



Cultivating an Interest in Becoming an Educator

Cultivating an interest in becoming an educator means creating the environment and conditions that allow for racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students to see themselves as public school teachers; welcoming adults and other non-traditional students from under-served and immigrant communities into the education profession; and the removal of barriers to entering teacher preparation and licensure programs. It is a necessary precondition for potential educators to succeed in gaining the necessary credentials.

All students benefit from diversity among educators, but we cannot increase educator diversity if we do not first increase the number of racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse people interested in a career in education. Decades of implicitly and explicitly racist hiring practices have meant that students of color have rarely seen educators who look like them, and their own experiences in schools have alienated them from imagining professional lives spent in schools. Repairing that damage requires that people of color feel welcome, valued, and successful as students, and that they be reintroduced to the deep and rich legacy of teaching in their own cultural backgrounds. From that foundation, students of color must actively be introduced to career pathways in education and recruited into teacher education and preparation programs. In addition, we must seek out non-traditional sources of racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse teachers, such as people from immigrant-rich communities who have credentials or teaching experience in their native countries and community members who can be supported to gain access to paraprofessional programs.

High-leverage strategies for cultivating an interest in education include emphasizing careers in education in existing career and technical education programs and other opportunities for learning and clarifying career pathways in education so that young people can imagine the full range of options for careers in schools and districts. In addition, a number of districts in New England with large populations of new Americans have created positions and incentives to “grow your own” teachers and paraeducators from those communities. Of course, any progress in this area must be predicated on effective antiracist work in schools to change the conditions that drive people of color away from careers in education.

Promising Practices

- [Breakthrough Collaborative](#) and its partners [Breakthrough Providence](#), [Breakthrough Manchester](#), and [Breakthrough Greater Boston](#): A student-focused organization that includes a “grow your own teacher” model to draw students of color into educator training.
- [The Lawrence Working Families Initiative](#): The Lawrence Working Families Initiative seeks “to link the families of Lawrence Public Schools students with resources to access employment and advance economically.” A central component of the Lawrence Working Families Initiative is linking Lawrence Public Schools parents—largely low-income, Latino, immigrant, and limited English speaking—to education and training opportunities such as the Para Educator program. The Para Educator program takes advantage of their strengths and aspirations, addresses their barriers and needs, and fills hiring gaps for the Lawrence Public Schools as well as neighboring districts.
- [Paradigm Shift](#): This organization works in Amherst, Holyoke, and Springfield, Massachusetts, “helping Black and Latino/Latina paraeducators become licensed teachers.” They do this by “help[ing] you navigate the education, training, and MTEL

testing requirements while you continue as a paraeducator. We introduce you to sources of financial aid and provide mentors and tutors to help you on your path to success. We provide the names and numbers of people to call if an issue arises."

- [He Is Me Institute](#): This institute "introduce[s] Black men to education by providing mentorship and teaching opportunities with middle school boys. [They] facilitate experiences that help these young men realize that they can teach, want to teach, and need to teach."
- [The Black Teacher Project](#): A program of the National Equity Project based in Oakland, California. The website includes a bibliography and links to [research and resources](#).
- [The Coalition for Diverse Educators](#): A California-based organization that describes itself as "a community of leaders from teacher preparation programs, public schools, teacher pipeline nonprofit organizations, and higher education leaders dedicated to developing and recruiting teachers of color."

Strategies to consider

The strategies listed here are applicable to all stakeholders. For role or system-specific recommendations, please turn to page 20.

1. Develop a comprehensive, region-wide initiative with a website as a one-stop site to promote teaching and educational administration as a profession (see: <https://connecticut.teach.org/>).
2. Replicate and grow district programs that welcome, train, support, and hire people (especially new Americans) to become paraeducators or substitute teachers and provide training and programming that leads to teacher certification.
3. Encourage businesses to allow employees to spend a day in school.
4. Strengthen, build, and promote education career pathways in K-12 career and technical education pathways programming.
5. Engage communities of color and multilingual communities in building pathways into teacher education programs.