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**As Wisconsin's K-12 Student Diversity Grows, its Teacher Workforce Fails to Keep Pace**  
*Findings affect achievement gap and workforce; Report also examines teacher pipeline*

The gap between the increasing diversity of Wisconsin's K-12 student population and the lack of diversity in its teacher workforce has widened in the last decade, with large gaps in urban school districts and the divide growing most quickly in the state's least urbanized areas, according to a new report from the Wisconsin Policy Forum.

The report examines the state's teacher workforce and educational pipeline, finding that while its teacher workforce has become more diverse, it is not keeping pace with changes in the student population. These disparities have huge implications for racial equity, workforce needs across the state, and efforts to reduce educational achievement gaps.

"While students of color have been rising as a share of Wisconsin's public K-12 student population, its teacher workforce has remained overwhelmingly white," the report finds.

Titled "A Teacher Who Looks Like Me: Examining racial diversity in Wisconsin's teacher workforce and the student-to-teacher pipeline," this report is the first in a series that will examine the issue and possible policy solutions. It is funded by grants from the Argosy Foundation and Herzfeld Foundation, as well as general support for the Forum's education research agenda from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and Northwestern Mutual Foundation.

A large body of research suggests a teacher workforce that closely represents the racial makeup of the student population it serves is important for all students – especially to support academic performance and aspirations of students of color.

Between 2009 and 2019, the number of public K-12 students of color in Wisconsin increased by 28.2% or about 58,000 students. As a share of all students, students of color grew from 23.6% to 30.7%. Although the number of teachers of color grew by 22.5%, they started as a small share of teachers overall and increased by only 1.1 percentage points to just 5.6%. This widened the gap between students and teachers of color from about 19 percentage points in 2009 to 25 points in 2019.

Black and Hispanic/Latinx students and teachers are the largest populations of color in Wisconsin and exhibit the largest disparities in teacher-student representation. In raw numbers and as a share of their overall groups, Black students and teachers have fallen since 2009. Black students now make up just over 9% of K-12 students, while Black teachers comprise only 2.1% of all teachers.

Conversely, Hispanic/Latinx teachers and students have more than doubled their numbers in the past decade, and their shares of the student and teacher populations have grown. Yet the gap between them has widened every year since 2009. In 2019, Hispanic/Latinx students made up 12.3% of all students, while Hispanic/Latinx teachers comprised just shy of 2.0% of all teachers statewide.

Urban school districts have some of the widest student-teacher race gaps and the largest populations of students and teachers of color. In cities, students of color now make up a majority (57.4%) of all students.

But disparities in representation between teachers and students by race also show up in suburbs, towns, and rural areas, and such gaps are growing fastest in towns and rural areas.

The report also looked at trends by race in the teacher pipeline, specifically, high school graduation rates, college enrollment rates, and enrollment in teacher preparation programs. It found that the percentage of people of color at each educational milestone has increased over the past decade, but that is not necessarily producing an increase in the number of people of color in the teacher pipeline.

It also found that the share of people of color who might pursue a teaching career falls significantly as they progress down the educational pathway. Although students of color made up 30% of all public K-12 students in 2018, their share drops to 23.8% of high school graduates, 19.5% of postsecondary enrollees, and 9.8% of those enrolling in teacher preparation programs in Wisconsin.

“The fact that teachers of color comprise only 5.6% of the teacher workforce in 2019 is more readily understandable when considering these drop-offs at each milestone in the pathway” said report author Anne Chapman.

This report is the first in a series. Subsequent reports will draw on the perspectives of educators and policymakers in Wisconsin in an attempt to explore policy options to improve teacher diversity statewide.

Approaches could focus on offering alternative credential pathways and strategies to improve teacher retention, the report says, but “strategies that focus on barriers that may discourage young students of color from considering or having the educational attainment credentials to enter the teaching profession hold particular promise.”

[Go here to read the report.](#)

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