

## All students benefit from minority teachers

Written by Freddie Allen, NNPA Washington Correspondent  
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WASHINGTON (NNPA) – Despite the cry from people of color for more teachers who look like them, both whites and Blacks benefit from a more diverse teaching force, according to a study by Center of American Progress.

"... A study of the relationship between the presence of African American teachers in schools and African American students' access to equal education in schools found that fewer African Americans were placed in special-education classes, suspended, or expelled when they had more teachers of color, and that more African American students were placed in gifted and talented programs and graduated from high school," stated the report.

Teachers of color also have, "an affinity for infusing their classrooms with culturally relevant experiences and examples, setting high academic expectations, developing trusting student-teacher relationships, and serving as cultural and linguistic resources—as well as advocates, mentors, and liaisons—for students' families and communities."

A study titled, "Teacher Diversity Revisited" reported in May 2014 that learning from and networking with a multicultural teaching staff is also important for preparing white students for a workforce and society where they will no longer make up the majority.

...students to interact with people who look and act differently than they do in order to build social trust and create a wider sense of community," stated the report. "In other words, the benefits of diversity are not just for students of color."

CAP researchers said that male teachers of color are more than twice as likely to ditch the classroom for another career than female teachers of color.

Black male teachers also told researchers that feelings of isolation or being the only Black male on the faculty increased their, "desire to leave their current schools." When male minority teachers get certified in their main subject, they "are only half as likely to leave the field as are other teachers."

In an effort to address the lack of minority teachers and to retain the ones currently in our nation's classrooms, CAP report suggested states should "develop innovative approaches to

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teacher preparation in both university-based and alternative-certification programs."

Researchers also proposed higher benchmarks for teacher-training programs.

The CAP report also cited the Education Department's recruitment campaign aimed at preparing 80,000 Black teachers for classrooms across the country by 2015 to provide students not only with high-quality educational experiences, but also to present them with role models with a variety of cultural experiences, as well.

"There is a need for more teacher-preparation programs to embrace calls for higher quality and candidate expectations—indeed, to marry the call for quality and diversity," stated the report. "Improved preparation will go a long way toward minimizing the number of new teachers that enter our schools ill-equipped and quickly exit through the revolving door."

The report concluded that policymakers needed to shift their focus to retaining effective minority teachers, while supporting the efforts of minority professionals seeking to enter the field.

"States and school districts have the power to remove barriers to the retention and success of teachers of color. Those that do not address these barriers—by, for example, supporting high-quality teaching and reforming school conditions—will continue to face high turnover, destabilized faculties, and unsatisfactory student achievement levels," the report stated. "Communities of color must advocate for effective teaching and encourage their children to prepare to enter a rigorous and demanding profession."

The report calls for "access to not only high-quality education opportunities, but also a high-quality and an equally diverse teaching force."

The CAP report said that effective teachers play a pivotal role in producing high performance students, and conversely that less experienced teachers often contribute to achievement gaps between whites and non-whites.

Minorities account for nearly half of the students in public schools in the United States, but less than 20 percent of teachers are non-white.

According to a 2011 study by The National Center for Education Information (NCEI), more than 80 percent of teachers are white and less than 10 percent are Black. At 70 percent, white females account for the majority of all teachers. Only 2 percent of all teachers are Black men, underscoring the paucity of Black male role models in U.S. public schools.

A 2014 report by the Children's Defense Fund said that more than 80 percent of Black students can't read at grade level and in 2010 less than 70 percent were graduating from high school in four years. Black students also received 1 in 6 out-of-school suspensions, compared to their white peers who received 1 in 20 out-of-school suspensions.