

Chapter 45

Sustaining Our Diminishing Teachers of Color in Urban and Suburban Schools: A Crisis of an Othered Identity

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ABSTRACT

This chapter emphasizes the importance of implementing culturally competent recruitment and retention practices, which suburban schools and systems can use to ensure that all students have a well-trained and high-quality teacher of color. Changes in teachers' expectations for student success and strategies in managing administrative and behavioral tasks are all required of all novice teachers. Methods of recruitment, strategies of organization management, and student demographics should be factors in supporting the approaches to implement culturally competent policy change, impacting the outcomes for teachers of color and the student's they serve. A positive organizational culture to include culturally responsive instructional leadership, adequate teacher salary, and critical professional development are determinants for sustaining high-quality teachers of color not only for students of color but for all learners. An emphasis on valuing the cultural identity of teachers of color in suburban schools will be emphasized as a preventative measure for the othering of teachers of color.

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INTRODUCTION

Principals are accountable for rigorous learning for all students. Excuses are not acceptable, particularly in turnaround schools, despite research that indicates that it takes a long term commitment for consistent school leadership and staff retention to fully turnaround a school in the long term (Hoxworth, 2017). School leaders guide their staff through the challenges posed by an increasingly complex environment. Teachers of color are experiencing burnout due to conflict, high job demands, high-stake accountability of assessments, boredom, negative student behavior, student trauma, and management's style of leadership.

This, however, is not simply an Urban-defined issue, but a Suburban concern as well. Every year, the recruitment of teachers steadily increases. School principals of Urban-defined public schools are accountable for improving student academics and the school's culture while addressing social and emotional issues of students and staff. Annually, schools receive a federal evaluation which rates the school on assessment results, student attendance, teacher turnover rate, student discipline, and student mobility. When schools receive negative evaluations, schools receive negative publicity which then makes it more difficult to gain and maintain sustainability.

Once sustainability is lost, student academics decline and the school's culture digresses. Therefore, this chapter emphasizes the importance of implementing culturally competent recruitment and retention practices, which Suburban schools and systems can use to ensure that all students have a well-trained and high-quality teacher of color. An emphasis on valuing the cultural identity of teachers of color in Suburban schools will be emphasized as a preventative measure for the othering of teachers of color.

BACKGROUND

It is common for Urban-defined schools to have negative reputations. When a school building is aesthetically unattractive, needing renovations and repairs, and the residing neighborhood of the school is believed to be dangerous and unsafe, employing high-quality educators is almost impossible. "The persistence of multigenerational poverty is the most villainous explanation for these continuing disparities, with structural racism as its regular sidekick". (Edly & Darling-Hammon, 2018). The school building should be functional with adequate resources. With the exodus of people of color from Urban to Suburban areas, definitions of Urban are now becoming blurred. Urban-defined schools are described as having a majority minority population demographic above 65% with a Free and Reduced Lunch population about 50%. Moving to the Suburbs, many have found, does not necessarily remove one from a Low SES status and a question of identity and belonging becomes glaring.

While an Urban-defined school can substantially improve with a supportive public policy, the actuality of Suburbanization is necessary to help mandate the needed changes. School policy should be written to design a school as a "safe haven" for students, teachers, and administrators where the cultural identity of all stakeholders are intact and valued. Teachers of color often bring alternative pedagogies to the school environment that counter traditional thoughts of schooling and learning as they introduce children of color to "culturally relevant" instructional practices (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Teachers should have a sense of satisfaction; students should be healthy and learning as the whole child; and administrators should have a sense of security in remaining in their roles. This is the ongoing description of Suburban schools in affluent areas. However, teachers of color in these Suburban settings often experience feelings of isolation, marginalization and frustration through a lack of being valued as professionals (Lee, 2013).

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