OECD Initial Teacher Preparation study

Promising practices

Addressing teacher diversity in the United States through NYC Men Teach

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Teacher education pathway category(ies): Attracting
Stakeholder category(ies): teacher; teacher educator
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This case study describes a “Promising practice” drawn from an OECD review of Initial Teacher Preparation in the United States from 25-28 October 2016.

The OECD Review Team identified a number of “Promising practices” in each country. These practices may not be widespread or representative, but seen in the context of other challenges, they represent a strength or opportunity to improve the country’s initial teacher preparation system – and for other countries to learn from them.

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Promising practice 2.
Addressing teacher diversity in the United States through
NYC Men Teach

Context

The United States has a diverse population in terms of race and ethnicity. However, this diversity is not fully reflected in the teaching population (Table 1). In the 2011-12 school year, 44% of all elementary and secondary students were “minority” or “students of colour”, defined (interchangeably) by the American Census as Blacks, Hispanics, American Indians, Asians and Pacific Islanders, compared to only 17% of all elementary and secondary teachers (Bond et al., 2015[1]). Even though the proportion of minority teachers has been steadily increasing over time, the diversity gap between students and teachers is widening as the growth of minority students’ population is expanding more rapidly.

Table 1. Trends in student and teacher population in the United States, by race and ethnicity (1987-2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1987-88 School Year</th>
<th>1990-91 School Year</th>
<th>1993-94 School Year</th>
<th>1999-00 School Year</th>
<th>2003-04 School Year</th>
<th>2007-08 School Year</th>
<th>2011-12 School Year</th>
<th>% Increase, 1987-88 to 2011-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minority population (%)</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total student enrollment</td>
<td>45 220 953</td>
<td>44 777 577</td>
<td>46 592 207</td>
<td>50 629 075</td>
<td>52 375 110</td>
<td>53 644 872</td>
<td>53 988 330</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic students (total)</td>
<td>31 641 098</td>
<td>31 213 142</td>
<td>31 895 394</td>
<td>32 700 441</td>
<td>32 419 640</td>
<td>31 864 127</td>
<td>30 164 827</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority students (total)</td>
<td>12 335 372</td>
<td>13 564 435</td>
<td>14 696 813</td>
<td>17 928 634</td>
<td>19 965 470</td>
<td>21 780 745</td>
<td>23 825 612</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority students (%)</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total teachers</td>
<td>2 630 335</td>
<td>2 915 774</td>
<td>2 939 659</td>
<td>3 451 316</td>
<td>3 717 998</td>
<td>3 804 065</td>
<td>3 850 058</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic teachers (total)</td>
<td>2 303 094</td>
<td>2 542 720</td>
<td>2 584 416</td>
<td>2 933 591</td>
<td>3 113 249</td>
<td>3 252 234</td>
<td>3 183 837</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority teachers (total)</td>
<td>327 241</td>
<td>373 054</td>
<td>375 243</td>
<td>517 725</td>
<td>604 749</td>
<td>641 830</td>
<td>666 221</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority teachers (%)</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the employment of minority teachers has increased, these teachers are more likely to work in “hard-to-staff” schools, meaning high-poverty or high-minority schools. Researchers suggest that less desirable working conditions in these schools might have a negative impact on turnover rates, in spite of stimulating recruitment efforts. They show evidence that teachers reflecting the full diversity of the nation’s population would be beneficial not only for minority students but for all students (Bond et al., 2015[1]).

What does NYC Men Teach entail?

NYC Men Teach is a programme based in New York City seeking to diversify the teaching workforce by recruiting and supporting teachers of colour. Since its launch in 2015 and in conjunction with Mayor Bill de Blasio’s NYC Young Men Initiative, the programme has focused on recruiting an additional 1 000 men of colour into New York City’s diverse classrooms.

The programme introduces multiple pathways towards teacher certification:

- A traditional certification programme partnered with the City University of New York
- An alternative certification programme placing candidates directly into a school setting with salary and full benefits, and
- Village Pathway Program for those who are not yet ready to commit to full-time certification programmes. Through a Reciprocity Support Program, it assists the New York State certification application process for certified teachers’ who already obtained their credentials from other states. Counsellors provide support on the teacher candidates’ hiring process such as certification exam practice sessions, advice on résumé and interview, etc.

The programme provides further support through mentor groups, professional development programmes and a hub school network.

Mentor groups

NYC Men Teach provides early career support for beginning teachers through mentoring. Every month, a mentor meets a group of new teachers in person for an hour and a half. Mentors give advice and attend an array of professional development and community building events with their mentees. New teachers are encouraged to reach out to their mentor and group members when they wish. Mentors participate in a Mentor Peer Group and share mentoring strategies and challenges. The Department of Education provides financial support for mentor teachers at a public school on a per-session basis.

Professional development programmes

NYC Men Teach organises professional development programmes to support beginning teachers on a variety of topics, including lesson planning sessions, workshops and panel discussions. Equity and social justice issues are embedded in most aspects of the programmes. Furthermore, professional development programmes focus on culturally responsive education, restorative practices, and mastery-based learning throughout the school year to provide spaces to discuss issues around race, gender and ethnicity.
**Hub School Network**

The NYC Men Teach Hub School Network seeks to build wider school partnerships, thereby promoting the diversity of New York City. Schools participating in the Network select potential mentors who can share their experience as a male teacher and/or experience supporting male teachers of colour. The training sites are also expected to contribute to professional development sessions, foster a positive school culture, open their doors to NYC Men Teach participants and visitors, and consider NYC Men Teach new teachers through NYC Men Teach.

**Why is it a strength?**

The OECD Review Team in its visit to the United States from 25-28 October 2016 concluded that the NYC Men Teach initiative was a strength in that it:

- **Addresses the general issue of lack of workforce diversity with regard to candidates of colour and male candidates.** NYC Men Teach has developed effective strategies to attract and engage male educators in colour. By empowering underrepresented teaching population in public schools, the initiative increases diversity and social connectivity. The programme offers a range of support for individuals so that these teachers can remain in their schools.
- **Forges strong partnerships** with various institutions including the NYC Department of Education, universities, community based organisations, and local schools. It created a healthy community to better provide employment and support opportunities for aspiring teachers of colour.
- **Addresses a number of challenges along the teacher education continuum** such as improving access to and attractiveness of the profession; and providing support for teachers from entry into ITE programmes to initial entry into the profession and onwards.

**How could it be improved?**

The OECD Review Team also noted that:

- **Co-operation at scale is difficult.** It may be challenging to spread this promising model across states and regions. About USD 16 million has been invested into the initiative; however, this level of commitment has been rare in many regions without strong leadership and capacity to engage underrepresented groups of the society.

**For more information**

