



# THE EDUCATOR DIVERSITY PLAYBOOK

## 5 STEPS

Every New York School District Can Take to Improve Diversity, Equity & Inclusion



The Education Trust–New York



# INTRODUCTION

Across New York State and around the country, increasing the diversity of the educator workforce is attracting attention and gaining momentum.

There are important reasons for this emerging focus in policy and practice. Research underscores the value of educator diversity for all groups of students, and studies indicate that for students of color, having a teacher of color during their educational experience can have a positive impact on improving student performance in reading and math, increasing the likelihood that Black students are identified as gifted, reducing suspension rates, decreasing dropout rates, and improving students' hopes of attending college.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, we also know that New York has a long way to go to ensure that all students have access to strong and diverse educators.

According to data released by The Education Trust—New York, one-third of all New York schools had no Black or Latino teachers in the 2015-16 school year. As a result, more than 115,000 Latino and Black students were enrolled in schools without a single full-time same-race/ethnicity teacher, and nearly half of the state's White students attended schools without a single full-time Latino or Black teacher.<sup>2</sup>

Yet there are also bright spots across the state—school districts working hard to create a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for educators and students alike. These examples remind us that in addition to seeking state-level policy changes and investments to support a more diverse educator workforce, there are powerful and practical steps that individual school districts and district leaders can take right now in their local communities.

This *Educator Diversity Playbook* is designed as a tool for school district leaders who are interested in improving diversity, equity, and inclusion in their schools and central offices. The *Playbook* focuses on five steps that school districts can take:

- 1 Encourage school boards to signal and embrace the importance of teacher and school leader diversity.**
- 2 Collect and use data to examine school district recruitment, interview, and hiring practices.**
- 3 Question and change recruitment practices to identify additional qualified applicants of color.**
- 4 Improve the working environment for educators of color.**
- 5 Invest in mentorship and career ladders for current and aspiring teacher, school, and district leaders.**

For each of these steps, the *Playbook* briefly cites the research, offers a district policy checklist, recommends indicators to track, and describes examples of New York school districts that are taking on this important work.

# 1

## ENCOURAGE SCHOOL BOARDS TO SIGNAL AND EMBRACE THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER AND SCHOOL LEADER DIVERSITY

Organizations that successfully embody diversity, equity, and inclusion demonstrate these values at all levels, beginning with their governance bodies. School boards have a vital role to play in establishing diverse environments and making clear to district and school leaders that a strong and diverse workforce is a priority.



# WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

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Research shows that educator diversity is associated with better student outcomes.<sup>3</sup> There is also extensive research from outside the education sector finding that diversity is important to organizational performance and that the role of leadership in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion as an organizational priority is essential. According to a study from the consulting firm McKinsey & Company: “Companies in the top quartile of racial/ethnic diversity were 35% more likely to have financial returns above their national industry median.... For example, in the [United States] there continues to be a linear relationship between ethnic/racial diversity and better financial performance.”<sup>4</sup> B-Lab—a national non-profit organization—emphasizes that diversity and inclusion “policies, programs, and practices require aligned, committed, and engaged leadership in order to signal the importance of the work to all employees and to make a meaningful impact on company culture and the workplace.”<sup>5</sup>

## THE PLAYBOOK: District Policy Checklist

- Adopt a board resolution making the district's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion explicit and describing how the district will pursue these goals in the short- and long-term.
- Include diversity, equity, and inclusion in the school board's mission and vision statement. See: *Addressing "institutional roadblocks" at Valley Stream 30.*
- Establish clear and specific performance goals for district leadership that reflect educator diversity, including but not limited to issues such as recruitment, hiring, support, and retention.
- Call on district leadership to create and present a strategic plan for diversity, equity, and inclusion, with specific activities, timelines, and measurable goals.<sup>6</sup> See: *Educator diversity is in Ithaca's strategic plan.*

## INDICATORS to track

- Number of school board meetings per year where specific goals and strategies to improve teacher and school leader diversity are on the public agenda and are discussed. See: *In Schenectady, "You don't get to work here and not be an activist."*
- Funding in the district budget for specific investments that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (e.g., professional development on implicit bias, "grow your own" initiatives, quality induction and mentorship programs).
- Number of educators of color interviewed, hired, retained, supported, and promoted.



# DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT

## ADDRESSING “INSTITUTIONAL ROADBLOCKS” AT VALLEY STREAM 30

Valley Stream School District 30 in Long Island works to ensure that diversity is not just a buzzword in a board policy, but a real reflection of its personnel.

When Superintendent Nick Stirling was appointed in 2012, the school board was already concerned about the lack of diversity among staff in the district. Fostering more diversity was part of the district’s strategic plan, but Stirling didn’t feel the district was doing enough to meet that objective.

Since then, Stirling has worked with the board to make sure issues of representation and inclusiveness are front and center. Since the board sets the tone for the rest of the district, Stirling said it’s critical that diversity issues are included consistently across a district’s strategic plan, mission statement, and vision statement.

“We revised **our vision statement** a year ago because we professed diversity but it wasn’t explicit in our vision statement, so we made sure to make it explicit because the vision statement lasts longer than the people in the positions,” he said.

The district also included diversity issues throughout its **District Beliefs**, including: “Diversity should be embraced, appreciated and respected in curriculum, staffing, and educational philosophy.”

Stirling and the board also work to ensure that a focus on diversity remains a priority across district operations. Together, they have targeted what Stirling calls “institutional roadblocks,” such as hiring committees.

“If your interview committee is not diverse in itself, any diverse candidate who comes to sit in front of you, will question you,” he said. “You say you want diversity, but your interview committee is not even diverse so what message are you sending to the candidate?”

Stirling thinks these lessons are relevant for boards in all school districts. “It’s very important for a Board of Education to see the importance of diversity as a means to uplifting, upgrading, expanding opportunity for all children, regardless of demographics of a district,” Stirling said.



## EDUCATOR DIVERSITY IS IN ITHACA'S STRATEGIC PLAN

Ithaca City School District Superintendent Luvelle Brown and the school board have made increasing staff diversity one of the goals in their **strategic plan** to promote equity.

Board members also play a hands-on role in teacher improvement and retention efforts. Those who serve on the human resources committee meet annually to discuss every non-tenured teacher, including how the district can best support employees as they develop professionally.

"We focus on supporting teachers and learning more about their strengths and areas in need of most development," Brown said. "If there are issues, how can we rally to support them, to get them to the level of expertise that we're expecting in our school district?"

One of the other ways Ithaca strives for equity is through the efforts of the Recruitment and Retention Officer, an assistant superintendent-level position the board created to focus in particular on staff of color. These efforts start early, Brown said.

"We've been identifying current high school students in our district, people who we've identified as potential candidates," he said.

The district then invests in and tracks these students throughout their college careers.

"We provide them mentors, we bring them back on trips, and we recruit them not just during the spring of their senior year of college but starting their first semester in their first year," Brown said.

The board and Brown are currently partnering with the Ithaca Public Education Initiative, the district's fundraising arm, on the Aspiring Educators Award Program, which will support these promising high school candidates with college scholarships.

"You can't start too early," Brown said. "I've been here almost nine years, and I've seen people who were in

middle school when I started now coming back to work in our schools."

While the district also recruits external candidates, Brown added that "growing our own means a lot more to us."

## IN SCHENECTADY, "YOU DON'T GET TO WORK HERE AND NOT BE AN ACTIVIST"

In the Schenectady City School District, Superintendent Larry Spring says that "the mantra inside the district is that race, economics, and disability should no longer be predictors for student achievement."

Of the three factors, Spring said race is the one the board and he tackle as publicly as possible. Of the over 9,000 students in Schenectady public schools, about 31% are Black, 23% are White, 21% are Latino, and 18% are Asian.

Spring says the goal is not just to develop a more diverse staff but for the community to understand why that is a goal. To drive that deeper conversation, the board has taken several steps, such as calculating whether schools were disproportionately more likely to suspend Black students than White students. (They were.)

The board also read and hosted public discussions about two diversity-related books: *Start Where You Are, But Don't Stay There* by H. Richard Milner IV, the director of the Center for Urban Education at the University of Pittsburgh, and *A Colony in A Nation*, by MSNBC host Chris Hayes.

It sends a message, Spring said, "when the public can see and when the staff can see the board is reading this book, the board is having this conversation, the board is saying this phrase, and then the board is saying, 'More diversity would be a better thing.'"

In addition, the board created a position focused on recruitment and diversity and charged the person in that position with seeking new pathways for diverse hires. For instance, instead of attending hiring fairs where most attendees tend to be White, this new position is focused on building relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

To show the public how much progress they're making on this goal, the board and Spring began tracking and publishing annual data about the diversity of its new hires and retained staff.

"We have to have a teacher workforce that's going to be inclined to say, 'Hey, wait a minute. Why do we do it that way? That's going to feel a certain way to some kids,'" Spring said. "We have to have folks who are going to help us be aware and help us work through these issues."

The board members and Spring have also publicly supported affinity groups, recognizing these safe spaces as a welcome place for educators of color as well as a

helpful feedback loop for a district continuously trying to improve on this issue.

"One of the things that I think makes our district attractive to teachers and administrators of color is that [the board and I] take a less neutral approach," Spring said. "In lots of places, there's this notion that as a school district leader, you have to be neutral. And I say pretty publicly that neutrality empowers the oppressor. And we have systems in place, not by our intentional design, but in our own system we can see from the data that there are certain populations of kids that get oppressed or get disadvantaged and trying to be neutral only makes you complicit. Therefore, we're going to be vocal. I'm going to be vocal. I tell folks, 'You don't get to work here and not be an activist.'"



# 2

## COLLECT AND USE DATA TO EXAMINE SCHOOL DISTRICT RECRUITMENT, INTERVIEW, AND HIRING PRACTICES

An essential step in improving teacher and school leader diversity at the school district level is to understand where the pipeline is working and where it is not. This begins with data systems that provide disaggregated data for every step of the process. Then, schools and school districts must regularly examine the data to identify areas where the diversity pipeline breaks down and change their processes to address these issues.



# WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

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A central finding in new research on the education sector by Promise54—a non-profit that partners with organizations to cultivate and maintain healthy, equitable, and inclusive environments—is that “data gaps at the field and organizational levels inhibit progress.” The authors noted that education-related organizations “are not collecting many sources of diversity, equity, and inclusion data beyond candidate and staff race/ethnicity. Across the field, nothing is collected systematically, not even demographics, making it difficult to measure progress on diversity, equity, and inclusion or talent practices more generally.<sup>7</sup> As a *Harvard Business Review* article explains: “Data and deadlines are also imperative to making diversity initiatives work.... Indeed, research has shown that setting and following through on diversity goals is the most effective method for increasing underrepresentation of women and minorities.”<sup>8</sup>

## THE PLAYBOOK: District Policy Checklist

- Track and report robust disaggregated human capital data—including who submits applications, is invited for an initial interview, proceeds to subsequent interview rounds, receives a job offer, is hired by the school district, and is successfully retained over multiple years. See: *In Plainview-Old Bethpage, "I have to prepare my students to live in a diverse world."*
- Establish quantitative targets with date-specific benchmarks to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion at each step of the recruitment, hiring, and retention pipeline.

## INDICATORS to track

- Progress towards achieving quantitative targets in recruitment, hiring, and retention.
- Regular meetings convened by the superintendent with the district leadership team that use the data to evaluate district policies, measure progress on targets, and revise district policies and processes as needed.
- Quarterly updates presented to the school board at a public meeting on the data and progress towards targets.



# DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT

## IN PLAINVIEW-OLD BETHPAGE, “I HAVE TO PREPARE MY STUDENTS TO LIVE IN A DIVERSE WORLD”

Lorna Lewis, superintendent of the Plainview-Old Bethpage Schools, has a novel strategy for ensuring that candidates of color are highlighted when the district hires a new administrator: she reviews every resume herself in order to counter bias.

“I just went through 500 resumes because we have an assistant principal opening,” Lewis said. “It’s important that I do that because there are clues on a resume that someone is a minority. I’ll flag a resume and say, ‘Must be interviewed’ in order to add diversity to the pool. I feel that it is my duty to have them get the experience.”

Lewis said that when she doesn’t hire a candidate of color, she often reaches out and sets up an appointment to offer coaching for the next time she or he interviews.

When Lewis, a Black superintendent in a district where 71% of students are White, doesn’t see enough diversity in a candidate pool, she reaches out to her extensive network, which includes the **Long Island Black Educators Association**, as well as local chapters of Black professional fraternities and sororities. Lewis also has extensive contacts across the state through her position as president of the **New York State Council of School Superintendents**.

Lewis said she conducts the final interview for all candidates, and these efforts have gradually created an environment that attracts candidates of color and that benefits her students.

“The minority teachers that I’ve brought on board, they’ve said that they came here because they knew that I was here, and they knew that they would be supported,” she said. “I feel that I have to prepare my students to live in a diverse world, and I want them exposed to a diverse staff.”

“**The minority teachers that I’ve brought on board, they’ve said that they came here because they knew that I was here, and they knew that they would be supported.**”



# 3

## QUESTION AND CHANGE RECRUITMENT PRACTICES TO IDENTIFY ADDITIONAL QUALIFIED APPLICANTS OF COLOR

**If school districts continue to look to the same pools of candidates, informal networks, and teacher preparation programs, they are unlikely to expand the pool of job applicants to include significantly more Latino and Black educators. Taking an intentional look at recruitment is essential—but it is also not sufficient. In addition, school districts must also address systemic barriers to employment for people of color.**



# WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

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An analysis by the Center for American Progress found that “school districts’ recruitment strategies are hyperlocal, untargeted, or nonexistent,” and that their “application and selection processes often emphasize static application materials—such as written applications, resumes, and proof of certifications—over performance-based measures.”<sup>9</sup> Likewise, a National Bureau of Economic Research working paper exploring the root causes of a Louisiana school district’s failure to achieve a diverse workforce emphasized the role of the district’s human capital system, noting that “a majority of recently hired teachers heard about the job opening for which they were eventually hired by word of mouth rather than an official job posting. The hiring process often occurred quickly, with only a limited number of candidates being interviewed.”<sup>10</sup> Looking beyond the recruitment process—and consistent with broader national bias in hiring across sectors in the American workforce—a study published in the *Harvard Educational Review* examined hiring practices in a large school district and found that “a Black applicant would be half as likely to receive a job offer as a White candidate with identical qualifications.”<sup>11</sup>

## THE PLAYBOOK: District Policy Checklist

- Actively engage teacher preparation programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs), and other institutions that serve prospective educators of color for strategic recruitment of graduating students and alumni.<sup>12</sup> See: *Buffalo Public Schools strengthens its educator pipelines.*
- Advertise job openings widely, specifically including outreach to professional networks serving educators of color.
- Include educators of color in candidate screening, interview, and promotion committees. See: *"This is where the rubber meets the road" in Valley Stream 13.*
- Provide relocation incentives as part of a compensation package to attract teacher candidates.
- Require all personnel involved in hiring to receive training in implicit bias and cultural competence. See: *Newburgh is embedding diversity in the hiring process.*

## THE PLAYBOOK: District Policy Checklist

- Implement strategies such as "name-blind" recruitment (where those responsible for hiring do not see personally identifiable information that can reveal race/ethnicity and other factors until after they decide whether to grant a candidate an interview) and greater reliance on performance tasks instead of resumes.
- Create and fund "grow your own" pathways in partnership with higher education programs, specifically focusing on preparing current students, paraprofessionals, and after-school staff to teach. See: *At East High School EPO in Rochester, "Growing Your Own" starts in middle school.*

## INDICATORS to track

- Number of educators of color interviewed, hired, and promoted.



# DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT

## BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS STRENGTHENS ITS EDUCATOR PIPELINES

Buffalo Public Schools Superintendent Kriner Cash continues to recruit educators of color by welcoming college and university education students into the district's classrooms even before they finish their teacher preparation program.

The district has a strong partnership with Medgar Evers College in New York City through a My Brother's Keeper grant, and part of the arrangement is that the college sends a group of students to complete their teaching residency in Buffalo.

"We have a cadre of high-potential teachers who come here as part of their program," Cash said.

Buffalo is also starting new residency programs for both teachers and administrators in partnership with the University at Buffalo that will allow candidates to spend a year immersing themselves in the district and getting to know its schools, its students, and its culture.

Although the residency programs are open to all students in the UB program, both Cash and the college see them as an avenue for recruiting more educators of color into the Buffalo schools.

The teaching residency offers college students what is essentially a longer version of their required student teaching, providing them an opportunity to get more in-the-classroom experience while at the same time developing a relationship with the district.

The administrative residency largely targets Buffalo teachers who are interested in taking the next step in their career.

Along with these efforts, Buffalo was selected to pilot a new pipeline program that offers support for school-based employees of color interested in pursuing their teaching certificate.

The teaching assistants and teaching aides will be able to receive financial aid and other support in completing the educational requirements to become teachers. The pool of school-based employees is far more diverse than that of teachers, so Cash said it presents an opportunity to recruit from within the district.



“It’s a very interesting stratification in our system,” Cash said. “We turned that into an opportunity. The teachers and the principals have already said these are really good assistants. That’s a potential group that, if given an effective and affordable pipeline, could be great teachers.”

Along with these efforts, the district has traveled to Puerto Rico and various HBCUs to recruit teachers of color, and started an innovative high school “grow your own” program at McKinley High School in partnership with Buffalo State College.

The district has also developed a strong partnership with Teach For America Buffalo, which Cash credits as a key driver in helping diversify the district’s teacher corps.

“Teach For America has been single-handedly the most productive in providing diversity,” Cash said. “Almost half of the recruits that come through TFA are teachers of color. And they help us fill very hard-to-fill positions, as well.”

Moving forward, the district is working with TNTP to develop a tiered approach to recruiting and retaining teachers of color.

“We’re working in all of these spaces with great intentionality,” Cash said.

## “THIS IS WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD” FOR VALLEY STREAM 13

Valley Stream 13 School District on Long Island is focused not just on recruiting applicants of color but supporting them throughout the hiring process.

The human resources department keeps data on the diversity of the candidate pool for each round of the

“**To accomplish this work requires a great deal of organizational reflection and change in processes.**”

interview process, and administrators have worked over the past several years to identify practices in the hiring process that create barriers to hiring diverse candidates, said Judith LaRocca, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction.

“This is where the rubber meets the road, so to speak,” she said.

Valley Stream 13 is trying a variety of strategies to make sure it does not lose candidates of color during the hiring process for factors unrelated to talent.

The district’s hiring committees are themselves diverse, with members who understand the importance of hiring diverse candidates and indicating to applicants that diversity is valued in the district.

They also screen candidates in a way that is not exclusionary, meaning that there are no automatic cut-offs for things such as years of experience, GPA, or number of certifications. Instead, staff that review resumes focus more on evidence that demonstrates traits like a growth mindset, intrinsic motivation, and cultural awareness.

The district has groups of staff members who write interview questions that capture the district’s values around diversity and create rubrics for interview committee members to keep the process as structured and standardized—and not subjective—as possible.

Interview teams give those questions to candidates when they come to interview to help alleviate nerves and demonstrate that the district cares about their success.

And finally, Valley Stream 13 leverages technology as a way to remove potential barriers for candidates. For example, the district conducts first-round interviews over live video so candidates do not have to take off from work, which can be a significant barrier for diverse candidates.

“Our administrative team has really been working hard at this, and we are making progress,” said LaRocca. “To accomplish this work requires a great deal of organizational reflection and change in processes.”

## NEWBURGH IS EMBEDDING DIVERSITY IN THE HIRING PROCESS

Like in many other school districts, Newburgh public school teachers have been less diverse than their students for as long as administrators Michael McLymore and Pedro Roman can remember.

Now, instead of waiting for qualified applicants of color to come to them, Newburgh is going to the candidates. The goal, said McLymore, an assistant superintendent, is to “change what our staff look like to better reflect the student population.”

The boldest step Newburgh officials have taken is holding a recruitment fair in Puerto Rico. Newburgh has an acute need for bilingual staff, so the district collaborated with the Buffalo Public Schools to travel to the island, conduct interviews with local media, and meet potential candidates.

The school district also launched a partnership with nearby Mount Saint Mary College to get its high school students thinking about college and a post-college career in the classroom. Starting in 10th-grade, Newburgh students visit Mount Saint Mary to grow more familiar with the college experience, hear from guest speakers, and participate in a mentoring program.

Roman, the district’s executive director for human resources, and McLymore said the district is also revamping its hiring process by developing a video to curb interview committee members’ biases and to ensure every candidate is asked at least one interview question about diversity.

“The trend across the nation is that not a lot of folks are getting into the teaching profession,” said Roman, “so if we are going to increase diversity within the district we really need to have varying recruitment strategies to tackle this challenge.”

## AT EAST HIGH SCHOOL EPO IN ROCHESTER, “GROWING YOUR OWN” STARTS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

At the University of Rochester Educational Partnership at East, Superintendent Shaun Nelms and his team start looking for their next generation of teachers in their own middle school classrooms.

They do that work through the Teaching and Learning Institute, which in recent years has grown from an elective course to one the school’s core **career pathways**.

East serves students in grades 6-12, and Nelms and his team meet with all of the middle schoolers to make sure the students are aware of their career pathway options and to help them make decisions about what area they want to pursue.

Those who choose the Teaching and Learning Institute spend three years learning a range of soft and hard skills. There’s also an emphasis on social justice.

“Kids need to understand social justice issues in order to be successful, especially in urban settings,” Nelms said.

Today, one administrator and three teachers at East are graduates of the Teaching and Learning Institute, and more than a dozen others serve throughout the district.

The teaching program has become so successful that Nelms is now in discussions with the Rochester City School District about expanding enrollment to students from other schools.

In addition to serving as superintendent, Nelms also serves as an associate professor at the University of Rochester’s Warner School of Education, which offers **a program customized for current Rochester educators**. The program focuses on an urban context and tends to attract educators of color, Nelms said.

When it comes to current and future educators, he said both programs share a common goal: “It’s really to grow our own.”

# 4

## IMPROVE THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR EDUCATORS OF COLOR

School districts should implement more equitable and inclusive environments that recognize the important contributions of educators of color and provide them with the professional development they need. In addition, teachers of color are disproportionately likely to work in schools with less resources and where there may be longstanding cultures of lower expectations for students. School districts should address these systemic issues, including by examining their approaches to assigning teachers.



# WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

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National data indicate that Latino and Black teachers leave the field at higher rates than their White colleagues.<sup>13</sup> As our colleagues at The Education Trust have noted: “They leave because of working conditions.... The bottom line is that across the nation teachers of color are placed in schools that are more likely to have less desirable working conditions. And this impacts their desire and willingness to stay.”<sup>14</sup>

## THE PLAYBOOK: District Policy Checklist

- Make the school environment more equitable and inclusive by valuing the unique experiences and voices of educators of color and ensuring that educators of color see the school as a place where they are safe, welcome, and belong.<sup>15</sup> See: *For Shenendehowa, a defining component of the district and Working “one conversation at a time” at Eastern Suffolk BOCES.*
- Conduct staff experience surveys, disaggregating the results by race and ethnicity, and use the outcomes to improve policies and programs (while protecting individual privacy).<sup>16</sup>
- Provide financial compensation, time during the workday, and/or promotional opportunities for additional work and responsibilities that many teachers of color are often asked to take on outside the classroom (e.g., Latino teachers are often asked to serve as translators).

## THE PLAYBOOK: District Policy Checklist

- Change practices that result in teachers of color—especially new teachers—being disproportionately assigned to work in schools with less resources and the greatest student needs.
- Set teachers up for success in the classroom by providing early career development opportunities.

## INDICATORS to track

- Retention rates for educators of color.
- Improvement and high levels of satisfaction on staff experience surveys.



# DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT

## FOR SHENENDEHOWA, A DEFINING COMPONENT OF THE DISTRICT

In Shenendehowa Central Schools, educators combat bias and promote inclusivity from the moment a candidate of color interviews for a job to the moment that teacher retires.

That culture is the outcome of a shift by the school board that started with the appointment of Oliver Robinson 14 years ago as the district's first Black superintendent.

"There was a realization that we needed to be much more intentional about trying to ensure we diversify our staff, we diversify our training of existing staff, we diversify our pedagogical practices, we diversify our curriculum materials," he said. The district also examines its tests for bias and dives into subgroup data to make sure minority populations are not getting overlooked when results are averaged. "It's a wide variety of things that have transpired."

Shenendehowa takes a comprehensive approach to improving the working environment for educators of color that starts with the hiring process.

The district made an **anti-bias hiring video** that all hiring committees watch before interviewing job candidates. The video assertively states that the district is looking to hire for diversity and to ensure interview committees are aware of bias, in an effort to reduce their own bias. The goal of the video, Robinson said, is to ensure the committee is the not gatekeeper to diversifying the district's staff, and ultimately, to help ensure teaching candidates of color feel welcome in the district.

Diversity and inclusion issues are incorporated into back-to-school professional development, including **a training on children's literacy** that touched on topics like how classroom books can help shape a culturally responsive environment.

Once the school year starts, teachers use curricular materials that meet the criteria of an **anti-bias checklist** developed by the Anti-Defamation League. Teachers can also access resources on cultural responsiveness through a staff-only intranet that includes documents like the **Parent and Community Communication and Outreach Rubric**.



All employees in their first four years learn about Shenendehowa’s values through a mentoring program. The mentoring program includes sessions on topics like equity and bias.

And to further show how embedded diversity issues are in the student and staff experience, Shenendehowa administrators developed **profiles of what they expect** from their elementary, middle, and high school students as well as their employees. Diversity and inclusivity issues are baked into the document, including a category around Globally Competent Persons “who value and respect different people, ideas and experiences and use creativity to define and solve problems from a larger context.”

“ “ **There was a realization that we needed to be much more intentional about trying to ensure we diversify our staff, we diversify our training of existing staff, we diversify our pedagogical practices, we diversify our curriculum materials.**

“This is all a part of our overall mantra as a school district,” Robinson said. “Our mantra is ‘Committed to Excellence,’ and there was a realization [years ago] that we can’t say we are committed to excellence if we’re not committed to equity and opportunities and outcomes for all kids.”

Robinson says the work of diversity and inclusion is embraced from top to bottom: the Board of Education is committed through the approval of district goals and essential objectives, speaking to diversity and inclusion statements and driving actions and outcomes. The entire leadership team has and will continue to engage in various professional development and lead building and department-based initiatives. This is a defining component of the fabric of the district, Robinson said.

## WORKING “ONE CONVERSATION AT A TIME” AT EASTERN SUFFOLK BOCES

In the Eastern Suffolk BOCES, diversifying leadership starts with culture.

All first-, second-, and third-year teachers as well as newly hired administrators meet monthly to learn about the Eastern Suffolk BOCES culture, and that includes diversity and inclusivity training.

“We are hopeful that catching people early on in their career and training them on the culture that we are trying to build is an effective way to sustain that culture.” Superintendent David Wicks said.

Wicks and Chief Operating Officer Julie Lutz helped form the **Long Island Consortium for Equity and Excellence**, which consists of a dozen school districts, to provide opportunities for discussions about equity and cultural proficiency. Over the course of eight sessions in a school year, superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors, principals, assistant principals, chairpersons, and teacher leaders get a chance to participate in discussions about diversity facilitated by national experts.

“The focus there is the teaching and the pedagogy of what’s going on in the classroom in terms of exposure to students, taking it from the building leader and teacher point of view and understanding how equity and inclusivity and cultural responsiveness is important in the classroom,” Wicks said.

The Eastern Suffolk BOCES leadership is always on the lookout for opportunities to give aspiring leaders of color more exposure.

“When the **Suffolk County School Superintendents Association** started a program for aspiring superintendents, they asked us to make suggestions as to who should attend,” Lutz said. “Last year, Dave and I recommended all of our administrators from diverse backgrounds. Sometimes that’s what it is, one person at a time, one conversation at a time, and if there are enough of those conversations it can turn the tide over time.”

# 5

## INVEST IN MENTORSHIP AND CAREER LADDERS FOR CURRENT AND ASPIRING TEACHER, SCHOOL, AND DISTRICT LEADERS

School districts should implement robust mentorship programs that specifically respond to the professional needs of educators of color. In addition, establishing meaningful career ladder opportunities that support teachers who wish to remain in the classroom or work to support other teachers—and the professional and financial advancement that career ladders represent—is crucial for educator retention and for improving student outcomes.



# WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

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Educators of color report that colleagues and administrators often turn to them exclusively as disciplinary enforcers, as opposed to educators with a robust skill-set including academics.<sup>17</sup> One important study on the experience of Black male teachers in an urban school system examined the experience “Groupers” (those who worked in “schools with four or more Black male teachers on the faculty”) and “Loners” (those who worked in “schools with one Black male teacher on the faculty.”) According to the study: “Compared with Groupers, Loners believed that teachers of color had fewer opportunities to influence school policy. Moreover, Loners, when compared with Groupers, also suggested that their White colleagues were more able to influence school policies than they were. Such differences may account for racial preferences by school administrators when selecting teacher leaders. Finally, Loners were more likely to perceive that persons in the organization were afraid of them because of their race. Given that these respondents were the only Black men on the faculty, it may well be the case that their colleagues did not know how to interact with them.”<sup>18</sup> New social network research on the experience of educators of color in mid-sized school districts also emphasized that “the organization’s culture and climate likely play a significant role in determining how much staff members interact across racial/ethnic (and other) lines.” This has important implications for the professional experience of educators of color, especially in schools where they face near or total racial/ethnic isolation.<sup>19</sup>

## THE PLAYBOOK: District Policy Checklist

- Implement a cohort approach to hiring and assignment to reduce professional isolation for educators of color, creating cross-school networks where necessary.
- Invest in mentorship and career ladders for current and aspiring teachers and school and district leaders. See: *Thanks to NYC Men Teach, "I can clearly see longevity in the career."*
- Create support networks for educators of color that provide mentorship, camaraderie, and professional development opportunities.
- Diversify formal and informal leadership opportunities, including but not limited to district advisory committees, opportunities to teach advanced courses, and opportunities to mentor new teachers.

## INDICATORS to track

- Retention rates for educators of color.
- Promotion rates for educators of color.
- Improvement and high levels of satisfaction on staff experience surveys.



# DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT

## THANKS TO NYC MEN TEACH, “I CAN CLEARLY SEE LONGEVITY IN THE CAREER”

Across New York State, school districts face a particular challenge recruiting and retaining men of color, who face unique obstacles in the workplace ranging from bias to being pigeon-holed into roles based on stereotypes of their race and gender.

That’s why in 2015 the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) launched the **NYC Men Teach Program**, which aims to increase the number of men of color in city classrooms by engaging, recruiting, and supporting candidates from before they even enter the field through their careers in the classroom.

Since it started, the program has recruited and retained 1,000 men of color to work in New York City classrooms. The percent of male teachers of color has increased from 8 percent to 13 percent during that time, according to the district.

A crucial feature of NYC Men Teach is that once participants enter the classroom, they receive guidance from mentors. Participants receive support in areas such as lesson planning, classroom management, and working with school administrators.

New York City recently released an **evaluation of the program** that was conducted by the research firm Westat. It found that “current NYC DOE teachers, who are already in schools, placed the greatest value on the mentoring that they are provided by virtue of their participation in the NYC Men Teach program.”

The evaluation described the impact as follows:

“NYC DOE participants who are current teachers reported that the most important program feature for them was

support from NYC Men Teach mentor teachers. A total of 68% of NYC DOE Participant Survey respondents who are current teachers stated that support from a NYC Men Teach mentor teacher was important or very important. Although NYC DOE provides mentoring to teachers in their first year of teaching, the NYC Men Teach program provides two years of mentoring for program participants. In addition to extending the mentorship period, NYC Men Teach select and train their mentors to provide more socio-emotional support and support around culturally responsive teaching practices. Participants describe how their mentors, who were experienced teachers, provided them guidance and information with areas where they had limited knowledge or prior experience, including areas such as lesson planning, classroom management, and working with school administrators. There is also anecdotal evidence suggesting that the mentoring support also improves participant perception of the supportiveness of their school in general.”

As one NYC Men Teach participant told the study’s authors: “I can clearly see longevity in the career because of the mentors, like the anchor system that they have. It would help me see longevity within education, because there’s so many things that you’re doing your first year that unless someone’s there to help you with that, but also see the bigger picture, it’ll be very hard for a lot of people to stay.”

Looking forward, the NYC DOE plans to use information from the recently released analysis to strengthen the program based on participant feedback, particularly the pathway options for people interested in non-traditional ways of entering the profession and launching a school retention task force that will seek to better understand what additional supports men of color need to stay in the classroom.

## ENDNOTES

This playbook draws on resources included in: The Education Trust, “Understanding the National Shortage of Teachers of Color,” (March 2019).

<sup>1</sup>“See Our Truth,” (New York, N.Y.: The Education Trust–New York, 2017), Available at: <https://newyork.edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/10/See-Our-Truth.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Vivian Hunt, et al., “Diversity Matters,” (McKinsey & Company, 2015). Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/business%20functions/organization/our%20insights/why%20diversity%20matters/diversity%20matters.ashx>.

<sup>5</sup>“Diversity & Inclusion in Your Workplace,” (B-Lab, 2016). Available at: <http://bit.ly/2ffDNic>.

<sup>6</sup>See, for example: Pinellas County (FL) Schools, “Bridging the Gap.” Available at: <https://www.pcsb.org/btg>.

<sup>7</sup>Xiomara Padamsee and Becky Crowe, “Unrealized Impact: The Case for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion,” (Oakland, CA: Promise54, July 2017), [http://www.unrealizedimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Unrealized\\_Impact-Final-072017.pdf](http://www.unrealizedimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Unrealized_Impact-Final-072017.pdf).

<sup>8</sup>Stefanie K. Johnson, “What 11 CEOs Have Learned About Championing Diversity,” (Harvard Business Review, 8/17/2017). Available at: <https://hbr.org/2017/08/what-11-ceos-have-learned-about-championing-diversity>.

<sup>9</sup>Annette Konoske-Graf, et al., “To Attract Great Teachers, School Districts Must Improve Their Human Capital Systems,” (Washington, D.C., December 2016: Center for American Progress). Available at: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2016/12/22/295574/to-attract-great-teachers-school-districts-must-improve-their-human-capital-systems/>.

<sup>10</sup>Cynthia (CC) DuBois and Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, “The Effect of Court-Ordered Hiring Guidelines on Teacher Composition and Student Achievement,” (NBER Working Paper No. 24111, December 2017).

<sup>11</sup>Diana D’Amico, et al., “Where Are All the Black Teachers? Discrimination in the Teacher Labor Market,” (Harvard Educational Review, Spring 2017, Vol. 87, No. 1, pp. 26-49).

<sup>12</sup>A list of HBCUs is available at: <https://nces.ed.gov/COLLEGENAVIGATOR/?s=all&sp=4&pg=1>. A list of HSIs is available at [https://www.hacu.net/assnfe/CompanyDirectory.asp?STYLE=2&COMPANY\\_TYPE=1,5&SEARCH\\_TYPE=0](https://www.hacu.net/assnfe/CompanyDirectory.asp?STYLE=2&COMPANY_TYPE=1,5&SEARCH_TYPE=0).

<sup>13</sup>Richard Ingersoll, et al. “Recruitment, Employment, Retention and the Minority Teacher Shortage,” (Education Policy Analysis Archives, Vol. 27, No. 37). Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.27.3714>.

<sup>14</sup>Ashley Griffin, “Black Teachers Are Leaving the Teaching Profession at Staggering Rates. But Why?” (September 30, 2015). Available at: <https://edtrust.org/the-equity-line/black-and-latino-teachers-are-leaving-the-teaching-profession-at-staggering-rates-but-why/>.

<sup>15</sup>Regarding professional development, see, for example: Travis J. Bristol, “The Troubling Shortage of Latino and Black Teachers—And What to Do About It,” (The Washington Post, May 15, 2016 ), [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/05/15/the-troubling-shortage-of-latino-and-black-teachers-and-what-to-do-about-it/?utm\\_term=.0d102bddea8a](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/05/15/the-troubling-shortage-of-latino-and-black-teachers-and-what-to-do-about-it/?utm_term=.0d102bddea8a).

<sup>16</sup>See, for example: Padamsee and Crowe, 2017.

<sup>17</sup>“See Our Truth,” 2017.

<sup>18</sup>Travis J. Bristol, “To Be Alone or in a Group: An Exploration into How the School-Based Experiences Differ for Black Male Teachers Across One Urban School District,” (Urban Education, March 14, 2017, pp. 1-21).

<sup>19</sup>Travis J. Bristol and Matthew Shirrell, “Who Is Here to Help Me? The Work-Related Social Networks of Staff of Color in Two Mid-Sized Districts,” (American Educational Research Journal, October 26, 2018).

<sup>20</sup>See, for example: Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools, “Building Our Network of Diversity (BOND) Project.” Available at: <https://bondeducators.org>.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

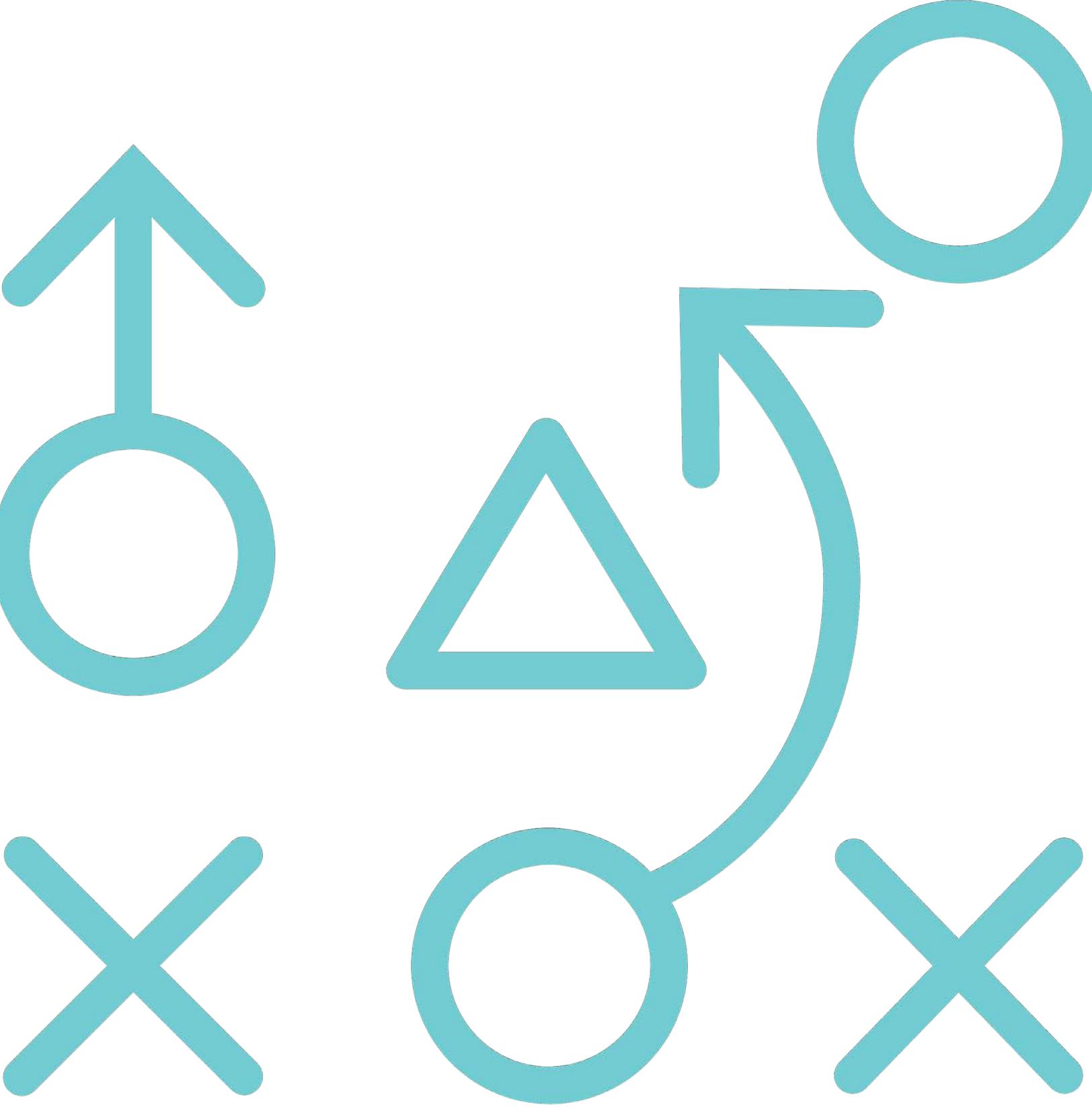
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**In lots of places, there's this notion that as a school district leader, you have to be neutral. And I say pretty publicly that neutrality empowers the oppressor.**

Larry Spring,  
*Schenectady City  
School District  
Superintendent*





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