathy, activist agency and worldviews.
- Commit to being continually aware of how school educators are expressing themselves to students so that they are not being preferential in language and nonverbal communications.
- Recognize a wide range of achievements and definitions of success in the school community.
- Find innovative and measurable ways to hold everyone accountable for their own and each other’s learning.

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CHAPTER 11

HONOR EDUCATOR EXCELLENCE

Just over a third of all teachers (36%) believe that American society values their profession.¹⁷ The majority of teachers (79%) who leave the profession cite the “lack of appreciation” as the top reason for their departure.¹⁸

A 2016 national qualitative study of Black educators reported a “lack of respect by white colleagues for their expertise” and a “lack of professional development opportunities” as oft-cited reasons for their dissatisfaction at work.¹⁹

A 2018 qualitative study of Latinx teachers reported their sources of dissatisfaction with their jobs, among other things: their being “viewed as inferior to other teachers or only beneficial for Latinx students” and “criticism from other teachers and school leaders if they encouraged their students to speak Spanish or if they embedded culturally relevant materials into their curricula.”²⁰

Showing appreciation is an untapped, proven strategy for educator-of-color retention. Schools can help address feelings of being undervalued and improve retention efforts by designing and integrating into their school culture innovative and impactful ways of honoring educational excellence.

Most schools award and recognize their teachers in conventional ways, for example, during Teacher Appreciation Week or as a part of annual performance reviews. Most schools don't act on findings that show frequent recognition of educator performance has a positive effect on school morale, resulting in an educator corps that is more engaged and productive, more likely to hear favorable feedback from their students and families, and more likely to stay.

“I think it’s hard, at times, in education, where you find that it’s predominantly white, and the majority of supervisors are white. I think that there are times that you don’t feel as safe or you don’t feel heard.”

—Educator of Color, as quoted in
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To make significant changes to educators-of-color retention, we recommend exploring out-of-the-box concepts and strategies for honoring educator excellence. Encourage retention by supporting their continual high performance and development as educator-activists.

If your school culture isn't one that's already recognition-rich with praise for educators coming from all directions and in all different forms, consider the following forms of honoring excellence for educators of color.

ADVISORS, COACHES AND MENTORS OF COLOR

One of the most powerful supports a school can give students of color to uplift their academic achievement is a teacher of color. Likewise, one of the most powerful supports a school can give teachers of color to uplift their excellence is an educator-activist of color to advise, coach and mentor them.

Research has shown educator mentoring works in retaining teachers.²¹ Less known is the impact of racial parity in educator mentoring. Anecdotal evidence and qualitative studies suggest an invaluable effect.²²

Invest in identifying potential mentors within and beyond your district to develop a large pool.

Explore teacher-coaching programs. Seek ones that integrate instructional coaching, expertise in cultural pedagogy, and open discussions to support the unique issues of educators of color in the school.

A COMMITTED LEADERSHIP TEAM

Demonstrate your commitment to the leadership development of your talented corps of educators of color.

How do you ensure their classroom autonomy, decision-making influence in setting school policy and creating healthy working relationships, and an anti-racist school culture that increasingly reflects the racial identities, cultural backgrounds, life experiences and worldviews of all your students?

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ON CULTURAL PEDAGOGY

Encourage your educators of color to further strengthen their cultural pedagogies through professional learning that the school sponsors.

Create a forum for educators of color to share what they have learned with colleagues. This could be professional development that they lead; if so, they should be compensated for it as they are assisting the school's effort to build capacity and reduce the "invisible tax."

ACTIVE NOMINATING FOR EXTERNAL ACCOLADES

It takes a concerted, organized effort to continually apply for awards and recognitions, especially those given by esteemed third parties.

It also takes the right kind of mindset. The kind that understands the invaluable return-on-investment for educators of color, who studies show feel disrespected and discriminated against. External validation by an organization, especially one that is well known, can go a long way in building an appreciation for the expertise, experiences and perspectives of your educators of color.

Create a list of potential awards and recognitions. We provide a starter alphabetized list that should be continuously updated. Try to recognize as many meritorious educators of color that you can.

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WORKSHEET 19

EDUCATOR-OF-COLOR AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

SCHOOL NAME: _____

Award Name	Deadline	Nominees	Next Steps
The ACTFL National Language Teacher of the Year. Presented by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language to foreign language teachers.			
Fulbright Teacher Exchanges. Offers award options for K-12 educators, including research projects, teaching abroad, online exchanges and overseas trips to observe best practices around the world.			
Grammy Music Educator Award. Recognizes current educators who have made a significant contribution to music education.			
National Art Education Foundation. 142 annual awards outstanding art educators nationwide.			
NCTE Early Career Educator of Color Leadership Award. Provides early-career teachers of color a national forum at the NCTE Annual Convention for professional collaboration and development.			
NCTE Outstanding Elementary Educator Award. Recognizes a distinguished educator who has made major contributions to the field of elementary English language arts education.			
NCTE High School Teacher of Excellence Award. Given to high school teachers who are nominated by their state, provincial, regional, and local affiliates.			
NCTE Outstanding Middle Level Educator Award. Recognizes exceptional English language arts teachers of grades 6-8 who have demonstrated excellence in teaching and inspired a spirit of inquiry and a love of learning.			
NCTM Equity in Mathematics. Awards financial support for projects improving middle school math standards.			
The NEA Foundation's Global Learning Fellowship. Enables educators to become leaders by acquiring the necessary skills to integrate global competence into their daily classroom instruction.			
NEA Grants. Offers multiple grants to public school educators nationwide.			
Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year. Honors K-12 teachers in public education who have made outstanding academic contributions.			
Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching. This is the nation's highest teaching honors for teachers in STEM, including computer science.			
The 2020 Rosenthal Prize for Innovation and Inspiration in Math Teaching. Recognizes and provides a cash award of \$25,000 for excellence in hands-on math teaching in upper elementary and middle school classrooms.			
Teach Plus Teaching Policy Fellowship. Seeks highly effective K-12 classroom teachers who are passionate about ensuring top-performing teachers remain classroom instructors.			

For more information please contact info@TheCenterBlackED.org.

Calendaring Everyday Shoutouts

A surprising shoutout can go a long way in having educators, including educators of color, feel seen for their expertise, experiences, contributions and opinions. Schools can promote a culture that encourages and applauds by providing the time and space to do so.

Educators might ask one another about a recognition they have made or would like to make. Run a school campaign that captures moments recognizing contributions through stories, photos and videos. Make sure every educator of color receives their fair amount of shoutouts.

But be real. This could backfire if the recognitions are false, empty compliments or coming from the wrong person. For shoutouts to be impactful, they must be authentic and meaningful.

This necessitates getting to know one another better, because you will then inevitably find ways to compliment and congratulate one another, even beyond classroom, school and professional successes.

You'll get to know each other's interests, what fuels each other's educator excellence. About your families, communities and cultures. Insights about one another that break down biases, prejudices, stereotypes and misunderstandings. All essential building blocks to an anti-racist school culture.

SIGNS YOU MAY BE DOING IT RIGHT

If you find yourself giving a shoutout for an educator of color who:

- Won a poetry contest.
- Gave a talk at their HBCU.
- Completed a family history video.
- Helped organize an anti-violence vigil.
- Secured a big grant for a community project.
- Has a daughter who defended her chess tournament title.

Think about the best way to share the shoutout: in person, at a school assembly, on an announcement board, through social media, a thank-you card, or even with a simple post-it note.

But be sure recognitions would be appreciated. Find ways to check in. Honor each other's privacy.

Peer Learning, Collaborations and Accomplishments

Actively identify opportunities for educators of color to work with one another. Institute forums for roundtables and panel discussions for sharing expertise and knowledge, but also for celebrating racial identities, learning about cultural pedagogies and encouraging social activism.

Structure collaborations to address real school challenges. Make all of this a regular part of your school culture and programming.



Winning this award means I now have a big stage to fight for my students and what they need. it means my students have an advocate who is going to tell their stories.

—Rodney Robinson
2019 National Teacher of the Year

CHAPTER 12

UNDERSTAND OUR MINDSET

What does it take to support the curiosity, mastery and purpose of Black and Brown educators? Solving for this would lead, not only to their increased retention, but to their becoming the highest-caliber educator-activists our students need them to be.

But solving for this also requires taking a hard look at your school from their perspectives. Here are some insights to consider:

Schools aren't safe havens for us.

Historically, schools and other educational institutions have incubated systemic racism and social oppression. Many of us know this from experience dating back to when we were students.

As we teach children who share our racial identities, cultural backgrounds and similar worldviews, negative experiences now as educators—from being left out of conversations about policy to witnessing unfair disciplinary measures meted out to students of color—can retrigger our own childhood traumas.

We get discouraged. You would, too.

Difficult working conditions, often in high-poverty, hard-to-staff schools. Being in the minority among white colleagues. A lack of respect for our intellectual capabilities, subject-matter expertise and classroom autonomy.

We teach our students to speak up for themselves while at the same time find ourselves silenced and excluded from real power and decision-making processes. We're exhausted by a steady stream of microaggressions from likely well-intentioned people within our school community and find it mentally exhausting to address each incident with grace and tact.

We find it harder to practice a pedagogy more aligned with our students' and our own racial identities. We struggle to practice self-care.

We know we are well positioned to lift students of color who see in us someone like themselves.

With the right support, we can connect with hard-to-reach students, those hurt by sustained traumatic stress, institutionalized injustices and educational inequities.

That's because we get them. We can be trusted by them to understand the bigotry of low expectations and over-penalization in schools. We know how racism and poverty

"They want to teach in urban spaces because they want to undo that damage that they've experienced, but end up leaving because they continue to experience the damaging effects of isolation, racism and socially oppressive forces."

—Chris Emdin, Associate Professor of Education, Columbia University

can try to limit us, but we also know these injustices do not define us. That we have the right to dream of and strive for limitless futures for our students.

But our potential to lift students can become too heavy a responsibility to carry alone.

We feel we cannot let our students of color down. We realize all good educators must feel this way, but that we may be the first—and possibly the only—educator in our students' 13 years of public schooling who can reflect both their unique challenges as well as their aspirations. At times, the weight of this responsibility can feel outsized.

Beyond the teaching we hold ourselves accountable to, there's also additional pressure to make the most of every single moment we have with our students. To arm them with the knowledge they need to make good decisions. To strengthen their resolve. To love on them. Because we know the toll of racism, educational inequities and other forms of social oppression can be traumatic, irreversible and fatal.

This pressure that educators of color experience generally, Black male educators in particular, has been referred to as "the invisible tax." This is what John King, former U.S. Education Secretary, calls the unrealistic expectation to fulfill schoolwide disciplinary and mentoring roles on top of teaching responsibilities.²³

The historic events of 2020 have further challenged our morale.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the gross social inequities people from marginalized communities suffer. More than three times more likely than white Americans to have contracted the coronavirus, many were twice as likely to die from it.

Our families and communities are still bearing the brunt of the economic and social fallout of the pandemic. In the public education chaos that ensued, our students may have had Chromebooks, but without broadband access or basic computer and typing skills, their schooling was severely compromised, with students of color being two to six months behind their white peers.

Had schools and teachers created more trusting and trustworthy relationships with their students and families, would the absenteeism have been so severe? One study estimates that approximately three million of “the most marginalized students” haven’t had a formal education between March 2020 and October 2020.²⁴

What cannot be minimized is also the emotional duress of dealing, and helping our students deal, with the series of state-sponsored persecution of and injustices against Black and Brown Americans before and during the pandemic. A toxicity that can weaken the spirit of even the strongest of us.

Even before the pandemic and racial reckoning, we were fighting social injustices from the classroom.

Landmark civil rights laws did not fulfill their promises. The color of our skin and zip codes are still social determinants of our collective academic, economic and social projections. School districts responsible for educating majority Black and Brown students receive \$23 billion less in funding annually than whiter districts.

But we still must continue to be change makers in systems working against our communities. To do this life-saving work, we need more allies and support.

Only by working together can we liberate education.

For us, it’s not just about fixing a system that is broken. As slavery had to be abolished, and not reformed, we also need to liberate education.

WORKSHEET 20

A CHECKLIST FOR SUPPORTING THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF EDUCATORS OF COLOR

SCHOOL NAME: _____

☐ Assess school culture.

Is it defined by high expectations and increased autonomy for teachers?²⁴ Where educators of color are not run ragged trying to solve racism alone where it exists in your school? Where students have voice and agency? Where community partnership is the norm? Where opportunities are built in for everyone to interrogate their mindsets, unearth biases and reflect on practices?

☐ Connect interested educators of color to quality, affordable mental health therapy.

Check out groups like the Black Mental Health Alliance, Therapy for Latinx, Asian Mental Health Project and National Muslim COVID Coalition. Set up funds to help educators pay for therapy with therapists who share their racial identities, cultural backgrounds and worldviews.

Openly acknowledge that educators of color may have more than their fair share of mental-health stressors. That we are strong and resilient, but not without vulnerabilities.

Find ways to check in with educators of color that respect their privacy. Take the time to learn about their experiences with systemic racism, educational inequities and social oppression. Support in demonstrable ways their continual self-care and trauma healing. Healing can take many forms but, for it to take effect, it needs to be self-directed.

☐ Help clear up misconceptions about mental health.

There is an unfounded notion that people of color with mental health issues are faking it or somehow inferior or weaker. This internalized racist stigma is perpetuated by a distrust in a mental health community dominated by white providers. This is why many seek alternative, culturally-informed ways of healing found in family, community and self-directed care.

☐ Create safe spaces for everyone.

Safety isn’t sourced in comfort. Feelings of discomfort, and uncomfortable conversations, are often required to confront bias and promote empathy, ensuring educators of color, as well as students of color, are safe in all ways—emotionally, physically, intellectually and culturally.

No school can progress in building an anti-racist school culture without its leaders openly acknowledging their own biases and misconceptions and addressing issues of race, class and privilege. Have the uncomfortable conversations to advance a school culture where everyone feels safe and valued.

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- Black Mental Health Alliance: Connects individuals with therapists and provides professional training. <https://blackmentalhealth.com/>
- Ethel's Club: Social and wellness community where paying members can access group workouts, guided meditations, wellness salons and art workshops as part of the healing process. <https://www.ethelsclub.com/>
- Inclusive Therapists. Centering the needs of marginalized populations, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, the LGBTQ+ community, neurodivergent folx and people with disabilities. <https://www.inclusivetherapists.com/>
- Latinx Therapy: Breaking the stigma of mental health related to the Latinx community; learn self-help techniques, how to support self and others. <https://latinxtherapy.com/>
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- Psychology Today: Detailed African American therapist listings for states and major cities. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/african-american>
- Sistah Afya Community Mental Wellness: Social impact business that provides mental health education, therapy, community support and resources to help young adult Black women. <https://www.sistaafya.com/>
- The Focus on You: Self-care, mental health, and inspirational blog run by a Latina therapist. <http://thefocusonyou.com/>
- Therapy for Black Girls: Offers a therapist locator, group chats and blog articles to encourage the wellness of Black women and girls. <https://therapyforblackgirls.com/>
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"They want to teach in urban spaces because they want to undo that damage that they've experienced, but end up leaving because they continue to experience the damaging effects of isolation, racism and socially oppressive forces."

—Chris Emdin, Associate Professor of Education, Columbia University

CHAPTER 13

EMBRACE FELLOWSHIP²⁵

Most educators of color do not have the good fortune of having mentors, coaches, advisors—let alone colleagues—who reflect their racial identities, cultural experiences, social activism and worldviews. Fellowships provide critical opportunities to connect with those who can guide educators of color and energize their important work.

Once you know what fellowship is, and how it can propel your retention efforts, we hope you're inspired to support your educators of colors in joining a fellowship or creating one of their own. One that is truly welcoming, productive, sustainable and radically impactful. One they find communal, joyful and beautiful.

WORKSHEET 21

CHECKLIST FOR BUILDING FELLOWSHIP

First, know what it is.

FELLOWSHIP IS SELF-DEFINED & DETERMINED.

Builders of fellowships, take to heart what James Baldwin once said, “Those who say it can't be done are usually interrupted by others doing it.”

- ☐ Don't wait around for district administrators, or anyone else, to rescue you. Don't waste your time complaining about the lack of leadership.
- ☐ Come together to support one another. Break free of isolation and demeaning conditions resulting from the systematic strangulation of the educator-of-color pipeline.

25. Much of this content is sourced in a chapter Sharif El-Mekki, a co-founder of FELLOWSHIP: Black Educators for Social Justice, wrote for a book titled *Black Male Educators*, that's soon to be published by Black Male Teacher Initiative Consortium. He shares insights to help build fellowships, revolutionary spaces for educator-activists to re-energize and perfect their craft based on universal, bedrock principles.

“I think about the benefits the Center provides to communities of color. I think the biggest piece is having a safe space to be Black in this work.”

—Dr. Kelli Seaton, Chief Learning Officer,
Center for Black Educator Development



"I'm excited for our meeting. I've had a lot on my mind... things have troubled me for quite some time, but I didn't have the forum to talk about them...my mind is currently going a hundred miles a minute."

—Malik Nelson, Black Male Educator for Social Justice, School District of Philadelphia

FELLOWSHIP IS NATURAL AND TIMELESS.

Helping younger educators of color is the natural order of things. It makes sense, and it's the right thing to do. Supporting next-generation leaders of color is critical in our fight for social justice.

Fellowship defies a racist, classist narrative that presupposes a "get mine" ethos. Instead, what drives each one of us, and the collective, to build a fellowship is a proud and sincere concern for each other's welfare and success. Rather than "get mine," we employ a unifying collective-responsibility mindset. Rather than "get mine," "we lift as we climb."

But how many young educators of color and others just beginning their careers are thinking about quitting? How many social justice warriors are at the end of their ropes with no one to talk to who can understand?

As brave and committed as they are, educators of color still can have a hard time fighting back the microaggressions of a racist culture so firmly embedded into the public school system.

- Map your community, and beyond it, to identify expert educator-activists of color who see younger versions of themselves in new teachers seeking mentorship and, in turn, can see in them brilliant, committed and revolutionary role models.
- Start putting out calls for mentors. Make individual asks. And expect quick, positive, appreciative and profound responses. No convincing required, no need for cajoling or teeth-pulling.

We have found busy, sought-after educators and community leaders step up because our call for mentorship taps into a powerful and empowering collective responsibility already consistent with their character, outlook and daily lives.

- When mentor and mentee meet, talk about wins and struggles, come up with solutions to try out, and get to know one another to see each other's full humanity—something younger educators may not be experiencing enough at their schools.

FELLOWSHIP IS THE CONTINUITY OF COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY.

Fellowships have a rich history. Every new one stands on the shoulders of others that have existed for generations. Recognize that a wheel already exists. There's no need to reinvent it.

- **Consider models for fellowships for educators of color in your community.** Affinity spaces where educators of color can support and be supported, heal and strategize.

In Philadelphia, the Fellowship of Black Male Educators for Social Justice found great models in the Association of Black School Administrators (ABSA) founded in 2004 to support young Black principals. There was also Concerned Black Men, which worked with multiple organizations, including Cheyney University, the nation's oldest HBCU, to recruit aspiring Black male educators in the early nineties.

We also had much to learn from Jenese Jones who, along with colleagues in the U.S. Department of Education, pulled off a national symposium for male educators of color in 2015.

- **Look out for new efforts to join and support.** Check out: Black Male Educator Alliance (BMEA), a national network of Black male educators with chapters in Illinois, Michigan and Washington, D.C., which continues to expand. One of the youngest members of the Philadelphia-based Fellowship, Tamir Harper, founded UrbEd with his peers at American University.
- **Be sure to address "the invisible tax" that educators of color generally, Black male educators in particular, have imposed on them.** This is what John King, former U.S. Education Secretary, calls the unrealistic expectation to fulfill schoolwide disciplinary and mentoring roles on top of teaching responsibilities.

Compared to most of their white colleagues in the field, educators of color face: tougher working conditions at high-poverty, harder-to-staff schools; a lack of trust and support from administrators and colleagues; even an unfounded

disrespect for their intellectual capabilities, subject-matter expertise and classroom autonomy; and exclusion from school and faculty decision-making processes.

Which is why they leave the profession at alarming rates. Why they leave teaching, their students and the communities they've come to love—even as they recognize their potential life-altering and life-saving roles as educator-activists.

Industry-wide, male educators of color are more than twice as likely as their female counterparts to leave the profession altogether. Black male educators represent the group with the highest rate of turnover in our profession.

FELLOWSHIP BEGETS MORE FELLOWSHIP.

At the sixth local convening of Philadelphia's Fellowship, three young Black educators had driven for more than nine hours through the night from Tennessee to experience fellowship with us. They said there was nothing like this in their entire state—nor in any of the eight bordering states.

We realized then that without doing so formally, we were already national. The need was real, if not desperate. We moved quickly to bring to bear our collective experiences in expanding our reach and impact.

- **Find strength and new resolve** in the success of previous efforts.
- **Advocate through joint petition**, for example as we did in the Commonwealth, demanding fair funding for the schools from Pennsylvania's state legislature.
- **Source inspiration, strength and acumen** in mentorships, peer networks and community found in fellowship. Solutions to common struggles we needn't find alone.
- **Build a braintrust** of concepts and strategies grounded in principles of fellowship. Invest in a mindshare of cultural pedagogy, literature, references and important studies. This includes professional development, upcoming events, job openings and funding opportunities.

Expect to exchange and stay apprised of developments that impact our efforts to diversify the teacher corps, close achievement gaps and build teacher-student parity so more children see mirrors to great futures.
- **Build a common lexicon** of references and continuously share reading material, including research findings, influential people and like-minded efforts. All to make us stronger, equipping our nascent community with the intellect and knowledge to fight for educational and social justice.
- **Participate and encourage others to participate in studies.** Facilitate the research we need to back up what we already know from experience.

FELLOWSHIP IS A POWERFUL COUNTERMEASURE TO RACISM.

Educators of color who hold themselves accountable for creating safe, nurturing places for students of color to learn, and heal from the trauma of systemic racism and social oppression, can serve as mirrors to brighter futures.

Much has been researched and written about the challenges of liberating education. But interventions, like building fellowships, can counter the racism and racist history that caused and enforced the current shortage of educators of color.

The rarity of being an educator of color in schools, if not entire districts, means that you often feel alone, dejected, siloed and isolated. That's why it's important to find our tribe, our people and our support systems.

If we were once alone, we no longer are.

Fellowships that consistently and powerfully bring together hundreds of educators of color are acts of defiance:

- Against theft of land, natural resources, culture and identity.
- Against historical genocide, geographical displacement and failure to adhere to subsequent treaties.
- Against slavery that forbade education.
- Against racially-based Jim Crow and second-class citizenship laws.
- Against the continued exploitation of non-citizen labor.
- Against systemic oppression in the areas of education, housing, criminal justice, finance and employment.
- Against the systematic removal of Black educators from the teacher corps.

The gathering of educators of color who made it against tremendous odds is not enough. We must:

- **Make our achievements count more** by leveraging fellowships to perfect our cultural pedagogy, our roles and responsibilities in the fight for social justice and equity. All to hold ourselves accountable for our students' academic achievement and life preparation.
- **Use our time together to interrogate** our own biases and adopt more expansive and inclusive mindsets. By engaging in self-reflection with trusted colleagues, we can continue creating safe, nurturing places for all our students to learn.
- **Model for our students** how we are also working on our own positive, healthy racial identities—to help them develop the tools to combat all of the negative images and messages about them and their community.

*"I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change.
I am changing the things I cannot accept."*

—Angela Davis, Political Activist

- **Encourage students of color to consider a career in education.** To be revolutionary at the blackboard. Studies show most don't because of their negative experiences with teachers and their views of schools as oppressive institutions, where they were stereotyped, over-disciplined and underestimated.

There's great urgency to fortify the pipeline of educators of color. Since 2000, Black graduates in education have decreased by 71 percent in Pennsylvania. In 2014, only 29 Black men and 20 Latino men obtained teaching degrees statewide.

But there are signs of progress. In 2019-20, compared to 2013-14, there was an increase of 129 more Black male teachers in Pennsylvania.

We must double down our efforts to accelerate advances.

FELLOWSHIP IS AN UNSTOPPABLE REVOLUTION.

The positive energy, mass intellect and collective promise of fellowships are joyful, beautiful things to experience. Educators of color all present to "lift as they climb" in a thoughtfully created space where we can feel whole.

All present to seek and provide support, learn and contribute, never losing sight of our ultimate commitment to our students and school communities.

If there is a single encompassing theme to the fellowships, it's love—a revolutionary love. For our students, and for one another as fellow educators. The kind of love that holds everyone accountable. The kind of love where you say, "I'm going to be there for you and support you."

When planning larger convenings of fellowships, consider:

- Going partially digital to keep it affordable and more convenient for more to attend. Reserve resources to support digital access for attendees.
- Inviting speakers and panelists who represent divergent interests and perspectives among educators of color. Established thought leaders as well as fresh thinkers. Activists beyond education who have much to offer in advancing teacher diversity, educator-of-color retention and anti-racist school cultures.

- Leveraging the forum as a strategy for advancing important policies. Encourage debate and consensus-building.
- Getting feedback from attendees. What will they do differently now? What did they learn about cultural pedagogies? How will they further support their students' racial identities? Do they see social justice as inseparable from educational justice?
- Promoting other conferences nationwide for educators of color that support fellowship and their further development.

When most people talk about education reform, they have a myopic perspective, limiting educational reform to charter schools and the like. For many educators of color, revolutionary reform is about changing something that is not right today to make it right for tomorrow.

If educators of color are working in isolation, we must create a space for them to work together.

That is reform.

If educators of color are looked upon unfairly as student disciplinarians and their intellect is not appreciated, nor respected, we must create a space for them to feel valued—like the intellectuals they are—who do incredibly challenging, emotional work.

That is reform.

No longer separate fingers, we can become a powerful fist in our fight for educational justice. In taking the radical stance of teaching all children to read, problem-solve and make contributions our world needs them to.

We are the fire, the thunder and the earthquake.

Be subversive. Join a fellowship.

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CHAPTER 14

PAY IT FORWARD

The 2019 results of the annual 51-year-old PDK Poll caused a stir when it was discovered that, for the first time, half the nation's public school teachers, frustrated by poor pay and underfunded schools, reported they had seriously contemplated leaving the profession within the last year.

More than half also indicated they would not want their children to follow them into the profession, citing inadequate pay and benefits, job stress, and feeling disrespected or undervalued.

In Pennsylvania, the average annual salary for a full-time classroom teacher in 2018-2019 was \$68,141. A decline of 5.7% since 1999-2000 once adjusted for inflation. Almost a third of school districts lag behind even this with teachers earning salaries below \$45,000.

Compensation is a critical issue for educator-of-color retention. The salaries and other financial incentives provided by schools are inextricably linked to how respected educators feel.

What's crucial is to be fair, transparent and proactive in the ways you implement salaries and promotions and continually seek to create and provide alternative forms of compensation.

We offer this checklist on the next page to support your efforts to "pay it forward" with educators of color. Our hope is for you to ensure not only equity in compensation but also in promotion.

"Teacher retention would increase if [educators of color] were treated as knowledgeable experts who are experts in their fields."

—Kmt G. Shockley, Professor of Education Leadership & Policy, Howard University



WORKSHEET 22

PAY-IT-FORWARD CHECKLIST

SCHOOL NAME:

Our school provides educators of color:

- ☐ **Equal pay for both men and women.**
- ☐ **Salary increases or bonuses for achieving set outcomes within an agreed upon timeline.**
- ☐ **Additional compensation for additional responsibilities.** This includes disciplinary or translation responsibilities on top of a usual load of teaching responsibilities.
- ☐ **Signing bonuses** or end-of-the-year bonuses for hard-to-staff positions.
- ☐ **Consideration beyond seniority.** Educators of color often represent faculty with less tenure than their white peers, which is why personnel policies based unfairly on seniority to determine pay, salary increases or layoffs have detrimental effects on educator-of-color retention efforts. Where state law allows, school districts should ensure that their layoff criteria and other policies will not hurt their efforts to retain educators of color.
- ☐ **Alternative compensation.** This could include providing housing support, assistance in securing mortgage guarantees and down payments. Or assisting with child care, for instance, by securing discounts at nearby high quality early childcare education centers.
- ☐ **Assistance in securing loan forgiveness** from state and federal programs. As college graduates, educators of color also have myriad options outside the teaching profession, so we need to strive to help keep them here by lessening their financial burden.
- ☐ **Professional learning programs** customized for each educator of color that the school sponsors. This includes opportunities to attend conferences as participants and presenters, as well as leadership training that provides a ladder for career advancement.
- ☐ **Health benefits** that take into account the additional stress, including possible traumatic stress, that educators of color experience at school.
- ☐ **Support in securing National Board Certification.** Board-certified educators of color have significantly higher retention rates than their non-certified peers. Examples: encouraging study groups, paying for prep courses, and fee reimbursements for securing certification.
- ☐ **Advocacy for pay raise legislation** to raise educator salaries, such as SB 656 in Pennsylvania's 2019-20 session and Governor Wolf's 2021 proposal to raise Pennsylvania's minimum teacher salary from \$18,500 to \$45,000. More than a dozen school districts in Pennsylvania have a starting teacher salary of \$35,000 or less, which is not commensurate with their responsibilities and education requisites.

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CONCLUSION

This guide represents a beginning, not an ending, to the revolutionary and necessary work of designing school cultures to support, nurture and retain educator-activists of color. We encourage you to utilize, adapt and iterate on the worksheets in this toolkit, all while continuously pushing yourself and your school community to more fully embrace anti-racism. As you implement these frameworks, share your learnings and best practices back with us and with the larger field, and study your successes and failures. Send your comments to Sharif.El-Mekki@thecenterblacked.org and engage on social media using #BlackTeacherRetention.

This work can't be done by any one individual, but when we all commit to radically reimagining our schools to support educators of color, we will not only see our faculties become and stay more diverse, but we will see all of our students start to receive the excellent educations they deserve.

PROFILE OF THE TOOLKIT DEVELOPER



Sharif El-Mekki is the Founder and CEO of the Center for Black Educator Development. The Center exists to ensure there will be equity in the recruiting, training, hiring, and retention of quality educators that reflect the cultural backgrounds and share common socio-political interests of the students they serve. The Center is developing a nationally relevant model to measurably increase teacher diversity and support Black educators through four pillars: Professional Learning, Pipeline, Policies, and Pedagogy. So far, the Center has developed ongoing and direct professional learning, mentoring, and coaching opportunities for Black teachers and other educators serving students of color.

The Center also carries forth the freedom or liberation school legacy by hosting Freedom School sites that incorporates research-based curricula and exposes high school and college students to the teaching profession to help fuel a pipeline of Black educators.

Prior to founding the Center, El-Mekki served as a nationally recognized principal and U.S. Department of Education Principal Ambassador Fellow. His school, Mastery Charter Shoemaker, was recognized by President Obama and Oprah Winfrey, and was awarded the prestigious EPIC award for three consecutive years as being amongst the top three schools in the country for accelerating students' achievement levels. The Shoemaker Campus was also recognized as one of the top ten middle school and top ten high schools in the state of Pennsylvania for accelerating the achievement levels of African-American students.

In 2014, El-Mekki founded The Fellowship – Black Male Educators for Social Justice, an organization dedicated to recruiting, retaining, and developing Black male teachers. El-Mekki blogs on Philly's 7th Ward, is a member of the 8 Black Hands podcast and serves on several boards and committees focused on educational and racial justice.