Statewide Educators Call on PA’s 500 School Districts to Use American Rescue Plan Funds to Increase Racial Diversity Among Teachers

Group points to studies showing that having culturally relevant educators improves scholastic outcomes for all demographic groups and helps fill teacher shortage

(Philadelphia and Pittsburgh – July 20, 2021) – As school districts statewide prepare to return to the classroom, they are making decisions on how to best use the new federal funding from the American Rescue Plan (ARP). The ESSA Leadership Learning Community (ELLC), representing prominent educators and advocates across the state, is calling for more of those dollars to be directed toward programs that have been shown to increase racial diversity among teachers.

Pennsylvania has one of the highest disparities between students and teachers of color in the nation. The percentage of teachers of color in the state has been below six percent for almost a decade while the percentage of students of color has increased from approximately 30 percent to 36 percent. Even more striking, male teachers of color comprise only slightly more than one percent of Pennsylvania teachers.

According to Sharif El-Mekki, CEO, Center for Black Educator Development, research has shown several ways students benefit from having teachers of color.

“All students benefit from increased teacher diversity. They are better prepared to participate as informed and engaged citizens in an inclusive national civic culture and increasingly complex world,” El-Mekki said. “Pennsylvania’s teacher pipeline begins at the K-12 level and extends through college, certification, and entrance into the teacher profession. The pipeline ends at teacher retention. We must examine all levels of Pennsylvania’s teacher pipeline as it loses teachers of color at each stage.”

Having culturally relevant educators has been shown to improve scholastic outcomes for all demographic groups while also helping alleviate teacher shortages, but leaders who spoke at today’s ELLC news conference say targeted funding is key.

“The American Rescue Plan for Education offers an incredible opportunity for schools and districts to invest in education diversity efforts as school leaders can use these funds to recruit and hire educators of color and mentor students of color as they consider becoming educators,” said Pennsylvania Deputy Secretary of Higher Education Dr. Tanya Garcia. “The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) is working with educators and partners across the commonwealth to support this work and the development of competencies needed to provide culturally relevant and sustaining instruction.”
One of those partners is Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, which is teaming with PDE and Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) under a statewide initiative called Aspire to Educate. In Cheyney's version, students can attend CCP for two years and then transfer to Cheyney for their final two years to earn their education degree.

“The idea is to get teachers of color back into the pipeline,” said Cheyney President Aaron A. Walton. “It’s a dynamic program where we are bringing in people who may have been in other professions and want to change over to become teachers. We are also attracting people who left college before graduation and may want to come back and switch to a teaching career. In both cases, we are re-establishing the pipeline. These partnerships among educational institutions make this program work.”

Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators (PACTE) President Dr. Gwen Price cited programs at Temple, LaSalle, Edinboro and Slippery Rock Universities that have formed teacher development partnerships, including dual enrollment programs, with area school districts.

“We must find ways to recruit candidates that are representative of a student population that will endeavor to serve,” Price said. “The recruitment must start early, defining the pivotal role that educators play in the development of young minds, redefining the perception of public education as a career, finding financial incentives and supports to make the pathway to becoming a teacher more enticing and removing the barriers known to disproportionally keep underrepresented groups from entering the field.”

Dr. Valerie Kinloch, Renee and Richard Goldman Dean at the University of Pittsburgh said, “we need to take seriously the implications of our diverse students never seeing a teacher who looks like them in their schooling experience.

“Additionally,” she said, “while it is important to have a diverse teaching force, we also need to ensure that every teacher is culturally responsive. We can’t take for granted that because you are a person of color means that you are innately culturally responsive, and since our white teachers are in the majority, we need to ensure that they have the tools they need to educate students of color and white students for a diverse world.”

Pittsburgh Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Anthony Hamlet and School District of Philadelphia Chief Talent Officer Larisa Shambaugh said their respective districts are committed to using ARP funds to continue to build programs and partnerships to prepare more diverse students to enter the teaching profession. They urged other districts to do the same.

The host of today’s event, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh President and CEO Esther Bush said the Pennsylvania coalition has a focus on developing and supporting a diverse education pipeline for both teachers and administrators with an emphasis on maintaining education opportunities for Pennsylvania, especially those in need.

“We are looking for more funding in three areas: building lasting and equitable systems of teaching and learning, safely reopening schools for all students, and addressing pre- and post-pandemic unfinished learning,” she said. She also noted that 184 school districts in Pennsylvania have no teachers of color, which she called both a challenge and an opportunity for growth.

All speakers at today’s virtual event are members of the Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium, ELLC, which was derived from Council of Chief State School Officers, the Council of Great City Schools,
and the National Urban League is funded by the Wallace Foundation. Speakers represented the following agencies organizations: Pennsylvania Department of Education, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, Center for Black Educator Development, School District of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh Public Schools, Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, University of Pittsburgh, and the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators.

###
Statewide Educators Call on PA’s 500 School Districts to Use American Rescue Plan Funds to Increase Racial Diversity Among Teachers

TUESDAY, JULY 20, 2021
Virtual Media Event

Speakers:

**Esther Bush**
President and CEO, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh

**Tanya Garcia, Ph.D.**
Deputy Secretary of Higher Education

**Sharif El-Mekki**
CEO, Center for Black Educator Development

**Larisa Shambaugh**
Chief Talent Officer, School District of Philadelphia

**Anthony Hamlet, Ed.D.**
Superintendent, Pittsburgh Public Schools

**Aaron A. Walton**
President, Cheyney University

**Valerie Kinloch, Ph.D.**
Renee and Richard Goldman Dean, University of Pittsburgh

**Gwen Price, Ph.D.**
President, PA Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators
Concentration of Teachers of Color
by District in Pennsylvania 2019-20

There remain nearly 1,500 Pennsylvania schools and 184 entire school districts that employ zero Teachers of Color.

Source: Research for Action - Teacher Diversity in Pennsylvania, December 2020
Districts' stimulus funding priorities

July 2021 review of 100 large and urban district plans

- Helping students make up lost instructional time: 51%
- Providing social-emotional, mental health supports: 43%
- Expanding technology capabilities: 40%
- Building newer and/or safer facilities: 36%
- Supporting teacher capacity: 27%
- Supporting high-quality curriculum: 20%
- Exploring new virtual delivery models: 17%
- Improving services to students with special needs: 17%
- Supporting English language learners: 10%
- Supporting educator pipeline strategies: 8%

Source: Center for Reinventing Public Education, “First look at ESSER priorities: Districts are placing their bets on what they know.”
Student and Teacher Race/Ethnicity in Pennsylvania 2019-20

Source: Research for Action - Teacher Diversity in Pennsylvania, December 2020
The Leaky Pipeline of Teacher Diversity in Pennsylvania

- 35.8% total students of color
- 30.8% high school graduates of color
- 27.3% college bound graduates of color
- 13.7% teacher prep enrollees of color
- 11.8% teacher certification test passers of color
- 6.0% total teachers of color
- First year teacher hires of color
- Retention rate for teachers of color

Original sources:
- Teacher Diversity in Pennsylvania from 2013-14 to 2019-20, 2019-20
- Pennsylvania Department of Education, Division of Data Quality, Graduates Data, 2019-20
The Pittsburgh Public Schools Expect Great Things Strategic Plan calls for the District “to develop and broaden its teacher pipeline and recruitment efforts to yield a diverse, culturally competent, and effective workforce.” The current PPS teaching staff does not reflect the racial demographics of the students it serves. While the Office of Human Resources (HR) continues in its ongoing efforts to recruit, develop, and retain a diverse workforce, promising initiatives are underway.

**New Para2Teacher Program**

While only one-sixth of District teachers are non-white, two-thirds of its students are of color. In stark contrast, more than one-half of the District’s paraprofessionals are of color. The new Para2Teacher program, approved by the Board at its September 24th Legislative Meeting, is designed to increase the diversity of the teacher workforce in PPS by developing an internal pipeline of paraprofessionals prepared to enter its classrooms as teachers.

Paraprofessionals in the program have the opportunity to complete a two-year online master’s degree while remaining employed in the District. The Para2Teacher program is supported by a generous grant from the Heinz Endowments, as well as investments by the District and Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers for tuition assistance.

**Partnership with Pittsburgh Brashear Teacher Academy Magnet**

On June 19, 2019, the Board approved a memorandum of understanding with the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers that will result in graduates of Pittsburgh Brashear High School’s Teaching Magnet program being hired as PPS teachers following their successful completion of a state-approved teacher preparation program and acquisition of required teaching certification. Eligible students from 2019 graduating class are the inaugural cohort of prospective teachers to whom this opportunity will be offered. It is currently anticipated that the first cohort of students returning as teachers will be hired for the 2023–24 school year.
ELLC SUMMARY

The passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015 opened up new possibilities for federal support of state and local efforts to make the most of the principalship. That’s because the law, a major source of funding for public school education, stressed the importance of school leadership in ways that its predecessors had not.

This emphasis may be beginning to yield results. Earlier this year, New Leaders, a school leadership research and development organization, reported that each of the 50 states “has committed to directing some portion of its federal funding” to leadership—from teacher leaders to principals and superintendents. The organization’s policy brief also found that 41 states had acknowledged leadership in their plans to improve high-need schools.

Here at Wallace, we are also seeing much activity.

Two years ago, the foundation helped organize and began funding a joint effort by the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Council of the Great City Schools and the National Urban League to bring together a group of states eager to use ESSA to fund evidence-based approaches to strengthening school leadership. The ESSA Leadership Learning Community, as it is named, involves teams from 10 states in on-going discussions both locally and nationally—developing strategies and implementation plans for using education leadership to help drive school improvement, especially for turning around the highest-needs schools. The teams all have representatives from the state, large districts and communities and typically include state education agency officials, school district leaders and leaders from local Urban League affiliates. Every team also engages additional members as appropriate for its local context.

Each of the states—Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Wisconsin—is seeking to use leadership in a way that makes sense for its own needs and circumstances. But all 10 are focusing on evidenced-based approaches to using leadership as vehicle for improving outcomes for disadvantaged students.

Each state team meets regularly to advance its goals. The 10 teams also gather as a whole several times a year for national meetings where they exchange ideas and learn from invited experts.

One example of the initial work is the Tennessee Leaders for Equity Playbook, published in April. The report’s crux is this: Highly trained school leaders play key roles in achieving equity and need to be supported by district leadership, school boards and community allies.

Earlier, a survey of representatives from 25 states taking part in a school leadership effort offered by the Council of Chief State School Officers found that 71 percent were making leadership a priority, while only 21 percent said they had made past progress on it; fully 91 percent consider incorporation of principal-focused work into ESSA school improvement plans a priority.

Wallace has a number of resources about ESSA and school leadership, including a RAND Corp. study identifying leadership activities that meet the law’s evidence requirements and a 2017 slide deck on the evidence base for school leadership presented to the U.S. Department of Education. Also, the Council of Chief State School Officers has an online guide for states in using ESSA to promote school leadership.