

Black Teacher Pushout Ends Now! Hire More Black Teachers in our Schools.

Dear School Board:

The Caucus of Working Educators is writing this letter in support the hiring of more Black Educators in Philadelphia public schools.

The public school student population in Philadelphia, which includes about 280,000 students total in both District and charter schools, is 53% Black/African-American, and yet only about 25% (2015 collection) of all teachers in the School District of Philadelphia are Black, and less than 5% are Black men. These numbers demonstrate stark disparities between the identities and lived experiences of our students in comparison to that of our teachers, and the need for the District to prioritize this moving forward.

According to the 2015 report, “The State of Teacher Diversity in American Education,” between 2001 and 2012, the percentage of Black teachers in Philadelphia public schools dropped 18.5%, and this was during a period when the teaching force overall grew by 13% (*The Public School Notebook*, 2015). The need for black teachers in Philadelphia schools is part of a national crisis; Black teachers make up less than 7% of the United States teaching force, and about 80% of all public teachers are white. In 2015, Philadelphia had one of the largest disparities nationwide between the racial makeup of teachers in comparison to the makeup of the student body: only 31% of teachers were people of color, in comparison to 86% of students (*The Public School Notebook*, 2015). Hiring Black teachers in the School District of Philadelphia has also decreased over the past two years, from about 20% in 2016-17 to about 17% in 2017-2018. We believe that this demand to hire more black educators is imperative for racial and social justice in our city.

Our public schools are not serving Black students in many ways, and we can see this in the disparities in graduation rates, which are partially due to the lack of Black educators in our classrooms. “Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, and Papageorge demonstrate that if a black male student has at least one black teacher in the third, fourth, or fifth grade, he is significantly less likely to dropout of high school and more likely to aspire to attend a four-year college” (Brookings, 2018). The benefits of having more Black teachers in the classroom include higher expectations for students, less unconscious and conscious bias, better school climate, and positive academic and non-academic outcomes for all students, regardless of race and ethnicity.

There are a variety of initiatives underway designed to create pathways for Black educators to enter the profession. In Boston, the Boston Public School High School to Teacher Program provides a viable pathway for students from Boston Public Schools to develop an interest in teaching during high school, study education during college and graduate school, and then return to teach in BPS. Almost 90% of the participants in this program are Black or Latinx. In Philadelphia, The Fellowship: Black Male Educators for Social Justice specifically addresses the need for more Black male teachers in Philadelphia public schools, and has set a goal of tripling the number of Black male teachers in Philadelphia by 2025. The School District of Philadelphia is a partner in this organization, and although this is a good start, there is still more work to be done.

The Caucus of Working Educators proposes the following additional strategies to the School District of Philadelphia:

- **Collect racial data, including the number of black educators, from District and Charter schools and make it publicly available each year.** The racial data for teachers has not been actively collected since the 2012-13 school year, and we will have no way of knowing whether we are making progress if there is no publicly available data on the issue.
- **Require charter school applications to include a plan for hiring and retaining Black educators.**
- **Implement more robust recruiting techniques.** This should include, but not be limited to: developing partnerships with local universities and HBCUs, identifying funding for college students who want to be teachers, and creating clear and accessible pathways for those who have already earned a degree but need to obtain their teaching certificate. Below are some specific ways that this should happen:
 - Reinstatement of the educational opportunities previously available to school aides to earn a bachelor's degree in order to provide a pathway for school aides to become certified teachers.
 - Establish a partnership with PA Student Power to **support the legislation currently in Harrisburg for debt-free college for all (also known as the Pennsylvania Promise)**, in order to provide access to higher education for more students in Pennsylvania.

- Develop partnerships with local foundations to provide scholarships and grants specifically for Black students to pursue teacher certification.
- Establish relationships with area **teacher education programs**, and provide incentives for veteran teachers of color in Philadelphia to work as part-time faculty for local teacher certification programs in order to **provide mentorship to the next generation of teachers of color.**

The organizations and individuals below strongly support the demand to hire more black educators in Philadelphia using the strategies listed above. The Caucus of Working Educators is willing to work with the School District of Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Department of Education in order to build a body of teachers who more closely reflect the experiences and identities of the students we serve.

1. Caucus of Working Educators
2. Faculty and Staff Federation and Racial Justice Caucus at CCP
3. Philly Socialists
4. Parents United
5. Black Lives Matter Philly
6. Philadelphia Black History Collaborative
7. Philadelphia Student Union
8. Tuesdays with Toomey
9. 215 Peoples Alliance
10. Pennsylvania Student Power Network
11. The Fellowship: Black Male Educators for Social Justice
12. GET UP at Penn
13. Concerned Citizens for Change (17th Ward)
14. Building Anti-Racist White Educators (BAR-WE)
15. Teacher Action Group