

Teacher and Administrator Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Tennessee

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INTRODUCTION

Thirty-seven percent of Tennessee's students are students of color, but teachers of color represent only 13 percent of the teacher population.¹ This gap between students and teachers of color in Tennessee mirrors a national trend. Across the United States, students of color make up 51 percent of the student body whereas teachers of color make up only 18 percent of the population.²

Low levels of teacher diversity are problematic for all students.

For students of color, exposure to a teacher of color can change the way they experience education. Teachers of color can serve as strong role models and raise expectations for learning through relationships with students and their families.³ Several research studies have shown that assignment to same-race teachers for students of color can lead to higher academic achievement, better attendance, a reduction in suspensions and expulsions, a significantly reduced risk of dropping out of high school, and more favorable teacher perceptions.⁴ For persistently low-income students, exposure to at least one African American teacher in grades 3–5 increases students' self-reported intention to pursue a bachelor's degree.⁵ Taken together, this means students of color who have a teacher of color stay in school longer, learn more, and are more likely to view higher educational attainment as feasible.

Studies also suggest that white students who are exposed to diverse teachers are better prepared for life in a multicultural society.⁶ Diverse teachers expose students to

different perspectives and experiences, pushing them to be more flexible in their thinking and open to considering the views of others. Preparing students to interact with a diverse society is increasingly important as our country becomes more diverse. A study of young people ages 10–19 shows that implicit racial bias is still as much of an issue for students today as it was in previous generations.⁷ Contact with diverse teachers can help break down racial barriers and dispel stereotypes that contribute to implicit bias.

Increasing teacher diversity is one part of a larger effort to expand the teacher workforce in the state. Tennessee has more vacancies for teachers qualified to teach English as a second language, world languages, and science than educator preparation programs (EPPs) in the state are producing.⁸ High poverty districts are even more likely to face these staffing challenges. Expanding the supply of diverse teachers is one aspect of addressing larger teacher supply issues.

Spurred by the growing body of research focused on educator diversity, groups such as the State Collaboration on Reforming Education (SCORE) and the Trailblazer Coalition have issued calls for the state, districts, and EPPs to share ideas and act to address the lack of diversity in the teacher workforce.⁹ This brief memo adds to these efforts by providing some statistics on the current racial and ethnic makeup of Tennessee's student body and educator workforce and outline where the department and districts across the state go from here.

STUDENT, TEACHER, AND ADMINISTRATOR RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN TENNESSEE

There are sizeable disparities between the statewide percentage of students of color compared to teachers or administrators of color. Data from the 2017-18 school year show the vast majority of teachers in Tennessee are white (87 percent) compared to 63 percent of the student body. African Americans make up the largest minority group

in Tennessee schools, **but the percentage of African American teachers is only half that of African American students.** Hispanic students make up a tenth of the student population, while only one percent of teachers or administrators are Hispanic.

Figure 1. Percentage of Tennessee students, teachers, and administrators of color in 2017-18

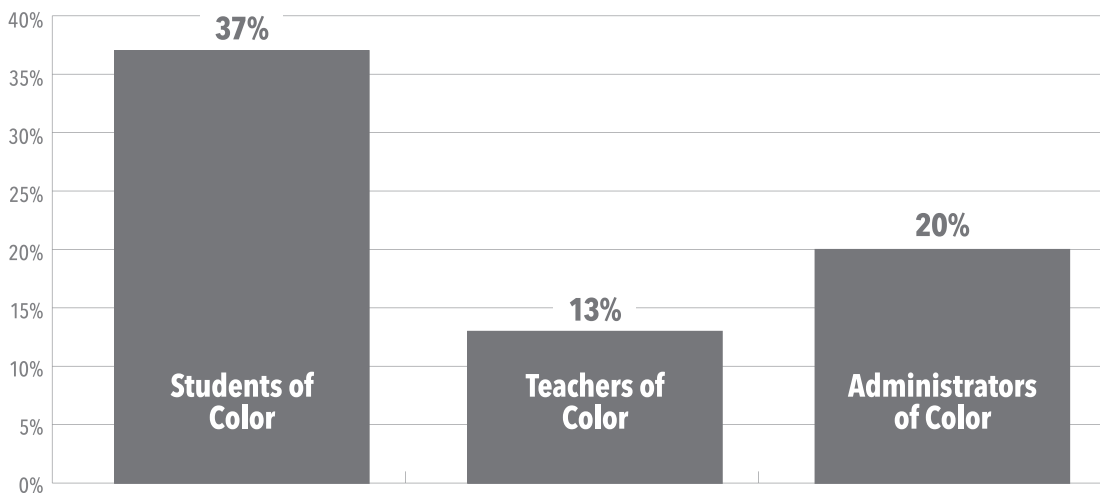
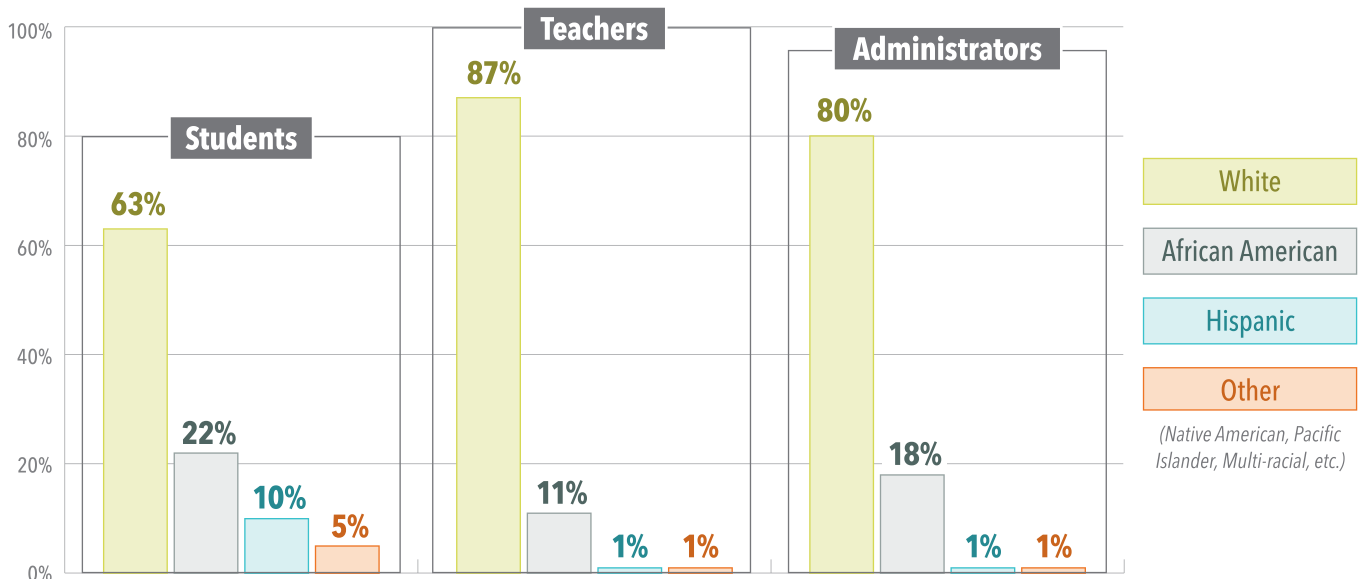


Figure 2. Racial and ethnic diversity among Tennessee students, teachers, and administrators in 2017-18

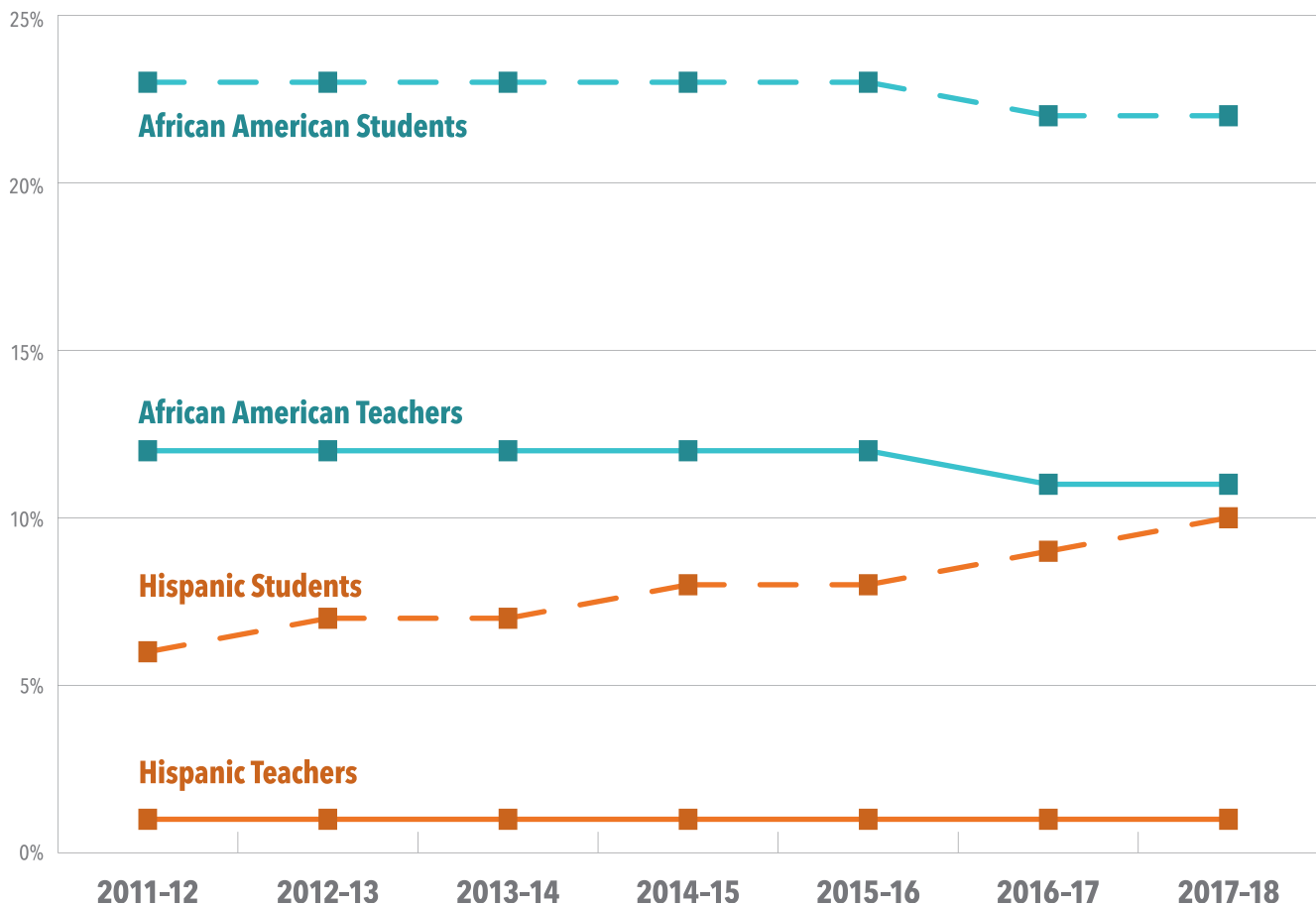


CHANGE OVER TIME

Since 2011-12, the overall percentage of teachers and administrators of color has remained fairly stable.¹⁰ In contrast, Tennessee's students are increasingly racially and ethnically diverse. In 2011-12, Tennessee's public schools included 30 percent students of color, but in 2017-18, this figure rose to 37 percent. The percentage of African American students declined slightly while the percentage

of Hispanic students increased significantly. Students identifying as Hispanic went from 68,051 students (6 percent) in 2011-12 to 98,690 students (10 percent) in 2017-18. The changes in student racial and ethnic diversity without a substantial change in teacher or administrator diversity mean that fewer students of color are learning from teachers of color.

Figure 3. Tennessee teachers and students of color over time



“Since 2011-12, the overall percentage of teachers and administrators of color has remained fairly stable.”

Measuring Diversity

Teacher diversity can be assessed in a variety of ways. The most commonly used measurement (which is also used in this report) is to compare the percent of students of color to teachers of color and report the difference as a “gap”, with the understood goal of an equal percentage of students and teachers of each race. Measuring diversity this way is easy to understand, but may not be the most effective way to shape policy or to establish expectations for schools and districts. Focusing solely on parity does not push predominantly white communities to diversify their teacher workforces because the percentage of non-white students is already similar to that of teachers. More than a third of Tennessee districts have 10 percent or less students of color and less than 3 percent teachers of color. Only measuring

“gaps” discounts the idea that white students in predominantly white communities also benefit from having teachers of color.

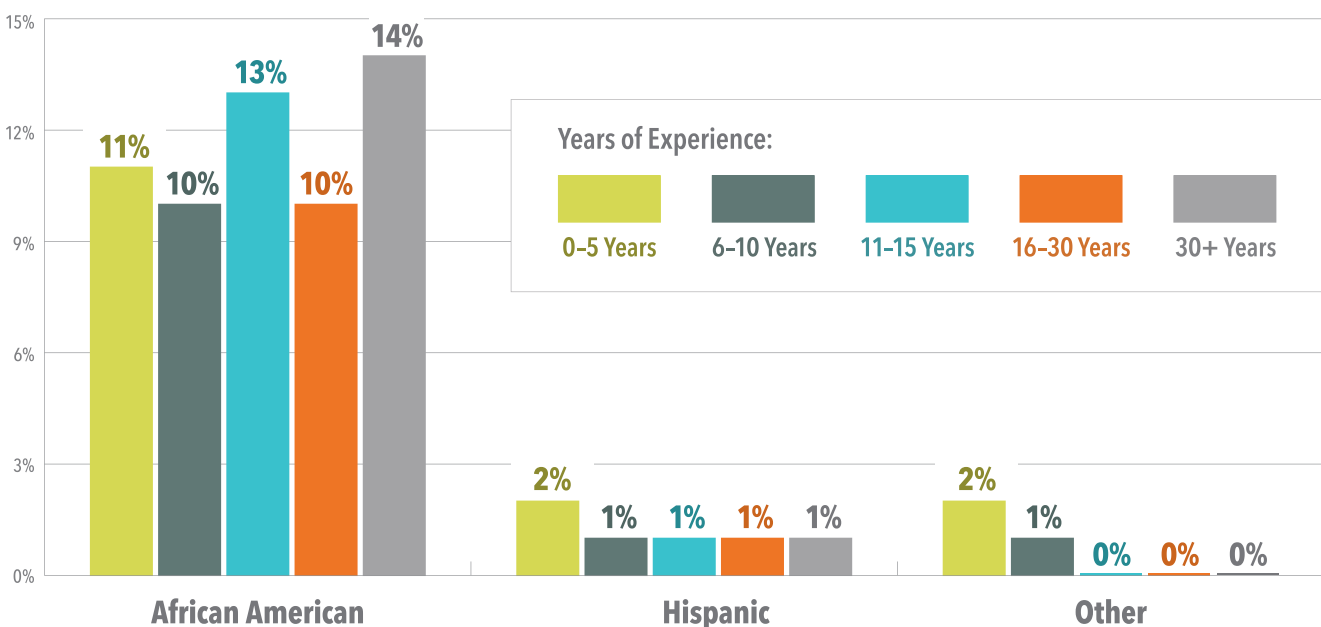
Another way to measure diversity is by comparing the workforce with the surrounding adult population, rather than with students. The adult population is less diverse than the student population, so comparing diversity of teachers to students could overestimate the number of adults of color in a community who could be teachers or administrators.¹¹ Measuring the diversity of the teacher workforce against the diversity of other adults in the community could lead to more realistic, attainable goals. The method used to measure diversity depends on the purpose of diversifying the teacher workforce. Ultimately, whichever measure is used, all students in Tennessee need to have access to more teachers of color.

TEACHER RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY BY EXPERIENCE LEVEL

In recent years, the percentage of beginning teachers who identify as Hispanic, Native American, Pacific Islander, and multi-racial has risen, but the percentage of new African American teachers has not increased. Teachers with more than 30 years of experience, likely approaching retirement, are 14 percent African American, but African American teachers make up just 11 percent of teachers with

five years of experience or less. Essentially, this means that the number of African American teachers entering and remaining in the profession in the past five years is falling short of the number of African American teachers previously recruited. If this trend continues, it would lead to a net loss in the African American portion of the workforce.

Figure 4. Teachers of color by experience level

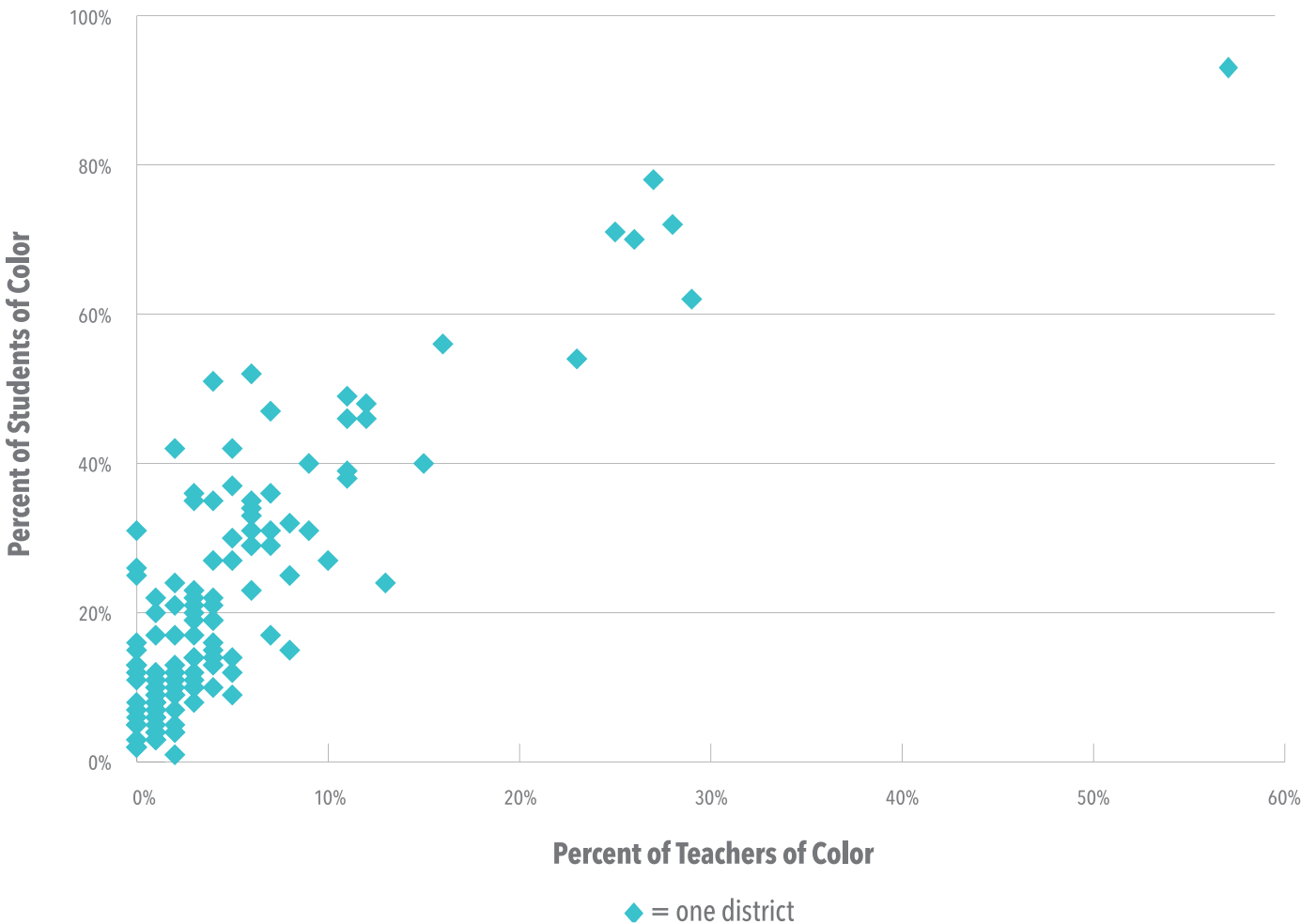


DISTRICT-LEVEL DIFFERENCES

In addition to teachers of color being less prevalent than white teachers in schools, they are also more concentrated in certain districts. Most teachers of color work in districts with large numbers of students of color, leaving many districts in the state with little to no diversity. In 2017–18, half of Tennessee’s 147 districts had at least 95 percent white teachers. Furthermore, 40 districts had no African American teachers, and 50 districts had no Hispanic teachers.

Figure 5 shows the percent of students of color compared to the percent of teachers of color by district in 2017–18.¹² Only seven districts have more than 20 percent teachers of color, and all of these districts have greater than 50 percent students of color. Most districts have less than 10 percent teachers of color, but many of those districts have between 20 percent and 50 percent students of color. In those districts there are sizeable numbers of students of color who have very little access to teachers of color.

Figure 5. Students of color compared to teachers of color in Tennessee school districts



WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

In accordance with state law (T.C.A. § 49-1-302(i)), the Tennessee Department of Education recommends that school boards and local school districts establish reasonable, incremental goals for recruitment, employment and retention of teachers of color. To set these goals, awareness of the importance and amount of teacher diversity is the first step.

The department now makes available teacher and administrator race and ethnicity data on the department's [Data Downloads page](#) so that all stakeholders can access educator diversity data at the state and district levels. In the 2018–19 school year, the department will also begin including educator race and ethnicity breakdowns within the school and district strategic planning tool to encourage more reflection on educator diversity when planning for improvements to human capital systems around recruitment and retention. Additionally, progress measures on recruitment and diversity are included in the State Board of Education's [Teacher Preparation Report Card](#) and in the department's annual reports on educator preparation.

However, making the data available is just the first step. Awareness and reflection should lead to innovative strategies for increasing teacher diversity through strategic recruitment and retention. As experienced African American teachers retire over the next 10 years, it will be critically important for districts and education preparation providers (EPPs) to develop new strategies to recruit and retain new teachers of color. The department is supporting this work through several new work streams.

Regarding recruitment, new policy changes require that EPPs develop formalized partnership agreements with their school district partners that should include a collaborative approach to program design and content and targeted strategies for recruitment and diversity.

Additionally, the department provided funding to encourage innovative practices at the EPP and district level. The

Tennessee Innovation through Partnership Grants awarded four EPPs a total of \$200,000 to design new strategies that will support the development of a diverse educator workforce, increase the pipeline of educators in high-demand licensure areas, and promote collaboration to improve educator preparation in literacy. Furthermore, the Diversity Innovation Grants encourage innovative practices in districts around recruiting and retaining diverse, highly effective teachers who better reflect the student population of Tennessee's public schools. In August 2017, three districts received one-year awards totaling \$100,000 to implement comprehensive strategies with the primary goal of increasing the representation of teachers of color in their local schools.

The department is committed to increasing awareness and providing supports and resources for school and district leaders in line with our goal of providing all students with equitable access to a high-quality education that puts them on a path to opportunities after high school graduation. In May 2018, the department released the [Leaders for Equity Playbook](#) developed for school, district, and community leaders to work towards providing and sustaining equitable outcomes for all students. The playbook outlines seven equity commitments, including recruiting and retaining a diverse teaching workforce. During the upcoming school year, the department will convene a network of districts to develop a comprehensive human capital strategy with a focus on ensuring equity and increasing access to highly effective teachers using the Leaders for Equity Playbook as a guide.

Community organizations are also joining in on the work. In middle Tennessee, the growth of the Latino and Arabic-speaking populations highlights the critical need for more teachers who share the racial and ethnic heritage of this growing student population. The Trailblazer Coalition brings together nine EPPs committed to raising awareness and changing the conversation around teacher diversity with a focus on the growing Latino and Arabic-speaking populations in Middle Tennessee. The group gathers input from educators,

community members, parents, and higher education to develop practical solutions such as building strong partnerships with Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) high schools and developing a Praxis preparation program that includes curriculum, content, and funding to support aspiring teachers of color.

By working together, the department, State Board, districts, and our EPPs have the opportunity to make real progress in attracting and retaining a more representative teaching workforce, which would benefit Tennessee for generations to come.

NOTES

1. Data on race and ethnicity for teachers was reported through TNCompass (the state's teacher data system), with missing data replaced with any available data from the Education Information System (EIS). Teachers of color are defined those who select any race or ethnicity other than white. Racial and ethnic percentages in this report are calculated out of teachers and administrators who had race/ethnicity data. This data was optional to report.
2. U.S. Department of Education (2016). The state of racial diversity in the educator workforce.
3. Boser, U. (2011). Teacher diversity matters: A state-by-state analysis of teachers of color. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.
4. Dee, T. S. (2004). Teachers, race, and student achievement in a randomized experiment. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 86(1), 195-210.; Dee, T. S. (2005). A teacher like me: Does race, ethnicity, or gender matter? *American Economic Review*, 95(2), 158-165.; Egalite, A. J., Kisida, B., & Winters, M. A. (2015). Representation in the classroom: The effect of own-race teachers on student achievement. *Economics of Education Review*, 45, 44-52.; Holt, S. B., & Gershenson, S. (2017). The impact of demographic representation on absences and suspensions. *Policy Studies Journal*.; Lindsay, C. A., & Hart, C. M. (2017). Exposure to same-race teachers and student disciplinary outcomes for black Students in North Carolina. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 39(3), 485-510.; Gershenson, S., Holt, S. B., & Papageorge, N. W. (2016). Who believes in me? The effect of student-teacher demographic match on teacher expectations. *Economics of Education Review*, 52, 209-224.
5. Gershenson, S. (2017). The long run impacts of same-race teachers. IZA discussion paper 10630.
6. Bower-Phipps, L., Homa, T. D., Albaladejo, C., Johnson, A. M., & Cruz, M. C. (2013). Connecting with the "other" side of us: A cooperative inquiry by self-identified minorities in a teacher preparation program. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 40(2), 29-51.
7. Nosek, B. A., Smyth, F. L., Hansen, J. J., Devos, T., Lindner, N. M., Ranganath, K. A., Banaji, M. R. (2007). Pervasiveness and correlates of implicit attitudes and stereotypes. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 18(1), 36-88.
8. Tennessee Department of Education (2017). Preparation through partnership: Strengthening Tennessee's new teacher pipeline.
9. Trailblazer Coalition. (2018). Fixing the broken pipeline: teacher diversity and the classroom.; State Collaborative on Reforming Education. (2017). Prepared for day one. Improving the effectiveness of early-career teaching. Nashville, TN.
10. Race/ethnicity reporting rates have increased since 2012. Fourteen percent of administrators were missing race data in 2012 compared to only 6 percent missing in 2017. Eight percent of teachers were missing race data in 2012 compared to five percent in 2017.
11. Colby, S. (2015). Projections of the size and composition of the U.S. population: 2014 to 2060. U.S Census Bureau.
12. The Achievement School District is not included due to a high percentage of missing data.

