

Brief: Undoing Whiteness to Diversify Teacher Education and the Teaching Force

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Context

Various initiatives are underway in Minnesota and around the country to promote racial consciousness in K-12 teaching (R4615). Some of these show great promise for helping to realize goals related to racial equity and social justice articulated by key professional organizations guiding teacher education and educational research nationwide ([AACTE](#); [AERA](#); [AESA](#)).

While enrollment statistics point to incremental gains being made toward diversifying the teaching force in Minnesota and nationwide, this pace lags behind the growth in diversity of the K-12 student population. At the same time, Minnesota's teaching force remains over 90% white (MDE, 2020). Considering what research shows about curriculum and teaching practices reflecting the majority group's interests (Sleeter, 2017), it is no coincidence that the state has produced some of the nation's highest racial disparities in academic achievement (Shockman, 2019).

This brief is offered as a call to complement recruiting efforts with a dismantling of existing white systems and practices that work to exclude or "filter" non-white teacher candidates out of teacher-preparatory programs and the teaching profession. As the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) claimed in its [2022 call for conference proposals](#), "simply recruiting teachers from diverse backgrounds is insufficient. Efforts that sustain and affirm these teachers are necessary to the goal of diversifying the educator workforce." In teacher preparation, this will entail undoing traditionally white practices known to alienate and drive teacher candidates of color away from teaching (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Johnson & Lehner, 2020).

Listening Sessions

Last year, two listening sessions were held with groups of teachers, teacher educators, administrators, and others from around Minnesota and three other states to address the question, "How can we get more teachers of color into our (teacher-preparation) classrooms?" Supporting questions included:

1. *What are the filters that keep students of color from entering teacher preparation programs?*
2. *What are the filters that keep students of color from completing teacher preparation programs?*

These sessions confirmed findings identified in the literature on whiteness as an alienating force in the teacher-education system (Jupp et al., 2016), specifically its practices of *economic exclusion*, *standardized testing*, and *definitions of teacher quality* (Han & Laughter, 2019). Additional factors identified by informants included the prevalence of institutional gate-keeping mechanisms (e.g., double application processes to professional education programs, high GPA requirements, edTPA) that pose consistent barriers to program completion.

Recommendations

1. Work to eliminate college entrance exams and teacher-certification tests which have little predictive value and are shown to reinforce white dominance in education (see Rogers-Ard et al. 2013 and Nettles et al. 2011 cited in Sleeter, 2017).
2. Dramatically revise or discontinue existing professional frameworks and evaluation tools (e.g., edTPA, Danielson) that are shown to reproduce whiteness in education to the detriment of non-white students.²
3. Develop teacher-preparation curricula and teaching methods that reflect the diversity of public schools nationwide which are now and have been majority students of color since at least 2018.
4. Actively work to disrupt and resist dominant white economic and political structures that continue to “reform” teacher education ways that are detrimental to equity, democracy, and the common good (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018).

Actionable Items

The following were generated from the listening sessions:

1. Partner with schools serving diverse populations to develop flexible online post-baccalaureate teacher preparation programs.
2. Create a collaborative partnership with other universities to offer a shared, online post-baccalaureate teacher preparation program.
3. Design flexible, creative alternatives to field experiences and student teaching.

4. Make teacher preparation curriculum and programs more inclusive and culturally sustaining.
5. Use culturally responsive teaching in teacher education programs.
6. Incorporate valid and culturally relevant methods for preservice and in-service teacher evaluation.
7. Provide resources for rigorous professional development for teachers and professors that includes critical race theory and culturally responsive teaching.
8. Create alternatives to the double application process (college and teacher education program).
9. Eliminate GPAs as the primary determinant of entry into teacher education programs.
10. Create culturally responsive alternatives to college entrance exam requirements.
11. Include instruction related to curriculum design in all teacher preparation programs.
12. Actively recruit, develop, and hire professors, TOSAs, and mentor teachers who reflect the students we are trying to get into our teacher preparation programs.
13. Advocate strongly for higher teacher wages, better working conditions, and rigorous and continued professional development for teachers.

Final Thoughts

Colleges and universities have long recognized the need to get more teachers of color into their teacher preparation programs, matriculated, and out into the classroom. However, the approach has always been to try to make the students fit the system. The 13 actionable items are an initial attempt to make the system better fit the student.

² Example analyses of whiteness in **edTPA**: Anderson, 2019; Behizadeh & Neely, 2018; Dover et al., 2015; Dover & Schultz, 2016; Luna, 2016; Madeloni, 2015; Petchauer et al., 2018; Picower & Kohli, 2017; Radhakrishnan, 2020; Souto-Manning, 2019; Tuck & Gorlewski, 2016. Example analyses of whiteness in **Danielson**: Burns, 2015; Flynn, 2015; Lybeck & Colum, 2020; Miller & Svrcek, 2020; Salazar, 2018.

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