



CENTER FOR  
BLACK EDUCATOR  
DEVELOPMENT

# REBUILDING THE BLACK TEACHER PIPELINE

## A Policy Agenda for Achieving the Education Workforce All Our Students Need. And Deserve.

### WHY OUR WORK IS SO CRITICAL

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court held in *Brown v. Board of Education* that racial segregation in public schools violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

As a matter of law, the decision served to dismantle state-enforced segregation in public education and expand access to educational opportunity. In practice, however, implementation exposed a significant gap between the legal prohibition and lived outcomes, as state policy decisions enabled coordinated resistance across legislative bodies and local communities.

As desegregation was operationalized, that resistance—expressed through mass protest, tuition-grant voucher programs, and workforce displacement—preserved existing power structures while limiting the expansion of educational access.

One of the most serious and long-lasting consequences of this implementation gap was its significant impact on the Black educator workforce.

In the decades following *Brown*, the number of Black teachers and school leaders declined sharply—not due to a lack of commitment, preparation, or capacity among Black educators, but because desegregation was implemented by *de facto* white leaders in ways that systematically excluded them.

School closures and discriminatory placement practices, as well as the widespread dismissal, demotion and forced resignation of tens of thousands of Black teachers and principals, occurred alongside formal compliance with desegregation mandates.

## So what?

Evidence consistently demonstrates the significant impact Black educators have on Black students, and the broader benefits they bring to all students, strengthening learning environments and preparing young people to succeed in an increasingly diverse society.

The research base underlying this is both substantial and consistent.

Black students who have even one Black teacher are more likely to achieve at higher levels, graduate on time, and pursue postsecondary education.<sup>1</sup> They also experience a stronger sense of belonging, greater access to rigorous coursework, and lower rates of exclusionary discipline.

Despite this evidence, these outcomes remain unevenly realized, not due to a lack of research support, but because racially-motivated systems implemented during desegregation continue to impede the recruitment, retention and support of Black educators at scale, undermining the rebuilding of the Black teacher pipeline.

The challenges facing today's educator workforce are not accidental. They are the predictable result of policy design choices that have shaped who enters, who remains, and who advances within the profession.

We at the Center for Black Educator Development are dedicated to rebuilding the national Black teacher pipeline and ensuring that every child has access to excellent educators who reflect their identities and experiences.

Our work directly responds to a persistent gap between longstanding evidence demonstrating the value of Black educators and the policy and practice environments that have failed to sustain them in the classroom.

Addressing this urgent need is central to building a stable and effective educator workforce. More importantly, it is critical if we want to offer the best possible education to all of America's students.

## Our Role In Shaping the Policy Agenda

The public policy that has eroded the Black teacher pipeline for more than 70 years—the institutionalized exclusion, determining who was allowed to teach, whose knowledge and leadership were valued and deemed legitimate, and which identities were marginalized—were choices made based on racist ideologies.

Reversing this legacy requires new choices. There must be more than rhetorical alignment with constitutional principle. We as a nation must confront the gap between formal commitments and the policy decisions that produced enduring harm.

Repairing this legacy requires coordinated policy action to address the structural consequences of how desegregation was implemented, not merely how it was articulated. This includes dismantling

longstanding policies that have marginalized Black educators and taking deliberate steps to rebuild, exponentially grow and sustain the Black teacher pipeline while strengthening the entire educator workforce.

At the Center for Black Educator Development, we are advancing a policy agenda grounded in the responsibility to align implementation with principle and to advance policies that move educational equity from affirmation in law to realization in practice.

It is an agenda designed to produce the best possible education for all students.

We hope you will join us to help shape and advance it.

## POLICY PRIORITIES

We advance policy solutions to rebuild the Black teacher pipeline and expand access to excellent educators across the public education system.

Our advocacy is grounded in the longstanding disconnect between well-established evidence on the positive impact of Black educators on student achievement and the policy frameworks that have failed to produce workforce conditions that support their entry, advancement, and long-term retention. This disconnect has allowed barriers to remain at every stage of the Black educator pipeline—from access and recruitment to preparation, support, and career stability.

Our policy priorities are designed to close the gap between what research affirms and what systems currently produce. They translate the mission of the Center for Black Educator Development into system-level workforce change by focusing on how policies are designed and implemented—not only how they are stated.

While our strategies will evolve as policy contexts shift, the priorities outlined here provide a durable framework for our policy recommendations, partnerships, and advocacy. Together, they define the structural conditions required to rebuild the Black teacher pipeline, ensuring long-term educator workforce diversity and stability.

### Priority #1

Strengthen Recruitment, Support, and Retention of Black Educators

### Priority #2

Build Equitable, Affordable, and Publicly Funded Pathways into the Teaching Profession

### Priority #3

Strengthen Mentorship and Leadership Pathways Across the Educator Workforce

### Priority #4

Strengthen Educator Workforce Data, Accountability, and Certification Systems

**PRIORITY #1****Strengthen Recruitment, Support, and Retention of Black Educators**

Black educators play a critical role in strengthening public schools and improving student outcomes.

A substantial body of research demonstrates that when Black students are taught by Black educators, they experience stronger academic outcomes, higher graduation rates, and increased postsecondary enrollment, particularly when educators reflect the communities they serve.

By third grade, having even one Black teacher significantly increases a Black student's likelihood of graduating from high school and enrolling in college.<sup>2</sup> Yet the current workforce is not responsive to this irrefutable research: Black educators remain significantly underrepresented in the public education workforce.

In 2022, approximately six percent of U.S. public school teachers were Black,<sup>3</sup> and Black men comprised less than two percent of the profession. Attrition further compounds the imbalance, with nearly 22 percent of Black teachers leaving annually,<sup>4</sup> outpacing the attrition rate of other educator groups. These trends point to a structural misalignment between what evidence has proven and the workforce conditions shaping the educator pipeline.

Addressing these gaps requires policies that build and sustain the workforce conditions necessary for entry, stability, and long-term persistence. Recruitment efforts alone are insufficient; they must be paired with sustained investments in compensation, financial supports, and career pathways that enable Black educators to remain, advance, and thrive in public education over time.

**PRIORITY #1: Recommendations**

- Ensure competitive compensation and sustained support by using local, state, and federal policy levers to recruit and retain Black educators and other educators of color as part of a comprehensive strategy to strengthen and diversify the educator workforce.
- Expand structured mentorship and leadership development by providing targeted support for early-career educators and evidence-based retention training for school and district leaders.
- Increase targeted investment in recruiting and retaining Black educators by funding scholarships, affinity-based programs, and cost-of-living support, including housing stipends, loan repayment, and local tax abatements to promote entry, stability, and long-term career growth.
- Invest in high-quality professional learning, connecting development opportunities to clear pathways for instructional leadership, administrative roles, and long-term career advancement.

**PRIORITY #2****Build Equitable, Affordable, and Publicly Funded Pathways into the Teaching Profession**

Teaching is a public-service profession, yet entry into the classroom is largely financed by individuals rather than designed as a public workforce investment.

Aspiring educators are frequently required to cover tuition, certification fees, and preparation costs out of pocket, and many complete a semester of unpaid student teaching, foregoing more than \$12,000 in earnings before becoming eligible to enter the workforce.<sup>5</sup>

These conditions create significant barriers to entry at a time when schools face persistent staffing shortages.

These barriers, moreover, are not evenly distributed. The financial demands associated with educator preparation disproportionately restrict access for candidates with less accumulated wealth, rising housing costs, and constrained geographic mobility.

As a result, many aspiring educators are priced out of the very communities where they hope to train and teach, narrowing the candidate pool and undermining long-term workforce stability.

Addressing these challenges requires structuring educator preparation as a public workforce investment, rather than personal financing by individual candidates.

Publicly funded compensation models, including stipends, tuition assistance, paid residencies, apprenticeships, and cost-of-living supports are foundational to ensuring that entry into the profession is both accessible and sustainable.

**PRIORITY #2: Recommendations**

- Eliminate financial barriers to entry by publicly funding tuition, certification fees, and compensated clinical training to reduce out-of-pocket costs for aspiring educators.
- Increase federal and state investment in proven preparation models by funding paid residencies, para-to-teacher and apprenticeship pathways, Grow Your Own programs, and early-entry youth pathways that provide structured, compensated training.
- Address cost-of-living barriers during preparation by providing housing stipends or cost-of-living support that enable aspiring educators to live in the communities where they train and ultimately teach.
- Expand access to high-quality preparation pathways by designing flexible, supportive programs that meet the needs of working adults, paraprofessionals, and career changers.

**PRIORITY #3****Strengthen Mentorship and Leadership Pathways Across the Educator Workforce**

Recruitment of Black educators alone cannot build and sustain a strong diverse educator workforce; organizational conditions must be designed for their long-term retention, supporting, developing and making it possible for them to see a future in the profession.

Evidence consistently demonstrates that structured mentorship and clear leadership pathways improve instructional effectiveness and reduce early-career attrition while strengthening school stability. Yet too many educators, particularly those early in their careers, enter classrooms without sustained guidance, professional development, or advancement opportunities.

Workforce data helps explain why this gap between research and practice persists.

Black educators leave the classroom at higher rates within their first five years in the profession.<sup>6</sup> Research and practice consistently demonstrate that these departures are shaped less by individual motivation and significantly more by leadership conditions within schools and districts. Principals, superintendents, and lead teachers are determinative in shaping school climate, instructional support, and professional trust—all factors that strongly influence whether educators remain, grow, and advance in the profession.

Addressing these challenges requires embedding mentorship and leadership structures within workforce design, rather than treating them as optional or informal support. Durable mentorship systems and clearly defined advancement pathways are required so that Black educators can grow, lead, and remain in the profession over time, thereby strengthening instructional quality and reinforcing long-term workforce stability.

**PRIORITY #3: Recommendations**

- Establish and fund high-quality mentorship programs that provide structured, sustained support for new and early-career educators, with clear expectations, training, and accountability.
- Invest in mentor quality and sustainability by funding mentor preparation, compensation, and protected time for mentors, teacher leaders, and residency coaches.
- Create formal advancement pathways that recognize, compensate, and elevate mentor teachers as instructional leaders, ensuring leadership roles are transparent, attainable, and aligned with instructional expertise.
- Embed educator retention and workforce sustainability competencies into leadership preparation and certification systems to strengthen instructional leadership and long-term workforce stability.
- Strengthen and expand leadership development and affinity-based advancement pathways for Black educators, including targeted support for Black men in education through mentorship, network building, and leadership development.

**PRIORITY #4****Strengthen Educator Workforce Data, Accountability, and Certification Systems**

Sustaining progress in diversifying and stabilizing the educator workforce requires robust workforce data systems and certification structures aligned to support entry and advancement, rather than hinder them. Yet educator workforce data remains fragmented, inconsistently reported, and insufficiently disaggregated, limiting policymakers' ability to identify where the biggest holes in the Black educator pipeline exist throughout preparation, hiring, retention, and leadership.

At the same time, certification and licensure systems often rely on practices that create structural barriers, disproportionately constraining access and mobility for educators of color.

Without reliable data and aligned credentialing structures, investments in recruitment, sufficient preparation, funded pathways, and mentorship cannot be effectively targeted, evaluated, or sustained.

Strengthening workforce data infrastructure and reforming certification practices are foundational to ensuring that policy decisions reflect workforce realities and dismantle structural barriers to entering and advancing in the profession.

**PRIORITY #4: Recommendations**

- Strengthen educator workforce data systems by requiring consistent, disaggregated reporting across preparation programs, certification systems, and employing agencies to track entry, retention, advancement, and attrition across the educator pipeline.
- Reform certification and licensure requirements to identify and remove non-evidence-based practices that create disproportionate barriers for Black educators, while maintaining high standards for instructional quality and professional readiness.
- Leverage workforce data to drive accountability and improvement by regularly assessing and adjusting recruitment, preparation, mentorship, and leadership policies to strengthen retention, advancement, and long-term workforce stability.

## ENDNOTES

1. Gershenson, S., Hart, C., Lindsay, C., & Papageorge, N. (2018). *The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers*. National Bureau of Economic Research.
2. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2023). *Characteristics of Public School Teachers*. U.S. Department of Education.
3. Hewett, P., Martel, E., Sullivan, N., & Viernum, K. (2023). *A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in the U.S.* Teach Plus.
4. The Education Trust & Teach Plus. (2019). *If You Listen, We Will Stay: Why Teachers of Color Leave and How to Disrupt Teacher Turnover*.
5. Egalite, A. J., & Kisida, B. (2018). *The Effects of Teacher Match on Students' Academic Perceptions and Attitudes*. Economics of Education Review.
6. Foster, M. (1997). *Black Teachers on Teaching*. Economics of Education Review. New York: The New Press.

## CONTACT

**Arthur T. Polly, Ed.D.**

Director of Policy & Advocacy

[Arthur.Polly@CBED.org](mailto:Arthur.Polly@CBED.org)