

**Best Practices in Minority Teacher Recruitment  
A Literature Review**

**Connecticut RESC Alliance  
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## **Introduction**

According to 2007-08 data released by the National Center for Education Statistics, 16.9 % of U.S public school teachers were minorities while 44 % of U.S students were minority (NCES Staff and Schools Survey, 2007-08). As the nation continues to become more diverse, this gap is likely to widen. To eliminate the gap, states and districts have developed programs to increase the number of minority teachers. The programs fall into 4 categories: High School “Grow your Own Programs”, University/College Programs, Non-traditional or Alternate Route programs, and Scholarship/Funding Incentives. A limitation to this review is that there seemed to be a spike in funding and research related to minority teacher recruitment efforts in the late 90’s and early 2000’s. Therefore, some of the data and program information in this review is several years old. Key themes found during the review of these programs include: strong university partnerships, community colleges as an underutilized pathway, common barriers to entering the teaching profession, and the attrition and retention of minority teachers.

## **Middle & High School “Grow Your Own” Programs**

One of the most cited and replicated high school “Grow your Own” programs was developed in South Carolina as part of their Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA). Open to all high school students, regardless of ethnic background, the High School Teacher Cadet Program began in 1986 and is entirely state funded (NEA, 2009). Students attend a college credit granting class, one period a day that introduces the educational system, teaching as a career and explores current trends in education. The course uses curriculum developed by the South Carolina Teacher Cadet Program (CERRA, 2011) . Students are also

involved in field experiences, classroom observations, reflection and self-assessments. The course is taught by a certified teacher. Participating students are required to have and maintain at least a 3.0 GPA, be a junior or senior in high school, obtain 5 recommendations from teachers, submit an essay and interview (CERRA, 2010). During the 2009-2010 school year 2,457 students participated in 157 schools (CERRA, 2011).

While the Teacher Cadets' website states the "*the school will actively seek to recruit students of color and males in keeping with the need to help expand the future pool of minority teachers*" (CERRA, 2010), the majority of students participating in 2011-12 are white (66%) and 31 % are minorities (CERRA, 2011). Some research findings on the program suggest that there is some success in the long term; in 1993 about 23% of the 1997-98 cohort were licensed to teach and of those 66% percent were actually teaching (NEA, 2009). In 2005, only about 10% of all past teacher cadet participants were teaching (NEA, 2009). After completing the program, 41% of students said they will be choosing teaching as a career after college and 74% said that the program helped them foster a more positive view of teaching (CERRA, 2011). The Teacher Cadet website boasts that their program is operating in 34 states, including in Connecticut at New Britain High School (CERRA, 2011).

CERRA in South Carolina also offers a program for middle schools called ProTeam. The program started in 1989 and is currently seeing a resurgence of activity. In 2010-11, 17 schools in South Carolina offered the program and 284 students participated. Of those 284, 139 were "non-white students" (CERRA, 2011). The program curriculum, *DreamQuest* is offered in a one

semester or full year course during middle school. The curriculum includes seven modules: *I Can Self-Reflect, I Can Communicate, I Can Teach Others, I Can Be Different, I Can Set Goals, I Can Make Decisions and I Can Think Positively*. Schools are also encouraged to operate an afterschool club in allow students to participate in “teacher like” activities. (CERRA, 2011)

Similar programs are operated out of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. The office provides funding to school districts to run LEAP (Leadership, Education and Achievement Program) in middle schools and ACE (Academic Commitment to Education) in high schools. The Board of Regents developed curriculum for both programs in 2003 and were piloted during the 2004-05 and 2003-04 school years respectively (Erwin S. , 2003) (Erwin J. R., 2004) . The high school ACE curriculum provides students with information on teaching at the early childhood, elementary, middle and high school levels, including classroom management, classroom set up, lesson planning, ethics and education law as well as reflective practices (Erwin S. , 2003).

Students also participate in internships. The middle school LEAP program focuses on developing leadership skills important in the education field: knowing yourself, relating to others, goal setting, and developing college plans. Students in the middle school program also participate in college visits (Erwin J. R., 2004). According to Goldie Thompson, Coordinator at the Oklahoma State Regents Office, 34% of high school ACE students stated that they plan to be teachers (e-mail 11/23/11).

Today’s Students, Tomorrow’s Teachers or TSTT began in 1994 in New York. The program targets diverse 9<sup>th</sup> grade students to build leadership and college readiness skills and to begin

exploring the teaching profession throughout high school (TSTT, 2010). The program includes job shadowing and internship experiences. Students are also supported with mentoring, SAT prep and college guidance. Students can apply to 22 “partner” colleges and universities (mostly in New York) and once accepted are eligible for a 50% tuition scholarship (TSTT, 2010) .

Support for students continues in college and beyond. Participants attend career development workshops and assistance in obtaining a teaching placement once they complete college.

Participants must commit to teach one year in a “participating” school district after receiving a teaching credential. The program is funded through a variety of corporate and private funders and is guided by a board of directors. Currently, TSTT programs are operating in over 70 high schools in New York, Connecticut (Bassick, Central and Harding high schools in Bridgeport) and Virginia (TSTT, 2010).

According to the TSTT’s 2010 Annual Report, the program has welcomed a high proportion of minorities into the program. Since the program’s onset, 47% of participating students are Black and 32% are Hispanic/Latino (TSTT, 2010). The program touts a higher rate of high school and college graduates than the national rate and also states that 90 % of their participants are teaching after 5 years, compared to 50% nationally (TSTT, 2010).

### **University Programs**

University programs designed to recruit minority teachers typically provide scholarships, mentoring and other supports to minorities in their teacher preparation programs. The College of Education at the University of Central Florida houses the Minority Teacher Recruitment and

Retention program which provides scholarships (up to \$2000 per semester) to full time minority candidates in the teacher education program. Scholarship recipients receive mentoring, participate in monthly workshops, complete 20 hours of community service each semester and must maintain a 2.5 GPA (UCF Minority Teacher Recruitment & Retention Program, 2011).

Similarly, at Western Kentucky University, the Minority Teacher Recruitment Center offers a scholarship for minority students working to obtain teaching certification. The scholarship requires that the recipient agree to teach a semester in a Kentucky school for each semester the scholarship was awarded. The Center also provides Praxis I and II Preparation, resume and interview assistance as well college visits for middle and high schools (Western Kentucky University, 2011).

The Call Me MISTER program out of Clemson University is a partnership between the state's historically black colleges. The program recruits black males to become teachers by providing tuition forgiveness programs, academic support, and mentoring (Call Me MISTER, 2011). The program also provides a conduit for transferring from some two year college to their partner four year schools. Since 2000, 60 men have graduated and are teaching in South Carolina elementary schools. Currently, there are 14 colleges in South Carolina which offer the program where 145 students are participating. The program has also launched in other states: Florida, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Missouri and Georgia (Call Me MISTER, 2011).

On a larger scale, The North Carolina Teaching Fellows is a nationally recognized program which began in 1986 and is funded through the North Carolina General Assembly (North Carolina

Teaching Fellows, 2011). The program recruits upcoming high school graduates for a “custom designed” program during college. Students attend one of seventeen participating colleges in the state, receive a \$6500 annual scholarship, participate in enrichment activities and field experiences in exchange for teaching in North Carolina for four years (NEA, 2009). As of 2010-2011, over 9,800 students had been selected as Teaching Fellows. In 2009-10 over 3,705 of them were teaching in 99 of 100 North Carolina school districts (North Carolina Teaching Fellows, 2011). According to the program about 25% of the 2010 recipients were minorities (North Carolina Teaching Fellows, 2011).

Colleges participating in the Teaching Fellows program must provide a full-time faculty member to serve as Campus Director of the program. The Campus Director must work closely with the Teaching Fellows staff to develop a campus program at the college that meets the goals and expectations of the overarching project; therefore each college’s program differs in its approach to providing programming and coursework in order to meet the needs of their student population (North Carolina Teaching Fellows, 2011). The program also offers enrichment experiences to participants outside of their college programming. Unfortunately, according to their website, program funding is being phased out during the 2011-12 school year. The program plans to maintain its commitment to current students, but is not seeking new applicants at this time (North Carolina Teaching Fellows, 2011).

In 1999, South Carolina replicated the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program. Their program acts as the “next step” for students in the Teacher Cadet Program (see page 2). Seventy-five



percent of fellows in South Carolina were Teacher Cadets in High School (NEA, 2009). In South Carolina, the program is currently offered in 11 colleges and universities in that state and is also funded by state monies. South Carolina's program has an impressive retention rate- 80% of participants are still teaching after working the four years required to repay the scholarship (Garrett, 2011). The program also reports higher program completion rates than traditional teacher preparation programs in the state. Between 2000 and 2006 South Carolina "graduated" 909 students from the Teaching Fellows Program (Garrett, 2011) however information on minority participation is unavailable.

### **Community Colleges**

Many researchers cited Community Colleges as a missing link in the Minority Teacher pipeline (Torres, Santos, & Peck, 2004), (NEA, 2009). According to the American Association of Community Colleges, "*half of the students who receive a baccalaureate degree attend community college in the course of their undergraduate studies* (Community College Trends & Statistics)." The organization states that 531 community colleges in the U.S offer 2 year programs in education (Community College Trends & Statistics). Therefore, it is likely community colleges are a large part of the pipeline for certified teachers. Community Colleges also tend to serve a higher percentage of non-white students than four year schools (Torres, Santos, & Peck, 2004).

What is missing is a smooth pathway for students to continue onto four year schools. In some cases, credits from Community Colleges are not accepted into education degree programs at

four year schools unless an “articulation agreement” is developed between schools (Shkodriani, 2004). Other schools develop “guaranteed admission” agreements with a four year school nearby. According to a 2004 report by ECS, several states have such agreements but there are challenges: many students are not advised of the articulation agreements and so do not take advantage of them; four year universities tend to consider community colleges as competition and do not regard their programs as “high quality” programs; and two year education degree programs cannot not be accredited by NCATE so four year schools do not want to accept their credits (Shkodriani, 2004). The relationship between the two year and four year colleges must be more streamlined to make it easier to navigate and create more flexibility of credit transfer.

Rio Hondo Community College in Whittier, California, offered a program called Project Teach! Its main purpose was to retain students through the teacher pipeline by offering a “sure track” to four year colleges including nearby Whittier College and California State at Fullerton, where students could obtain an undergraduate degree in education (Rio Hondo Project Teach, 2009). Participating students received workshops on education and teaching issues as well as support in transferring and obtaining funding to attend a four year college. This program was funded by a Title V Cooperative Grant beginning in 2003 (Rio Hondo Project Teach, 2009). Unfortunately, the program is no longer operating. The program was considered an exemplar of a “sure track” program that worked directly with other four year institutions to create a seamless transition from community college to a four year college (Learning Point Associates, 2004).

**Non Traditional Paths/Alternate Routes**

Launched in 1989, the Pathways to Teaching program, funded by the DeWitt-Wallace Reader's Digest Fund was nationally recognized in the early 2000's as a model for non-traditional candidates to prepare them to teach in high need schools (Torres, Santos, & Peck, 2004). The program funded over 40 programs throughout the country targeting 4 distinct populations: paraprofessionals, non-certified teachers teaching under emergency certificates, returned Peace Corps volunteers, and middle, high school and college students (Clewell, October 2001). Most of the research on program effectiveness focuses on the first 3 groups or more non-traditional routes.

The Pathways to Teaching grant funded 40 programs. Funded programs varied in terms of curriculum, candidate requirements and funding usage. Participating educational Institutions were not required to develop specialized curriculum, but most did in order to best meet the needs of the nontraditional population that was targeted (Clewell, February 2001). While the teacher preparation programs varied, several themes were found across programs which contributed to their success: curriculum that focuses on diversity and culturally responsive teaching, a strong connection between theory and practice, and innovative instructional practices such as reflection journals, case analysis, and performance assessment (Clewell, October 2001). Many programs reported offering courses in the evenings, on Saturdays or on-site at district locations in order to accommodate paraprofessionals and other school staff (Clewell, October 2001).

Paraprofessionals and non-certified teachers were recruited from the schools and districts employing them and in some cases were identified or nominated by other school staff. This was found to be a particularly important piece of the program. When school and district staff were heavily involved in the recruitment and selection of candidates, candidates reported feeling like the district was vested in their success and the district was more likely to hire candidates once they completed (Clewell, October 2001). Program participants continued to work in their districts and received financial support to obtain teaching credentials and earn a bachelor's or master's degree. A common barrier for paraprofessionals was the loss of incoming during student teaching. Many programs overcame this by providing paid student teaching experiences using a variety of methods (Clewell, October 2001).

While paraprofessionals and non-certified teachers already held positions in classrooms, the program expected returned Peace Corps volunteers to find a school placement as an emergency certified teacher (Clewell, February 2001). This was not always easy. In general, applicants were not officially accepted into the program until they obtained a position, however the program typically assisted applicants with that process. Having all participants working in classrooms while completing the program was considered a key factor to maintaining a connection between classroom theory and practice. In addition to placement in a school district, "fellows" participated in a two year graduate program to obtain a master's degree and teaching credential (Clewell, October 2001).

A wide variety of supports were made available to Pathways participants both during the program and after to ensure a positive transition into the teaching ranks. Prior to starting the program, participants took part in an orientation. Designed to introduce the district and the teacher preparation program to participants, it was especially important for the returned Peace Corps volunteers, as they had limited knowledge of the school district they would be employed in (Clewell, October 2001). During the program, academic advising, tutoring, preparation for certification exams, counseling, mentoring and financial support were made available to participants. After program completion, some programs offered assistance with finding teaching positions (particularly for paraprofessionals) and offered induction services to help ease the transition into teaching. Program alumni were also reported to continue to gather for meetings, professional development and act as mentors to new program participants (Clewell, October 2001).

In terms of outcomes, the Pathways to Teaching Program was evaluated over a six year period beginning in 1994 (Clewell, October 2001). The funding for the evaluation was also provided by the DeWitt-Wallace Reader's Digest Fund. The main collection of data was via surveys completed by program participants, field experience supervisors and school administrators. By the end of the 1999-2000 school year, the program recruited 2,593 participants- more than their original recruitment goal of 2,200 (Clewell, October 2001). The program was effective in recruiting minorities: 47% of participants were African American, 11% were Hispanic and about 2% were Asian American or American Indian (Clewell, October 2001). The vast majority of

minorities came from the paraprofessional and non-certified teacher population; the Peace Corps fellows were overwhelmingly white.

The evaluators, using national data from 2000, argue that the Pathways program increased the minority teacher pool in the U.S. by almost 15% (Clewell, October 2001). Overall, 85% of Peace Corps fellows, 75% of non-certified teachers and 67% of paraprofessionals completed the Pathways to Teaching program. Completion rates for Peace Corps fellows and non-certified teachers were higher; possibly due to the shorter time frame it took them to complete (Clewell, October 2001). Many paraprofessionals still needed to obtain a bachelor's degree and other general education requirements in order to be certified as opposed to the other populations who already had met these requirements. Once participants entered the teaching profession, many had to repay their financial support by working in high need districts. Overall, 84% of completed participants worked in those high need districts (Clewell, October 2001).

Three years after program competition, a follow up survey of participants had a 63 % return rate and revealed that of those who responded, 75% were teaching in a classroom and 13% were working in other educational roles (administrator, resource staff, bilingual teacher, reading recovery, school psychologist, etc.) (Clewell, October 2001). Interestingly, evaluators found that those who originated from the paraprofessional and non-certified teaching population were more likely to remain in teaching than their Peace Corps counterparts. Data from the follow up surveys also indicated that minorities were marginally more likely to stay in

teaching than their non-minority counterparts (Clewell, Evaluation of the Wallace Reader's Digest Fund's Pathways to Teaching Careers Program, October 2001).

In general the research revealed that the programs funded by the Pathways to Teaching initiative were successful in recruiting minority teachers. Their success was attributed to four factors: strong partnerships between university programs and school districts; a rigorous recruitment and selection process for participants; curriculum customized to focus on diverse learners; and providing a strong support system for participants (Clewell, October 2001)

### **Scholarships and Financial Incentives**

In 2003, 19 states offered scholarships/grants and loan forgiveness programs for minority students enrolled in a teacher education program. (Education Commission of the States, 2003)

As noted above many colleges also offer scholarships to minority students in teacher preparation programs. The Pathways to Teaching programs typically covered at least two-thirds of tuition costs for participants (Clewell, October 2001). In fact, every post high school program reviewed for this research provided at least some financial support to minority teacher candidates.

### **University Partnerships**

Many of the above programs would not exist without the partnerships of universities and colleges. The Teacher Cadet Programs require college partnerships since their courses offer college credit and require a college faculty member to support the program. They also

encourage the colleges to participate in additional ways such as providing on-campus visits, and guest speakers (CERRA, 2011). All grantees in the Wallace-DeWitt Pathways to Teaching program were required to create a formal partnership between a district and a university/college teacher education program (Clewell, February 2001) and according to their own evaluation, the partnerships were a key to their success (Clewell, October 2001).

### **Retention & Attrition**

A research report published in 2011 examined where the minority teacher shortage actually exists. As with most of the programs discussed above, the tendency is to believe that the shortage is due to recruitment issues. Using longitudinal data from National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Staffing and School Survey, Ingersoll and May found that the number of minority teachers has actually increased by over 90% in a twenty year period, however their turnover rates are outpacing the rate with which they are hired. At the onset of the 2003-2004 school year, about 47,663 minority teachers entered the profession; at the end of the 2003-04 school year approximately 56,244 minority teachers left the profession. In 2008-09 minority teacher turnover was 24% higher than that of non-minority teachers. This data provides evidence that the minority teacher shortage actually exists because these teachers are not being retained (Ingersoll & May, 2011).

Using responses from the NCES Teacher Follow up Survey, Ingersoll and May found that the reason for the high turnover of minority teachers is attributed to organizational and school conditions (Ingersoll & May, 2011). While over half of minority teachers accept positions in



high need, high minority, urban or rural districts where working conditions are often more difficult, the type of district (urban, high poverty, etc.) was not strongly related to why minority teachers leave. The most strongly related reasons for leaving were lack of “instructional autonomy” and “level of faculty decision making influence within the school” (Ingersoll & May, 2011). The findings of this recent research suggest investigation of ways to encourage more collaboration in schools and ways to encourage minority teachers to stay in the profession.

Using the 1980 NCES High School and Beyond Survey, Vegas, Murnane and Willet found that minorities had higher rates of attrition throughout the teacher pipeline—from sophomores in high school through graduation, college and up to entry into the teaching profession. (Torres, Santos, & Peck, 2004). Once minority students completed a four year degree, they were much more likely to enter the teaching profession (Torres, Santos, & Peck, 2004).

### **Other Barriers related to Recruitment**

There is a body of research that attributes some of the issues related to the minority teacher shortage on the minorities’ perceptions of career itself, preparation programs’ lack of a multi-culturally infused curriculum and a lack of minority mentors and other supports. Some studies have suggested that minorities did not feel valued by their teacher preparation program or felt like “just a number” (Torres, Santos, & Peck, 2004). Minority teacher candidates also reported that overall coursework was “mono cultural” or that multi-cultural perspectives were discussed in one particular class, but not embedded throughout the program. In addition to curriculum, teacher preparation programs also lack mentors with diverse backgrounds (Torres, Santos, &

Peck, 2004). Support, including mentoring, was often cited in research as being a key piece in recruiting minority teachers. Most colleges and universities have a shortage of minority faculty and mentors to work with minority students and it is generally thought that mentees search for similarities when seeking out mentors (Torres, Santos, & Peck, 2004).

Evidence that minorities do not always have a favorable view of a teaching career stems from their experiences as a student in school or negative cultural (and family) perceptions of teaching as a career (Ramirez, 2011) (Torres, Santos, & Peck, 2004). Surveys of college and high school students have revealed that inadequate salary also influences young people's decision to enter teaching (Ramirez, 2011). Other research points to perceived racism and fear of being perceived negatively by other teachers as reasons why minority college students did not choose teaching as a career. (Torres, Santos, & Peck, 2004).

Educator certification exams are also seen as a barrier to aspiring minority teachers (Torres, Santos, & Peck, 2004) (Ramirez, 2011). The rationale for this is that during their K-12 education, minority students often receive an inferior education compared to non-minorities; therefore minorities are not as well prepared for these exams as other students (Torres, Santos, & Peck, 2004). ETS found staggering gaps in pass rates between minorities and non-minority Praxis I and II tests. As an example, the gap between African-American and Caucasian pass rates on Praxis I was 41.4 % in math and 40.8% in reading (Tyler, 2011). Another interesting find is that a higher percentage of minority Praxis I test takers take the assessment after obtaining a

Bachelor's degree or higher (Tyler, 2011), suggesting that the score gaps may be due to the time elapsed since last in school and that teaching may be a second career for many minorities.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the research reviewed, programs for developing a successful minority teacher pipeline require several key elements. First, programs in middle or high school should be focused on changing the perception some students have of teaching, provide early field work experiences, mentoring, have a strong partnership with a local community college or university and support students with support and developing college readiness skills. Secondly, college programs must provide financial assistance, develop pathways from a two year college, provide a diverse pool of mentors, assist with test preparation and create a multi-culturally rich curriculum and field experiences. Lastly, alternate route programs should work to attract populations who have experience working with diverse children, provide financial assistance, create strong relationships with local colleges and school districts, develop multiple ways to mentor and support, and allow for flexibility in the scheduling and completion of courses requirements. In terms of retention, school districts need to look at how they can keep minority teachers by providing opportunities for creativity and autonomy in the classroom as well as building a school culture that welcomes diverse staff.

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