

Grounding Principles



The following grounding principles are central to the work of the Task Force on Diversifying the Educator Workforce. Task force members surfaced these principles as necessary and imperative for all educators and education stakeholders to embrace and uphold as foundational. A racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse educator workforce is vital to closing the inequitable gaps that persist between students of different races and ethnicities. It's also essential to nurture the social cohesion, recognition of difference, and acknowledgment of the strength that results from diverse communities.

This work is disruptive to the system by design. This means that leadership must exist at many levels and be both positional and dispositional. We need leaders to stand behind the work for it to be sustainable, but we also need distributed leadership in order to influence and sustain the work. Disrupting and developing a new system requires efforts by leaders from a variety of key sectors to change the conditions that impact educators throughout all aspects of their career—from their earliest experiences as students who contemplate a career in education to the ways in which they are supported, retained, and promoted in the latter stages of their career. This work will also necessitate a long-term investment of moral courage, time, energy, and resources. To enact these changes and successfully increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of our educator workforce, effective and courageous leaders must:

- **Commit to equity.** The Great Schools Partnership, a nonprofit school-support organization working to redesign public education and improve learning for all students, defines educational equity as “ensuring just outcomes for each student, raising marginalized voices, and challenging the imbalance of power and privilege.” For the task force, this means that every level of the educator development and progression system must work toward the goal of ensuring racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse educators thrive at every level of the education system as teachers and leaders. In order to achieve this goal, leaders at every level of the system must view equity as a process and an outcome in everything they do—work that is inextricably connected to their organizations’ mission. They must commit to creating equitable processes and ensuring equity of opportunity, outcome, and access. Committing to equity in this way is directly tied to the collective success of our communities and our states benefit.
- **Acknowledge the harm the system has perpetrated and continues to perpetrate.** We have inherited a system that has resulted in the homogenization of the education profession. We must recognize that at every step of an educator’s career—from the earliest school experience and the development of an interest in teaching to the ways in which they were supported and promoted (or not)—more White educators than educators of color were encouraged, supported, recognized, and elevated. We did not arrive at this point without investing in racist practices and we will not disrupt and reinvent the system without investing in antiracist practices. Leaders must have the courage to examine, understand, and acknowledge why this is, the impact it has individually and systemically, and be willing to change it.
- **Honor identity in all its forms.** This includes socially significant identities such as race, ethnicity, language, gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, and age. Furthermore, leaders must acknowledge how intersectionality—the combination of multiple elements of identity and how that impacts our lives—has led to myriad injustices felt by members of our society. The title of our report and its emphasis on increasing the racial, ethnic, and linguistic

diversity of the educator workforce is intentional. We live in a world where so many of our identities are shaped by a myriad of identities (e.g. race, class, gender, language). This intersectionality results in a complex set of ways each of us experience discrimination and privilege depending on the combination of factors. It is our intent to explicitly advocate for an educator workforce that is diverse not only with respect to race, but to ethnicity and language as well.

- **Engage equitably.** Equitable community engagement requires an ongoing, two-way process of building relationships, working collaboratively, and sharing power. Leaders must deliberately reach out to professional organizations, government agencies, and educator preparation programs, as well as teachers, administrators, community leaders, policymakers, families, and students—especially those of color. Lead by example. Listen, build relationships, and seek to understand. Vow to share power and develop coordinated, aligned, and coherent solutions together. If we commit to examining the deep and pervasive issues that have led to our lack of diversity among K-12 educators but continue to enlist the same (usually White) stakeholders to do so, we are sorely missing the point and will not make progress. The best ideas, the most meaningful understandings, and the most powerful commitments arise when we deliberately work to bring together diverse communities who have the greatest stake in this work.
- **Be an antiracist.** The work of diversifying the educator workforce must be antiracist in order to have a real, deep, and sustained impact. In “How to Be An Antiracist,” Dr. Ibram Kendi defines an antiracist as, “...one who is supporting an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing an antiracist idea” (p. 13). Further, Dr. Kendi writes, “No one becomes a racist or antiracist. We only strive to be one or the other. We can unknowingly strive to be a racist. We can knowingly strive to be an antiracist. Like fighting an addiction, being an antiracist requires persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination” (p. 23). No matter how you are attempting to diversify the educator workforce or what kind of leader you are (positional or dispositional), this report is a call to adopt an antiracist mindset—to be persistently self-aware, constantly self-critical, and regularly self-examining in your actions, beliefs, and commitments. This report, therefore, is a call to you, asking and imploring you to take up again and again an antiracist mindset, asking you to support, promote, and advance antiracist policies and ideas that will diversify the educator workforce.
- **Measure, share, and reflect on data and evidence of progress in a transparent manner.** Leaders must insist on establishing long-term goals and mid- to short-term benchmarks and routinely collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data as they implement the high-leverage strategies we outline in this report. Transparency in making and in tracking progress is critical to building the level of trust and engendering the shared sense of ownership and commitment this work requires.

We turn next to the framework—a set of five interconnected career-development phases, surrounded and informed by the above guiding principles—that can be used to guide the political reforms and systemic changes required to effectively and equitably diversify our educator workforce. Following the framework are action steps that leaders from across all sectors with an interest in and influence over education must take so that our systems encourage, prepare, license, recruit, hire, support, and promote educators of color so that all students, and our communities, can benefit.