Strengthening and Diversifying the Education Profession

National Center for Learning Disabilities

Overview

Educators are the most influential in-school factor of student success,[1] yet only 17% of teachers surveyed feel very well prepared to teach students with learning disabilities.[2] Additionally, as our student populations become more and more diverse, American teachers continue to be disproportionately White.[3] Studies have shown that having teachers of the same race can increase achievement and engagement for students of color, and that Black and Latinx students are less likely to be subject to exclusionary discipline in schools with higher proportions of Black and Latinx teachers.[4,5] Furthermore, there has been a longstanding shortage of special educators and certain specialized instructional support personnel. This was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.[6] Comprehensive changes to how educators are recruited, prepared, and retained are essential to improving student outcomes.

FAST FACTS

- Only 50% of educators feel that students with learning or attention issues can achieve at grade-levels standards.[7]

- Students of color make up 47.2% of the student population, but teachers of color only make up 18.5% of the teaching population.[8]

- In 2020, there were half a million fewer jobs in public K–12 education compared to 2019 levels, and 890,000 fewer than what is needed to keep up with the growth in student enrollment that has taken place since 2008.[9]

- Only 10 states require teacher candidates to take specific coursework or meet specific standards relating to students with disabilities. Eight states do not include students with disabilities in their standards at all.[10]

NCLD believes:

1. To effectively instruct students with learning disabilities or attention issues, teachers must have key skills and embrace critical mindsets, such as a positive orientation toward inclusion, a strong sense of efficacy, and a growth mindset.

2. Teachers can't do it alone. We need to consider how teachers can gain more experience, preparation, and self-confidence before they're in the classroom full time. And we need to provide better support once they are there.

3. Policymakers must improve teacher preparation programs and provide additional funding to recruit, educate, and retain educators to reduce the teacher shortage and to increase diversity within the education profession.

NCLD advocates for:

- Creating a federal grant program that incentivizes states to set requirements for teacher candidate licensure, certification, or teaching standards. These requirements should prepare general educators to meet the needs of students with disabilities and to teach using evidence-based instructional practices (including in virtual settings), evidence-based positive behavior management, and culturally responsive pedagogy.

- Providing grants to states to increase recruitment and retention of educators of color, multilingual educators, and educators in shortage areas such as special education and school psychology.

- Commissioning an audit of state licensure exams and providing resources to states to identify disparities within teacher preparation program completion and licensure rate for teachers of color.

1 Opper, I. M. (2019). *Teachers matter: Understanding teachers' impact on student achievement.* RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR4312.html

2 Galiatsos, S., Kruse, L., & Whittaker, M. (2019). *Forward together: Helping educators unlock the power of students who learn differently.* National Center for Learning Disabilities. https://ncld.org/research/forward-together/

3 Lindsay, C. A., & Hart, C. M. D. (2017). Teacher race and school discipline: Are students suspended less often when they have a teacher of the same race? *Education Next, 17*(1), 72–79.

4 Egalite, A. J., Kisida, B., & Winters, M. A. (2015). Representation in the classroom: The effect of own-race teachers on student achievement. *Economics of Education Review, 45*(C), 44–52.

5 Lindsay, C. A., & Hart, C. M. D. (2017). Teacher race and school discipline: Are students suspended less often when they have a teacher of the same race? *Education Next, 17*(1), 72–79.

6 EPI analysis of data from the Current Employment Statistics public data series and U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

7 Galiatsos, S., Kruse, L., & Whittaker, M. (2019). *Forward together: Helping educators unlock the power of students who learn differently.* National Center for Learning Disabilities. https://ncld.org/research/forward-together/

8 Student Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), 2017–18
Teacher Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), 2017–18

9 EPI analysis of data from the Current Employment Statistics public data series and U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

10 Galiatsos, S., Kruse, L., & Whittaker, M. (2019). *Forward together: Helping educators unlock the power of students who learn differently.* National Center for Learning Disabilities. https://ncld.org/research/forward-together/

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