

# A more diverse teaching force may improve educational outcomes for minority students

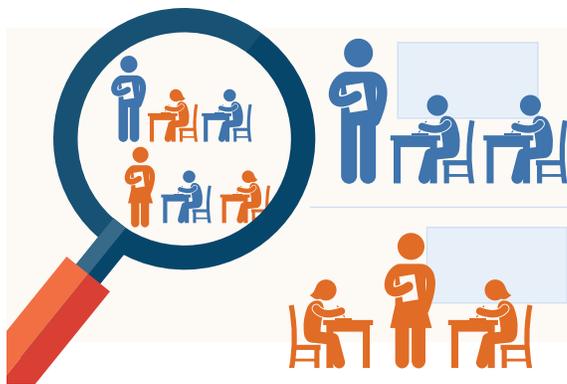
**Nationwide achievement tests** show large, persistent gaps in scores based on race and ethnicity.<sup>1</sup>



## One potentially promising strategy to increase the achievement of minority students and reduce achievement gaps is to increase the diversity of the teacher workforce.

Research shows that a diverse teaching force may help states and districts close large, persistent racial and ethnic achievement gaps and improve the educational outcomes of minority students. In particular, the research finds benefits for black students.<sup>2</sup>

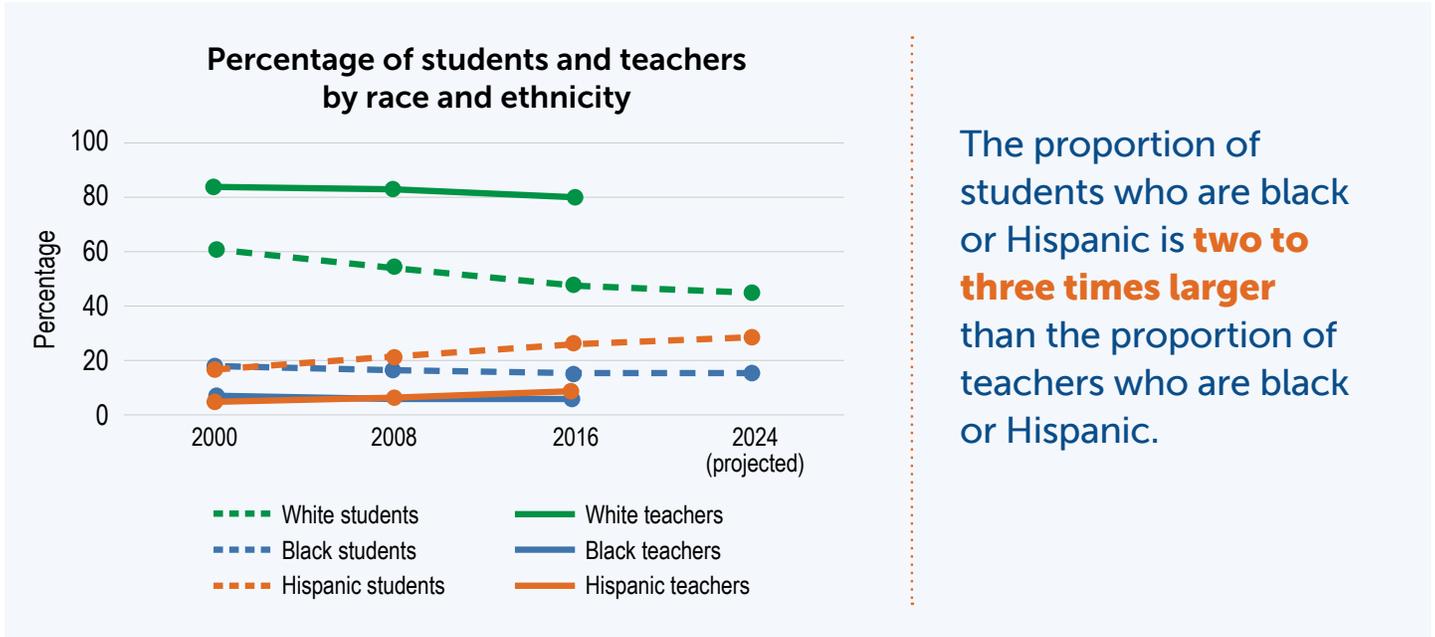
	Black students in preschool to grade 3 taught by a black teacher for one year had math scores 2 to 5 percentile points higher and reading scores 3 to 6 percentile points higher than black students taught by a white teacher. <sup>3</sup>
	According to the same two studies, the increases are largest in preschool and elementary school and for lower-achieving black students, black students in schools that disproportionately serve black or low-income students, and black students who had black teachers for multiple years. <sup>3</sup>
	Black students in kindergarten to grade 3 that were assigned a black teacher were 5 percentage points more likely to graduate high school and 4 percentage points more likely to enroll in college. <sup>4</sup>
	A study that examined effects for Hispanic students taught by Hispanic teachers did not find similar increases in test scores, which could be explained by the diversity of nationalities in the Hispanic community. <sup>5</sup>
	Non-white kindergarten to grade 5 students taught by same race/ethnicity teachers have 19 percent fewer suspensions per year. <sup>6</sup>



It is not clear what about matching student and teacher race and ethnicity drives these effects, but it is possible that students may receive more culturally relevant instruction and have more positive perceptions of their teachers when taught by teachers of the same race or ethnicity, particularly if they are of the same gender.<sup>7</sup>

**Most minority students are not taught by teachers of the same race and ethnicity.**

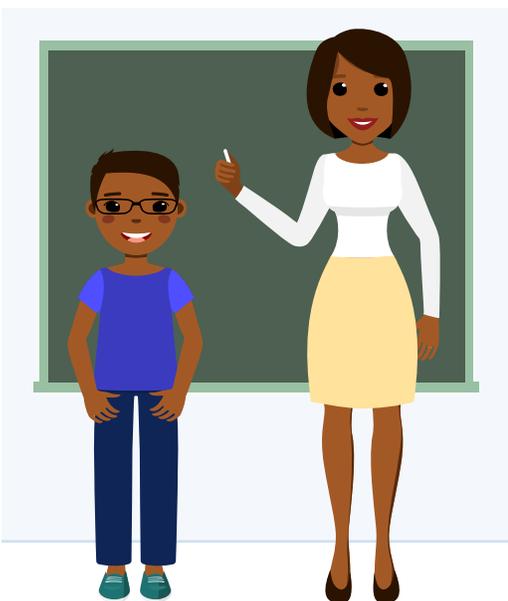
The proportion of students who are black or Hispanic is two to three times larger than the proportion of teachers who are black or Hispanic, a gap that appears to be increasing.<sup>8</sup> Over the next decade, the proportion of white students is projected to continue to decline, while the proportion of black students will remain about the same, and the proportion of Hispanic students will increase. Data from 2000 to 2016 suggest teacher demographics are changing more slowly. The proportions of teachers who are white and black are slowly declining, while the proportion who are Hispanic is slowly increasing.



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Figure note: The percentages apply to public elementary and secondary schools.

Sources: National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). Digest of Education Statistics. Table 203.60. Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17\\_203.60.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_203.60.asp); and National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.) Digest of Education Statistics. Table 209.10. Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17\\_209.10.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_209.10.asp).



The widening gap between the racial and ethnic compositions of the U.S. student and teacher populations suggests the achievement gaps between minority students and white students could grow in the future. States, districts, and teacher preparation programs may wish to consider policies and strategies to diversify the teacher workforce as a way to address this gap. REL Mid-Atlantic conducted [a webinar on four teacher preparation programs and initiatives](#) that may offer insights into policies and strategies to improve teacher diversity.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). Digest of Education Statistics. Table 222.10. Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17\\_222.10.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_222.10.asp?current=yes)
- <sup>2</sup> Some of the studies were unable to examine effects for Hispanic students or students of other races and ethnicities due to limited numbers of students and teachers of those races and ethnicities.
- <sup>3</sup> Dee, T. S. (2004). Teachers, race, and student achievement in a randomized experiment. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 86(1), 195-210. Retrieved from <https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/003465304323023750>
- Egalite, A. J., Kisida, B., & Winters, M. A. (2015). Representation in the classroom: The effect of own-race teachers on student achievement. Working Papers Series. PEPG 14-07. Program on Education Policy and Governance. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED562618>
- These studies found that, among black students, having a same-race teacher increased math and reading scores by 2 to 3 percentile points in preschool to grade 3, 0.012 to 0.30 standard deviations in grades 3 to 5, and 0 to 0.012 standard deviations in grades 6 to 10.
- <sup>4</sup> Gershenson, S., Hart, C. M. D., Lindsay, C. A., & Papageorge, N. W. (2017). The long-run impacts of same-race teachers (No. 10630). IZA Institute of Labor Economics. Retrieved from <https://www.iza.org/publications/dp/10630/the-long-run-impacts-of-same-race-teachers>
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- <sup>5</sup> Egalite, A. J., Kisida, B., & Winters, M. A. (2015). Representation in the classroom: The effect of own-race teachers on student achievement. Working Papers Series. PEPG 14-07. Program on Education Policy and Governance. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED562618>
- <sup>6</sup> Holt, S., & Gershenson, S. (2015). The impact of teacher demographic representation on student attendance and suspensions (No. 9554). IZA Institute of Labor Economics. Retrieved from <http://ftp.iza.org/dp9554.pdf>
- Lindsay, C. A., & Hart, C. M. (2017). Exposure to same-race teachers and student disciplinary outcomes for Black students in North Carolina. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 39(3), 485-510. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0162373717693109>
- <sup>7</sup> Egalite, A. J., & Kisida, B. (2018). The effects of teacher match on students' academic perceptions and attitudes. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 40(1), 59-81. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1168347>
- Cherng, H. Y. S., & Halpin, P. F. (2016). The importance of minority teachers: Student perceptions of minority versus white teachers. *Educational Researcher*, 45(7), 407-420. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1116809>
- <sup>8</sup> Hansen, M., & Quintero, D. (2019). The diversity gap for public school teachers is actually growing across generations. Brown Center on Education Policy. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2019/03/07/the-diversity-gap-for-public-school-teachers-is-actually-growing-across-generations/>