A Call to Action:
Diversifying the Teacher Education Workforce,
a Look at One State's Efforts

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Abstract

Over the last few years, much attention has been focused on the nationwide teacher shortage. As teachers begin to retire in record numbers, and the number of students entering teacher education majors continues to decline, concern around the teacher shortage heightens (US Dept. of Ed., 2016). The numbers are even more dire when looking at Teachers of Color entering the profession (US Dept. of Ed., 2016). To address this TOC shortage, Pennsylvania's Department of Education called for Institutions of Higher Education to create programs aimed at attracting and retaining students of color in their teacher education programs. The Aspiring to Educate (A2E) program was Pennsylvania's intentional attempt to diversify the teacher workforce. This

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paper describes the work of three Black educators, as they examine their positionality and work independently and collectively to answer PA's call to action through the implementation of start-up Grow Your Own programs.

Key words: teacher education, teacher workforce, teacher education pipeline, Grow Your Own (GYO), teachers of Color, reflexivity, positionality, Black teacher pipeline

Introduction

Research shows that diversity in schools, including racial diversity among teachers, can provide significant benefits to students (United States Department of Education, [US Dept. of Ed.] 2016, 2023; Stohr et al., 2018). When students of color have teachers of color, they are more likely to attend college and more likely to be held to higher expectations. Increasing the diversity in the teacher workforce not only benefits students of color, but their White counterparts also have notable benefits (Stohr et al., 2018; Swisher, 2023). There is a need for teacher education programs to produce quality teacher candidates of color that are prepared to enter the teacher workforce.

In 2016, the United States Department of Education published a report on the *State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce*. This report highlighted the immediate need to increase diversity in our nation's teacher population and placed the focus on the issue. While the overall number of teachers of color has seen a slight increase, teachers of color in our nation's schools are not representative of the populations of students of color (US Dept. of Ed., 2016, 2023). A closer look at the teacher of color numbers shows that while overall there is a slight growth, the numbers for Black teachers have declined (US Dept. of Ed., 2016, 2023; Swisher, 2023).

When looking at the data by state, Pennsylvania's data points to a huge lag in the number of teachers of color in the classroom. According to the Education Trust Report (2018-2019) in the state of Pennsylvania, 53% of schools report having no teachers of color and 43.3% of students in schools have no teachers of color (2018-2019). Some 93.6% of teachers in the state of Pennsylvania are White, while more than 35% of the students are students of color. "Without question, when the majority of students in public schools are students of color and only 18 percent of our nation's teachers are teachers of color we have an urgent need to act" (US Dept. of Ed., 2016). Students of color are expected to make up 56 percent of the student population by 2024, the elementary and secondary educator workforce is still overwhelmingly White" (US

Dept of Ed., 2016). This report highlighted the critical need to have teachers of color in our nation's classrooms.

There was a time when teacher education was an attractive option for middle class Black college bound students. In the 1950s one-half the African American professionals in the U.S. were teachers (Lash & Ratcliffe, 2014). Teaching was a profession often selected by Blacks with a college background. In recent years, there has been an overall decline in students moving into teacher education, and more noticeably a decline among teachers of color more specifically Black teachers. According to Lash and Ratcliffe (2014), "[b]etween 1971 and 1986 the percentage of African American educators declined from 8.1% to 6.9%" (Foster, 1996, p. 329). There are many factors that have led to less students of color entering the teaching profession. Students have more options than in the past. They are seeing themselves in varying majors across our universities and colleges. While this is progress, it does serve to tap the education majors.

Although this article does not fully address this historic point, to understand the contemporary lack of Black teachers and Black students who are pursuing education degrees, it is imperative that we explore the profound racism and professional obstacles that Black educators endured, post *Brown vs. Board of Education* (Stewart, 2013; Tillman, 2004). Specifically, as Hudson and Holmes (1994) noted:

> In 1954, the year of the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, approximately 82,000 African American teachers were responsible for the education of the nation's two million African American public-school students. A decade later, over 38,000 Black teachers and administrators had lost their positions in 17 southern and border states. Between 1975 and 1985, the number of students majoring in education declined by 66% and another 21,515 Black teachers lost their jobs between 1984 and 1989. (p. 388)

Relatedly, contemporary efforts to diversify the teaching profession also need to understand the larger historical narrative for Black educators. It is crucial to acknowledge the parallels between the obstacles encountered in EC-Pre-K and higher education, where a significant majority of faculty members are of Caucasian descent. There is also a shortage of Black faculty with 27% of faculty members representing people of color, with less than 6% faculty Black (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). This issue deserves attention, especially considering the presence of Black faculty members who are actively involved in reshaping our teacher preparation programs, both in Pennsylvania and beyond. These efforts take place within an environment

where the majority of our colleagues are white, and our institutions are predominantly white institutions (PWIs).

Not only are the percentage of teachers of color entering the teaching profession not representative of the students of color in our classrooms, but many are also leaving the profession at a higher rate than their White counterparts (Heubeck, 2020). Teachers of color have noted common experiences of microaggressions and racial tensions in many schools which have long term impacts on teacher retention (Mawhinney & Rinke, 2019). In addition, TOC are often in higher concentrations in higher poverty schools resulting in more stressful situations which impact teacher retention. The COVID-19 pandemic hit Black and Brown communities hardest with children and families suffering from the effects of COVID and schools in low-income areas being challenged by the sudden switch in modality, the lack of access to technology and internet, and the gap in learning since the pandemic (Coleman-King et al., 2023). These factors add to teachers of color, more specifically Black teachers, leaving the classroom at a faster rate than their White counterparts post pandemic (Coleman-King et al., 2023).

We are three Black educators who, at the time of the project, were all working at PWIs. While at these institutions, we were working to: bring awareness to the need for educators of color, dismantle structural inequities in our Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs), and diversify the teacher educator workforce. Our positionality came with a level of understanding and connectedness that guided our work.

This paper examines Pennsylvania's collective efforts to diversify the teacher workforce, and it takes a closer look at the reflexive work of three Black educators as they create Grow Your Own programs in an effort to support sustainable diversity teacher education pipelines.

Background

Teacher of Color Shortage

Over the last few years, more media attention is being brought to the teacher shortage happening across the nation in our K-12 schools. Parallel to those conversations are the discussions surrounding the lack of diversity in the teacher workforce. As the numbers of students of color in K-12 classrooms continue to rise, the number of teachers of color has not kept up with the student diversity in the classroom, but in some cases the number of teachers of color has declined (Swisher, 2023; US Dept. of Ed, 2016). In addition to the need for teachers of color, to keep up with student populations, there is a need for multilingual teachers (Swisher, 2023). This TOC shortage has implications for all students.

Impact of Teachers of Color

When students have teachers of color there are clear and documented benefits. Regardless of racial background, all students benefit from having a teacher of color, however, the benefits for students of color are magnified (Carver-Thomas, 2018; US Dept. of Ed., 2016). Students of color generally perform better in school when they are taught by a teacher of color at some point in their academic career (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Ingersoll & May 2009).

> Teachers of color are more likely to (1) have high expectations for students of color (as measured by higher numbers of referrals to gifted programs), (2) confront issues of racism, (3) serve as advocates and social brokers, and (4) develop more trusting relationships with students, particularly with those with whom they share a cultural background. (US Dept. of Ed., 2016)

Despite the clear benefits, every state has a disproportionately low number of teachers of color with larger disparities typically in more diverse regions (Carver-Thomas, 2018; US Dept. of Ed., 2016).

Barriers and Hidden Challenges in the Teacher Education Pipeline

At the high school level, high school students report that they are not encouraged to enter into the teaching profession (Swisher, 2023). This coupled with negative school experiences can lead to students of color not entering the teaching profession (Swisher, 2023).

Teacher education programs have both obvious and hidden barriers to program completion and program success. The certification testing requirements serve as a challenge to some students. Students are required to take and pass the Praxis Basic Skills exam as well as the content area exams for their particular program of study. Students of color pass the licensure exams at a much lower rate than their White counterparts (Daniels, 2022). While the difficulty in passing the exams is frequently discussed, what is not discussed is the cost of testing. The financial cost of testing is often a hidden cost that may be overlooked as a barrier to teacher education. Teacher education majors are required to obtain clearances in order to engage in field experiences and student teacher internships. Many programs require child abuse clearances, fingerprinting and FBI clearances along with tuberculosis (TB) testing. Costs also come with obtaining clearances.

Some teacher education programs are rich with field experiences. Field experiences can enrich a program and give preservice teachers an opportunity to have hands-on experiences in teaching and work-

ing with children. The students are often expected to have their own transportation to and from these schools. The lack of transportation and costs associated with it frequently impacts students of color and students from a lower SES at a higher rate.

The rising cost of a college degree, coupled with low earning potential for graduating teachers, leave graduating teacher education candidates with a profession that is less attractive that other college majors (Daniels, 2022).

Another significant challenge to recruiting students of color into the major ironically is the lack of students of color in the major. Many teacher education programs lack diversity. With very few students of color and faculty of color in teacher education programs, incoming teacher candidates may not feel welcome or a sense of belonging in teacher education programs. The lack of faculty of color in education programs can also serve as a barrier to recruiting and retaining a more diverse body of students in teacher education programs.

Frameworks

Reflexivity and Positionality. The need to diversify the teacher educator pipeline has been magnified over the last few years as data reports the critical underrepresentation of teachers of color in our nation's classroom. This is especially true as it relates to Black teachers. As three Black educators in Pennsylvania, engaged in diversifying the teacher educator pipeline, reflexivity allows us to identify what we are bringing to the work and how that impacts our decisions and choices. Reflexivity generally suggests an awareness that the researcher's background influences the research (Probst, 2015). Reflexivity guides us to identify our positionality.

Positionality describes an individual's view on the world and the position that one adopts as they take on a research task. The individual's worldview concerns ontological (an individual's beliefs about the nature of social reality and what is knowable about the world) and epistemological assumptions (an individual's beliefs about the nature of knowledge) (Holmes, 2020). "These are colored by an individual's values and beliefs that are shaped by their political allegiance, religious faith, gender, sexuality, historical and geographical location, ethnicity, race, social class, and status, (dis) abilities and so on" (Holmes, 2020, p. 2). Positionality reflects the position that the research adopts. Self-reflection and reflexivity (looking inward to identify one's standpoint) are necessary in allowing a researcher to identify their positionality. "Reflexivity is the concept that researchers should acknowledge

and disclose themselves in their research, seeking to understand their part in it, or influence on it" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 359).

Grow Your Own Models. The work discussed in this paper has a foundation based in Grow Your Own (GYO) models. GYO frameworks are designed to recruit, prepare, and place community members in schools in their communities. These programs partner with Institutions of Higher Education to create programming geared at preparing and supporting community members through program completion (Gist, 2022). "Grow Your Own programs, developed in partnership between university-based teacher education programs and local high schools, encourage high school students to consider becoming a teacher" (Texas Comprehensive Center, 2018, p. 3).

Institutions create viable pipelines and pathways in an attempt to increase teacher diversity in our nation's schools through homegrown Grow Your Own Programs. Grow Your Own Programs are not new but are now being re-envisioned to support the teacher diversity efforts in our nation. There are many different models of Grow Your Own (GYO) programs; community leader, paraprofessional, and high school pipeline programs (Gist, 2019). Homegrown pathways to the teaching profession often enable long time school community workers, parents, and paraprofessionals to enter the teaching profession (Gist et al., 2019).

Community Cultural Wealth Model. Recognizing that TOC that have strong cultural and linguistic connections with their students tend to build stronger relationships (Gist et al., 2019), the Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) model frames the GYO recruitment models discussed in this paper. Dr. Tara J. Yasso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model recognizes the cultural capital that students of color bring with them to college. Community Cultural Wealth Model examines six forms of cultural capital that students of color bring with them to college; aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance (DaGraca & Dougherty, 2015; Yosso, 2005). These forms of cultural wealth are appreciated and embedded into college programming in an effort to build on diverse students' strengths. Drawing from the local communities, the GYO programs discussed in this paper focus on the pre-collegiate recruitment efforts as well as recruitment efforts from the school community.

The Call to Action:
Diversity as an Imperative for Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE)

Pennsylvania has one of the highest disparity rates between students and teachers of color in the Nation (Stohr et al., 2018; US Dept.

of Ed., 2016). The data that highlights the importance of educators of color has been meaningful. Having one Black teacher in elementary school increases a Black child's graduation rate by 13% and the probability that they will go to college by 19% (Gershenson et al., 2022). With such data concerning Black achievement, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) could not ignore the need for teachers of color. Sharif El-Mekki, a long-time proponent of diversity in education, had advocated for diversity in schools for more than a decade before the department took notice of the crisis. And, by the time Pennsylvania's Department of Education recognized, in 2019, and took steps toward addressing the need for educators of color, nearly half of all school districts in Pennsylvania had zero teachers of color. Furthermore, over 109,102 students of color and 521, 422 white students were enrolled in schools with zero teachers of color (Shaw-Amoah et al., 2020).

The Pennsylvania Department of Education was partially responding to this diversity crisis when it decided to launch the Aspiring to Educate Program (A2E) in 2019. They needed a program that would allow them to symbolically kill two birds with one stone. On the one hand, they needed a strategy to address the overall teacher shortage that was plaguing not only Pennsylvania but the entire nation. While on the other hand, they needed an initiative that specifically allowed them to address the challenge of educator diversity—That program was Aspiring to Educate (A2E). The program's premise rested on the idea of collective action, common agenda, and short-term outcomes. The strategy was to fund six institutions of higher education (IHE's), and the Center for Black Educator Development (CBED) in Philadelphia. Each of these institutions would work together to develop specific tools that would allow them to not only recruit students from local school districts but also retain and support them as they move through the teacher preparation pipeline.

Aspiring to Educate (A2E): One Approach to the Problem

When the A2E program was developed as a GYO initiative, there were no other nationwide models for addressing educator diversity in the country or at least none with a proven track record. Many states and organizations were in the early stages of developing state-led initiatives, so PDE had no specific model to emulate. Therefore, they developed a program that paired culturally relevant and sustaining education (CRSE) approaches to diversity while using a collective approach to address the problem. In their 2021 Report, Research for Ac-

tion (RFA, 2021) captured the milestones, successes, and challenges of the A2E program. The report provides an opportunity to see what it was like to tackle a large-scale problem through a collective approach.

The A2E program had three unique categories, each of which centered on three specific demographic groups—youth from local school districts, adults who were already working in education but needed to move toward certification, and post-baccalaureate and paraprofessionals who were closer to entering the pipeline. Each funded institution and the CBED focused on one area and worked together to move individuals toward completion. Below is a description of each of these areas and the individuals served.

Youth Apprenticeship for Aspiring Educators. Under the youth pre-apprenticeship model, students would begin the A2E program during their junior year of high school with a path into a partnering institution of higher education (IHE), that is prepared to offer them the support they need to effectively complete the program. Under this model, students would enroll in a series of dual enrollment courses with upwards of 30 credits available, putting them ahead once they are officially admitted to an IHE.

◆ Juniors and Seniors from the School District of Philadelphia (SDP).

◆ Students must maintain satisfactory academic progress.

Adult Apprenticeship for Aspiring Educators. Under the adult apprenticeship model, students who meet satisfactory academic requirements and have at least 30 credit hours that count toward a teacher certification program can enroll and will be given hiring priority and financial support (contingent upon multiple funding sources) throughout the duration of the program. Adults who qualify for this program include Youth Apprenticeship program completers, SDP teacher apprentices, and individuals in good academic standing.

◆ Youth Apprenticeship program completers.

◆ Individuals working as teacher apprentices at SDP.

◆ Students who have at least 30 hours of credits that count toward the teacher certification program.

◆ Students who meet satisfactory academic progress requirements.

Post Baccalaureate and Continued Development for Aspiring Educators. The A2E program also considers non-traditional candidates who may have already earned a bachelor's degree and are

interested in becoming teachers. These post-baccalaureate candidates can enter the program once they meet the satisfactory program requirements and are given the same benefits of other adult candidates. Such benefits include (but are not limited to) hiring priority by the local school district, mentorship, financial incentives, and scholarship possibilities.

  ◆ Adult Apprenticeship program completers.

  ◆ Students who meet satisfactory academic progress requirements.

  ◆ Students who have completed a BA.

Collective Impact:
The Common Agenda

To address educator diversity and the lack of culturally relevant and sustaining educators in Pennsylvania, PDE used a collective impact approach. When A2E began, they didn't name it collective impact. Still, according to Kania and Kramer, (2011), collective impact "requires many different players to change their behavior to solve a complex problem" (p. 38), and that's what they were doing. For the first time in Pennsylvania, the Department of Education was offering grants to institutions in Pennsylvania for them to work together to create collective outputs. The grant to each of the six institutions and the CBED rested on their ability to develop toolkits that addressed, Retention, Recruitment, Mentorship, & Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education (CRSE). The work to develop the toolkits was important because as individual institutions were engaged in their own version of A2E, they could use and share best practices in the toolkits. The funded institutions were Arcadia University, Cabrini University, Cheyney University (the oldest HBCU in the country), Drexel University, Temple University, West Chester University & the Center for Black Educator Development.

While A2E found great success in its pilot year, COVID-19 presented grantees with challenges as they began their programs. The funded institutions had to pivot significantly to meet the needs of learners during the pandemic. However, while COVID-19 changed the dynamics and direction of each program, it allowed us to see more explicitly how diverse communities and schools were severely underserved. This mobilized and motivated not only the funded institutions but many institutions across the Commonwealth to collective action. Consequently, by the time the grant period had ended, A2E had morphed into something bigger than anything PDE had imagined; it had become the

Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium (PEDC). Furthermore, when the grant period ended, PEDC became an independent entity no longer owned by the Department of Education. The growth of the collective work, which began under A2E, was bolstered during the pandemic and continues today. Kania & Kramer, (2011), posit that,

…There is scant evidence that isolated initiatives are the best way to solve many social problems in today's complex and interdependent world. No single organization is responsible for any major social problem, nor can any single organization cure it. (p. 38-39)

Consequently, we work together to address challenges that cannot be solved by any individual organization—including PDE. Today, our common agenda continues to be workforce diversity, culturally relevant and sustaining education and education systems in Pennsylvania. While this goal may be perceived as only relevant to diverse learners and educators, this is in service to all students of every background in Pennsylvania and beyond (see Figure 1).

Two Pennsylvania Programs

Six institutions of higher education and the Center for Black Educator Development were funded in this call from the Pennsylvania

Figure 1
Aspiring to Educate Framework
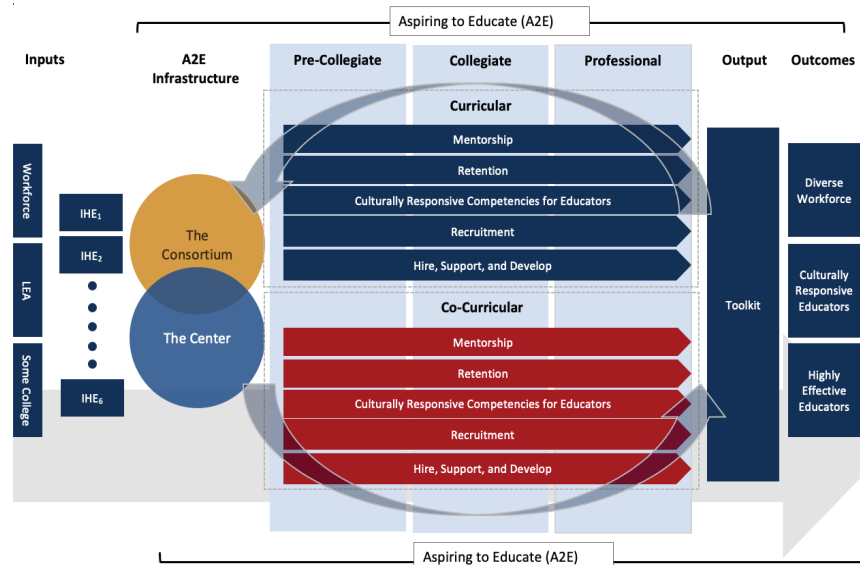
Department of Education Aspiring to Educate Grant. This paper ex-
amines two of the IHE's programs that were funded, one from a mid/
large-sized public institution and the other a smaller private insti-
tution. As Black educators in predominantly White spaces we were
intentionally reflexive while planning and carrying out these teacher
educator pipeline projects. How does our identity drive and inform our
work as we create programming to diversify the teacher pipeline? The
self-questioning led to the creation of programs that were culturally
responsive and that focused on recognizing the cultural capital that
students brought to the table. For the purposes of this article, the two
universities will be referred to as University I (the public institution)
and University II (the private institution). IRB was not needed for the
purposes of this article. This article is a program review.

Program 1:
Multicultural Teacher Education Early Pathways at a Public Institution

University I is a mid-large sized public research university located
in Southeastern PA, approximately 20 miles from Philadelphia. Uni-
versity I began as a normal school educating teachers and is accredited
by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and classified
among R2: Doctoral Universities, as a High research activity. With
17,719 undergraduate and graduate students as of 2019, it is the larg-
est of the 10 state-owned universities belonging to the Pennsylvania
State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) and the sixth largest uni-
versity in Pennsylvania. It also maintains a Center City Philadelphia
satellite campus on Market Street. University I has seven academic
colleges: College of Arts and Humanities, College of Health Sciences,
College of Business and Public Management, College of the Science
and Mathematics, College of Education and Social Work, University
College, and Wells School of Music.

While the public state IHE has a large number of education ma-
jors, they, like most EPP's, have numbers of Students of Color that are
not representative of the population. The Pennsylvania Department of
Education reached out to the EPP's teacher education program about
the Aspiring to Educate Program and the intention of creating a part-
nership.

Planning: Program Description and Purpose. The initial in-
tent was to begin working with high school students beginning their
first year of high school. Parkway West was a Career and Technical Ed-
ucation (CTE) high school in Philadelphia. The student body was over
90% Black. Students enrolled in the Early Childhood program were

targeted to participate in this program as they had already expressed an interest in teaching. The intent was to begin with first year high school students and partner with them through their matriculation in high school. However, the first inaugural/pilot year the program began with 11th graders. Because the grant period was only for three years, it made sense to start with the juniors. As rising seniors, it seemed critical to begin the program with them as they begin to embark on their final year leading to college. The piloted teacher pipeline program was divided into 3 phases.

In phase 1, University I partnered with the high school to provide an all-day *Why Teach—Teacher Education Symposium* where students visited the college campus to learn more about college enrollment and teacher education programs. This program went a little further than the typical high school student college visit, providing the 11th graders with workshops on financial aid, the college admissions process, introduction to teacher education programs and majors, a Black male educator panel, and conversations and mentoring with current students of color in teacher education majors.

Phase II had selected rising seniors from a High School in Philadelphia were invited to participate in a summer dual enrollment program which focused on mentorship, basic skills prep, and other college readiness activities, social justice, and a teacher education introduction course. If additional funding was obtained, during their senior years, these students would have an opportunity to participate in two more dual enrollment courses, giving them a total of 9 college credits that will count toward a teacher education program. Students will be supported as they apply to the University I's teacher education programs and complete their required FAFSA. The goal was for ten summer dual enrollment students, once accepted into University I for fall 2021, to receive financial assistance to supplement state and federal grants to cover tuition costs at University I. If accepted into University I following graduation, all students from the Teacher Education Academy will receive intentional advising and academic support throughout their time at the university.

Phase III consisted of support and mentoring for students in their senior year. Students continued with SAT prep and helped with the college application process. This phase consisted of another opportunity to visit the campus, this time with their families.

Program Goals (review goals)

◆ Conduct a *Why Teach* Teacher Education Symposium for 11th graders.

◆ Create mentoring opportunities for high school students.

◆ Enroll high school students in a dual enrollment program in the summer taking a 3-credit child development course.

◆ Retention and persistence through dual enrollment, financial support, academic support, mentorship and a critical community cultural wealth approach.

◆ Success through graduation of a portion of those students in teacher education programs at University I.

◆ Up to five students that successfully complete the Teacher Ed pipeline program but not accepted traditionally into University I will have an opportunity to enter the university through the Academic Discovery Program—a bridge program aimed at supporting students that may not have met all admissions requirements but have potential for college success.

◆ Create a multicultural advisory board of current undergraduate students to serve as mentors.

◆ Incorporate Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) and Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Pedagogy into Teacher Education Programs.

The grant allowed the program to run for two cohorts beginning January 2020. The unfortunate start of the COVID pandemic greatly impacted the scope and modality of the program. After each phase of the program, an informal questionnaire was given to participants, students and teachers alike to find out what worked and what challenges existed. In addition, program directors offered reflections on their experiences running the programs.

Program 2:
Going Deeper About Diversifying Teacher Education at the Private Institution

University II is a private institution of higher education dedicated to operationalizing its mission. Located 20 miles from Philadelphia, the university embraces diversity from Philadelphia and the surrounding area. University II is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the University serves approximately 1,400 undergraduates and 900 graduate students.

University II has established four academic schools: School of Education, School of Business, Arts, and Media, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and School of Natural Sciences and Allied Health. The University offers undergraduate degree programs in over 40 majors, pre-professional programs, concentrations, and minors, six master's

degree programs, and two doctoral programs in educational leadership and organizational development.

University II is one of Pennsylvania's top private institutions in terms of the number of teachers certified. Through active recruitment and new programing, University II's full-time undergraduate minority enrollment (41%) has more than doubled in the past five years, and over a quarter (27%) of 2 students are considered first generation college students with neither parent graduating from a higher education institution. University II's education programs are identified as a thought- and social justice-leader by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, PreK-12 partners, and other educational organizations.

The Vision. The School of Education at University II is committed to developing a diverse educator pipeline to serve Pennsylvania's teacher education workforce. Thus, the School of Education facilitated an initiative titled: Diversity and Equity, Within the Education Profession (DEEP IMPACT) to focus on the recruitment and development of a diverse teacher education workforce. The name of DEEP IMPACT symbolizes the project's mission of ensuring that there will be diversity & equity within the education profession that will impact the educational experiences of all students and communities. DEEP IMPACT seeks to shift the national lack of educator diversity, by intentionally focusing on increasing the representation of teacher candidates from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds, with a specific focus on African American and Latinx teacher candidates.

Specifically, the national lack of educator diversity continues to be a problem in public education (USDE, 2016), thus, constructing innovative pathways for diverse candidates is in alignment to University II's commitment to equity and social justice. University II's commitment to social justice and equity is exemplified in practice and in its mission statement. Specifically, University II's conceptual framework clearly states that: "We envision a School of Education that creates inclusive communities where equity and justice flourish. Central to our vision is engaging in culturally sustaining and restorative practices to make a difference in people's lives." In working with a team from Enrollment Management and Marketing, the School of Education envisions the rollout of the DEEP IMPACT Project to capture a diverse group of teacher candidates and provide the needed resources to support them. The A2E initiative catapulted the DEEP IMPACT project into existence and would allow University II to create pathways for these students and gain a strong reputation as a leader in the field.

Program Description and Purpose. University II's collaborated with several K-12 charter schools, private institutions, and community colleges in their development of a pipeline program for Educators of color. Specifically, University II collaborated with their partners to identify participants with some college credits, who were looking to become teachers and earn their Bachelor of Science in Education at University II. The initial cohort was composed of 23 African American and Latinx teaching candidates, who aspired to work in urban settings. During their time in the DEEP IMPACT program, participants took a course that focused on pedagogical techniques, which centered the importance of culture and context. Additionally, through specialized symposiums, and mentors from the field (e.g. teachers and educational leaders), candidates were exposed to opportunities for professional growth and networking. Further, some of the individuals that participated in the initial cohort, also participated in a teacher candidate think tank session, which ultimately influenced some of the themes in the Pennsylvania Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education competency document (Cole-Malott et.al, 2021).

Program Highlights and Successes

With the implementation of both GYO programs, we were responsible for the planning, the implementation, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the program. Here we report on directors' reflective perceptions of program highlights and program challenges of their respective GYO programs.

Program 1:
Multicultural Teacher Education Early Pathways at University I

Program Highlights

Awareness. One of the biggest successes that came out of the A2E program at University I was the awareness of the issue of the Teacher of Color shortage and the urgent need to recruit and retain teacher candidates of color. Hearing the call from lone Black faculty in the department is one thing, but hearing a nationwide call from the US Department of Education and from Pennsylvania's Department of Education moves the issue from being a "personal" issue that a faculty cares about to a nationwide call for action.

Why Teach Symposium. Phase I of the program, the *Why Teach Symposium* was indeed the highlight of the A2E Pipeline Initiative. The high school students, their teachers, and the university faculty

and students all reported that the day-long program was beneficial and proved helpful in introducing students to the field of teaching. Phase I took place directly before the onset of COVID-19 in February of 2020. The day-long symposium was unaffected by the global pandemic.

The day went further than just being a day of fun, it was a working day where the high school students heard first-hand about the importance of teaching and were able to hear directly from teacher candidates and Black males in education. In addition, the college prep workshops were helpful for the high school juniors giving them critical information they need about college admissions and matriculation. The focus was to allow the high school students to really envision the need for Black teachers and to see current teacher candidates of color and hear their stories.

Dual Enrollment Course. Summer of 2020 there were nine students enrolled in the dual enrollment course, and summer of 2021 there were eight students enrolled. While the numbers were much lower than projected, the students enrolled in the program successfully completed the course which was moved online due to COVID-19. The students were engaged and successfully earned three college credits in an education course.

Program Challenges

While there were elements of the program that were very successful, as with many large projects, especially projects with a short planning period, challenges are sure to arise. Here, some main challenges are highlighted noting how they impacted the program. The intention is to think about challenges to consider these and/or similar challenges moving forward and to also consider what circumstances contributed to program impact.

Grant Administrative Challenges. One of the problems detected early in the implementation was administrative challenges dealing with the carrying out of the grant. The state-wide programs were initiated with the understanding of a short turn around and quick start time. The short turnaround time (Request for Proposals (RFP) came out in October and the program was to begin in January) left little time for proper planning. Also, the program was set to begin January and the funds weren't released at the start of the program which meant money had to be secured by the institutions to run the program. This created additional hardship for the program director and the IHE.

Worldwide Pandemic (COVID-19). Immediately after Phase

I, as the program moved into Phase II, the recruitment of students for the summer dual enrollment program, COVID-19 began to impact schools across the country. While students had indicated an interest in participating in the summer dual enrollment program initially and teachers were excited and engaged, the onset of the pandemic shifted the recruitment efforts. Schools were scrambling to shift to emergency remote instruction and this dual enrollment program and focus on teacher education was moved to the back burner. It is believed that this contributed to the reduced number of participants. It also reduced the contact and planning time with our partner school.

The pandemic impacted Phase II's modality. Students were not able to come to campus as first anticipated, so the summer program was moved to an online remote modality brought about further challenges. This was a challenge as the students were just getting their laptops from the school district and encountered many technology issues as they learned their device and had to interact with the Learning Management System. Some of the issues that were encountered further highlighted the digital divide and demonstrated that it is beyond access. The digital divide showed a lack of familiarity with some basic functions—creating files, uploading files to folders, and other general uses of computer programs.

Program Sustainability Concerns. Whenever a new program is implemented with grant funds, a question arises, how do we ensure that the program is sustainable once the grant funds run out? Getting full commitment from IHE" s in the form of financial and human resources is necessary in sustaining diversity led programing long term. It would benefit IHE's to weave programming in regularly scheduled programs in an effort to ensure they will last. Having a program run as a separate silo makes sustainability a real challenge.

Program 2:
Going Deeper About Diversifying Teacher Education at University II

Program Highlights

The DEEP IMPACT program at University II was able to recruit a cohort of 22 BIPOC students, who aspired to teach in urban schools, and urban school districts. Aspects of preparing students for the profession included mentorship, leadership development, professional development. Regarding professional development, students were challenged to explore the importance of culture, in the co-learning exchange, the salience of implicit biases, and anti-racism courses, that are rooted in

practice. Additionally, many of the initial DEEP IMPACT students were able to participate in think tank sessions, with the research team for the Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education (CRSE), competency report. Thus, these students were able to add commentary of dispositions, knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, approaches, and skills needed for student teachers to facilitate CRSE practices.

Program Challenges

From a methodological approach, the DEEP IMPACT program was being guided by Improvement Inquiry (Bryk et.al, 2015). The Six Core Principles of Improvement Inquiry are:

1. Make the work problem-specific and user-centered.
2. Variation in performance is the core problem to address.
3. See the system that produces the current outcomes.
4. We cannot improve at scale what we cannot measure.
5. Anchor practice improvement in disciplined inquiry.
6. Accelerate improvements through networked communities.

Given the various processes that align with operationalizing Improvement Inquiry, the primary challenge that we had with the DEEP IMPACT program is profound modality changes that occurred because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, our program was designed to assist our cohort in-person. Thus, we did not have the technology infrastructure to redesign our program to meet the needs of our participants. Additionally, as a result of the pandemic, many of our participants could no longer continue in the program for various reasons (e.g. mental health challenges, health challenges, financial challenges), therefore, cohesion within the program was greatly impacted.

Lastly, like many of the other funded programs, confusion and broken promises of the distribution of the funds caused profound budget challenges, and mistrust about the "authenticity" of the grant, with both our internal and external stakeholders.

Results

Since the start of the Aspiring to Educate program, Pennsylvania's teachers of color have seen a slight increase from 5.4% to 6.6% (Fuller, 2024). Between 2013-2014 the teachers of color in PA increased by .8%, however, 37% of students are students of color (Cabrail et al., 2022). The Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium will hold its 5th annual Diversity Summit in June providing culturally responsive professional development to educators across Pennsylvania.

The multicultural dual enrollment program at University I began

in 2020 with 48 students participating in the "Why Teach" Symposium. Year 1 and year 2 both saw six students completing the dual enrollment summer course gaining 3 college credits while still in high school. Although those students did not enter into University I's teacher education program, in 2024, the program is now the Prize Program. The program has five phases: Early Exposure, Continued Exposure and Engagement, Admission into University I, Matriculation, and Graduation (West Chester University, 2024). Four years later, the program continues to grow and thrive.

The Deep Impact program at University II engaged 22 BIPOC students wishing to become teachers. The students were engaged in co-curricular activities to strengthen their probability of being successful going into teaching, however, with the recent announcement of the closure of University II, the program halted.

Conclusion and Implications

Our country is at a critical time for the teaching profession. The ongoing nationwide teacher shortage coupled with a rapid increase of a diverse student population and the abysmal numbers of teachers of color entering the field, Educator Preparation Programs are scrambling to brainstorm ways to diversify the teacher educator pipeline.

With most states (US Dept. of Ed., 2016, 2023) falling short of proper representation of teachers of color, top state officials should lead the charge and put out a call of urgency for IHEs to do the work while setting aside money to support IHEs in their efforts. IHE leaders should recognize the need and support the work of diversifying the teacher workforce by providing ongoing funding and human resources to focus on the work in addition to support for teacher diversity educators often working in silos. With state backing and funding, more opportunities can be created for IHEs to collaborate and support each other in this charge. Educators focused on diversity, working collectively, coming together across the state to develop policies and practices that can be adapted across the state for all IHEs puts everyone on the same page and allows for consistency and productivity.

With intentionality and collective thought, states can galvanize researchers at colleges and universities and related institutions to begin to collectively plan to create and strengthen the diverse teacher educator pipeline. The collective gathering of like-minded individuals focusing on the work of teacher diversity gave us an affinity space - a space to collect and gather our thoughts, share ideas, and pull together resources and programming. Working collectively allows us to

have greater impact and allows us to move the needle of the work. Connecting teacher educators that focus on diversity issues in teacher education can move the educators out of their silos and allow them to collectively move an agenda and accomplish goals. With states being intentional and centering teacher diversity, there is a likelihood that working together can impact change.

Teacher educators could benefit from being reflexive in their thought and by identifying and naming their positionality when thinking about their research and/or program creation. Recognizing your standpoint and position in this work can allow researchers/teacher educators to identify specific knowledge or stance as multiple perspectives are gathered.

At the federal and state level, diversity work must not be an afterthought. Proper thought-out planning must be in place well enough in advance so that it allows for proper phasing in and carrying out the diversity work. Frequently, in our haste to begin a program, we may rush to start without spending time to think through and carry through the running of our programs. Often grants are offered and there is a short turnaround to plan and write the grant and once funded, there is a short time to begin the program without consideration for planning and phasing in time. In all programming efforts, including teacher diversity efforts, time needs to be allocated to allow for proper planning, recruitment efforts, and implementation of the newly designed programs.

When creating Grow Your Own programs, creating alternative pipelines for educator diversity tackles the issue on more than one front. Speaking with students in early high school programs and talking to them about the critical nature of teaching is key. Identifying high school students that have already expressed an interest in teaching and supporting them in the process is critical. Also critical is identifying paraprofessionals that are already in school settings and providing support structures.

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