

Title: Teacher Diversity Can Help Close the Racial Achievement and Disciplinary Gaps in the Iowa City Community School District

Abstract

The underrepresentation of minority teachers in schools has negative and life-long consequences on minority students. Evidence has shown that the lack of minority teachers is tied to minority students' educational success and could be a contributing factor to academic achievement and discipline gaps. Academic achievement and disciplinary gaps have been linked to many negative results such as unemployment, crime, poor health and other negative socio-economic outcomes. Using survey data from the Iowa City Community School District, the Equity Implemented Partnership was able to collect and analyze the information specifically for this district. After analyzing this data, we have proposed several recommendations to combat the lack of teacher diversity in the Iowa City Community School District by recruiting and retaining teachers of color and by implementing diversity training among current teachers and staff.

Description

The motivation for this research comes from numerous studies that have found a range of consequences on minority students as a result of racially homogenous teaching staff. One study found that “the underrepresentation of minority teachers leads minority students to endure greater exposure to racial mismatch and potential bias in interactions with teachers” (Gershenson, 2017). In a study created by Project STAR, researchers analyzed administrative data regarding the random assignment of students and teachers to classrooms from two states. They found that “the underrepresentation of minority teachers leads minority students to endure greater exposure to racial mismatch and potential bias in interactions with teachers” (Gershenson, 2017). The researchers also suggest that a lack of teacher diversity contributes to racial achievement and disciplinary gaps. “Educational attainment gaps are troubling because lower rates of educational attainment are associated with a host of negative downstream outcomes, including elevated risks of unemployment or relegation to low-

wage work, crime, poor health, civic disengagement, and other negative socio-economic outcomes” (Gershenson, 2017).

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