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# RECRUITING, SUPPORTING & RETAINING LATINX EDUCATORS IN WASHINGTON, DC

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**"As a Latino teacher, one of my most important roles is to make sure I am a living role model, to show that they can do more"- LatinX DC Teacher**

## **Recruiting, Supporting and Retaining Latinx Educators in Washington, D.C.**

**February 2020**

### **Executive Summary**

There is a wide consensus that it is of great importance for our students to be able to see themselves in their educators and that educators of color make a world of difference both for students of color and white students. Here in Washington, D.C., while there is a more diverse workforce than in many other cities, we face a particularly stark gap between our Latinx student and teacher population - a critical problem that has received little attention by local policy-makers.

In interviews, DC students told us how critical Latinx, Hispanic and bilingual educators are in their own lives - serving as mentors, easing the transition to a new country, allowing their parents to communicate and be involved in their academic journey and understanding the unique challenges they face.

There are many promising avenues to increase recruitment of a new generation of Latinx educators, including raising the Latinx high school graduation rate, easing the burden of college debt, raising educator salaries and erasing certification barriers affecting those with teaching experience outside the U.S. Increasing the diversity of college faculty, bolstering clinical teacher preparation, expanding “Grow Your Own” programs, and lessening the influence of standardized entrance exams can also assist in strengthening the pipeline of Latinx educators.

To support and retain Latinx educators, we must tackle the “Latinx teacher tax” whereby Latinx educators are expected to take on additional uncompensated responsibilities like translating, handling parent communication for the school, and obligated to serve as a cultural or linguistic liaison for fellow staff. These additional responsibilities take a toll and can lead to high turnover. To retain Latinx staff, school administrators should focus on racial equity, culturally responsive school environments, and listening to teacher voice. Ensuring strong mentor relationships and support for new teachers is also critical, especially for those who have not received significant clinical experience in their preparation. We must also value the unique contributions of our Afro-Latino educators.

In conversations with Latinx DC educators, we heard that they are proud to be able to serve as role models and guides for their Latinx students. We heard that they help their students see a wider world of possibilities for their own future, affirm their culture in their teaching, and advocate for them when others don’t. We also heard that while they’re glad to go above and beyond, the “Latinx teacher tax” is real and can take a toll.

In speaking with DC principals at schools with a large Latinx student population, we heard that it is absolutely a priority to recruit, support, and retain Latinx educators but they often face a challenge given the lack of a concerted, strategic plan to ensure a deeper pipeline not only of Latinx and bilingual classroom teachers, but school counselors, psychologists, social workers, behavior technicians and educational aides. We heard about their efforts to support teacher voice, to combat

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stereotypes and bias in their schools, to identify students with a desire to become educators or work in their own schools in the future, and to intentionally work with community partners to facilitate important conversations on race and equity.

Finally, in speaking with leading DC education policy-makers, we saw an emerging consensus that this problem must be tackled to serve our large and growing Latinx population and the growing demand for dual language instruction across the board. The impediment most commonly mentioned was a lack of Latinx representation in senior DC education leadership roles. Without Latinx representation at senior levels, it's no wonder, these officials said, this issue hasn't been a top priority. Officials at the DC Council were unsure of how large of a role legislation could play in solving this problem, but agreed on the need for a more coordinated strategy from DCPS and District education leaders. While each independent charter school must take this issue on itself, Steve Bumbaugh, a member of the Public Charter School Board, argues that the current way of evaluating schools disincentivizes schools from a focus on what matters most - ensuring excellent, culturally-competent educators in every school.

DC Council Member Brianne Nadeau said it best: "Politically, no one is opposed to expanding [and diversifying] the workforce; there just isn't a strategic plan for it." Our review found that there is a strong existing consensus from all stakeholders that we must confront this issue. There is a deep reservoir of support and demand in wait of a plan. By contacting DCPS leadership, testifying at DC Council oversight hearings for DCPS, the Public Charter School Board, the Deputy Mayor for Education, OSSE and providing public comments at the monthly State Board of Education meetings, stakeholders can make clear this issue is a priority. We believe the recommendations offered in this report and the roadmap for action provided can serve as a guide for the large coalition of organizations and individuals that care deeply about the need to further support DC's Latinx community in our education system.

## Abbreviated Report

### Context

Students in the United States are increasingly diverse, yet America's teaching force is still largely the same as it was during public education's founding: white, middle class, and female. Research has shown the value of students having teachers who look like them in their schools, and while substantial research exists investigating the need for black teachers, there is a paucity in similar research for Latinx teachers nationwide. In Washington, D.C. in particular, while there is a diverse teacher workforce overall, the gap between Latinx students and Latinx teachers is just beginning to prompt investigation. Latinx teachers face a specific set of obstacles to enter the teaching profession and have unique experiences once in the profession. To fully explore the issue of Latinx teacher recruitment and retention, Washington, D.C.'s specific context must be investigated.

A recent study on teacher workforce from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) showed that only 7% of the city's teachers in both the public and charter school sectors are Latinx, compared to 19% of Latinx students<sup>1</sup> (OSSE 2019 workforce report p. 12). **This disparity**

<sup>1</sup> <https://osse.dc.gov/publication/dc-teacher-workforce-report>

**is heightened in Ward 1, where a teaching workforce that is 15% Latinx serves a student population that is 58% Latinx, and Ward 4, where just 10% of teachers identify as Latinx compared to 40% of students.** While DCPS has engaged in initial efforts to recruit potential teachers in Puerto Rico, there does not seem to be evidence of any broad or coordinated effort to recruit Latinx teachers specifically to D.C. schools. Across all demographics, Washington, D.C. sees

a 25% rate of teacher turnover annually (SBOE Teacher Retention Report 2019).<sup>2</sup> The turnover rate jumps to 33% in the highest poverty schools. Every year, approximately a quarter of schools in the district have a new principal at the start of the year. Taken together, these two trends—low Latinx teacher diversity and low overall rates of teacher retention—have serious implications for students in Washington, D.C.

Evidence shows that having a teacher workforce that reflects the diversity of America’s students is beneficial for students of all races. The Learning Policy Institute (LPI) reported that in a study of students grades 6 through 9 where teachers were measured along with seven metrics, including feeling cared for and challenged academically, Latinx teachers scored higher than white teachers almost every time<sup>3</sup> (LPI, Carver-Thomas, 2018, p. 5). It is also documented that students of color, in particular, perform better when they are taught by someone of their same race or ethnicity. A study based on Tennessee STAR test results showed black elementary school students taught by black teachers had scores 3 to 6 percentile points higher when compared to their black peers taught by white teachers (LPI Carver-Thomas, 2018, p. 4). While there is considerably less research surrounding the effects of Latinx teachers on Latinx students, Diana Quintero found that there is a correlation between schools with more Hispanic teachers and schools where there are more Hispanic students taking AP classes using 2015-2016 data from the Civil Rights Data Collection (2019), suggesting that Latinx students also see gains when taught by Latinx educators. Evidence suggests that these trends cross racial lines and extend beyond secondary school. LPI reported that community college students of underrepresented identities including black, Latinx, Native American and Pacific Islander students taught by faculty of color were more likely to pass classes with a grade of B or higher than underrepresented students taught by white professors (LPI, Carver-Thomas, 2018, p. 5). **In a country where Latinx students are four times less likely to graduate from a four-year college than any other demographic, increasing the Latinx teaching force in the United States could have substantial effects<sup>4</sup> (Partelow & Shapiro, 2018).**

## The Student Perspective

In this report, we spoke to Latinx students and teachers about their experiences in DC schools and the importance of recruiting, supporting and retaining Latinx, Hispanic and bilingual educators in the District. We also spoke to principals of schools with high Latinx populations, officials at local teacher preparation programs and local policy-makers about the path forward in tackling this critical issue.

<sup>2</sup> <https://sboe.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/sboe/documents/2019-11-07-FINAL-Teacher%20Attrition%20Report%202019%20%28update%29.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/diversifying-teaching-profession-report>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2018/02/20/445999/fix-large-growing-latinx-teacher-student-gap/>

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It is clear that to Latinx students like Luis Valarde, a Junior at Bell Multicultural High School at the Columbia Heights Educational Campus, Latinx teachers serve an important role in being a model for success. As role models, Latinx teachers can better motivate and inspire their students to reach for academic and professional goals that they otherwise would perceive as impossible. Luis moved from Bolivia to D.C. when he was 13 years old. “Having a Latina teacher made me feel more comfortable because she represents me. I was able to go up to my Latina teacher to speak about her university life and scholarship opportunities and it was easy for my parents to communicate with her on this level.”

A student at Roosevelt Senior High School, Omar Mendez, spoke of the importance of having Latinx educators who know what they have gone through and understand how they feel. That shared experience is invaluable to many of the students we spoke with. Roosevelt student Maria Cedillo said that her Latinx teachers are there for her beyond her academic learning and help her solve a variety of problems she confronts as a recent immigrant. Raul Rosales, a student at Roosevelt Senior High School, spoke of the importance not only for himself as a student in having an educator who shared his language and culture and smoothing the transition to a new country, but the importance for the broader student population in the “development of an international society.” In fact, evidence points to not only the benefit of teachers of color for white students, but that in fact according to a New York University study, students of all races have a more positive preference for their Black and Latinx teachers than their white teachers.<sup>5</sup> Researcher Hua-Yu Sebastian Cherng finds that this holds true when you control for a wide variety of variables. He believes that “teachers of color score more highly because of their ability to draw on their own experiences to address issues of race and gender, which, he says, can be highly germane even to teaching subjects like math, especially in America's majority-minority public schools.” (Kamenetz, NPR). Another study conducted in 1989 by M.M. Waters found that having teachers of color helps dispel the myths many white students may have internalized of racial inferiority.<sup>6</sup> Another Roosevelt student, Maria Cedillo, said that having Latinx teachers has also helped her understand and respect her non-Latinx peers.

## Challenges in Recruitment

A high school diploma is required to enter the education field, but data has shown that minority students have a lower likelihood of reaching graduation compared with white counterparts.<sup>7</sup> Students of color are also far more likely to be victims of a system that not only under-resources schools but subjects them to unstable educational conditions, all of which have been shown to lead to lower test scores and graduation rates- urban schools with high teacher turnovers<sup>8</sup>, districts that close schools instead of invest in them<sup>9</sup> and rising housing prices that force many families to move school or districts. These frequent educational disruptions can be detrimental to student success.

We spoke to Dr. Jacqueline Greer, associate professor of education and counseling at Trinity Washington University, who said “Teachers of color who have become teachers means they have

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/10/07/496717541/study-finds-students-of-all-races-prefer-teachers-of-color>

<sup>6</sup> Waters, M. M. (1989). An agenda for educating Black teachers. *The Educational Forum*, 53(3), 267–279

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.americaspromise.org/high-school-graduation-facts-ending-dropout-crisis>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.thegraidenetwork.com/blog-all/impact-of-teacher-turnover-on-student-learning>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.tulane.edu/~mflarsen/uploads/2/2/5/4/22549316/mflarsen\\_schoolclosings.pdf](https://www.tulane.edu/~mflarsen/uploads/2/2/5/4/22549316/mflarsen_schoolclosings.pdf)

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been successful in a system that was not designed for them... so their ability to be able to connect how they have experienced this system to persist in education is really important."

Desiree Carver Thomas, a member of the Learning Policy Institute's Education Quality Team and author of *Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color*, addresses additional responsibilities students of color face, such as working to pay for the cost of college, family responsibilities, and transportation fees. Financial strain can affect the choice to enter teacher preparation programs: "teacher preparation programs require students to take out large loans with little promise of financial reward. With these constraints, teaching has steadily lost prestige among college students, becoming a career of last option"<sup>10</sup> (Bireda & Chait, 2011, p. 2). A 2018 review of comparative college debt cited these troubling gaps. "An estimated 86.8% of black students borrow federal student loans to attend a four-year public college, as opposed to 59.9% of white students, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)...Hispanic students also borrow at relatively high rates: 65% at public four-year colleges and 73.5% at private four-year colleges."<sup>11</sup> Instead of relying on loan forgiveness alone, there is promise in programs that pay in advance for a student's college education, provided they commit to teaching in their local community upon completion. If teachers of color do decide to pursue teaching, they risk the daunting prospect of a high debt load in a low salary profession, driving many to reconsider education as a sustainable career path. Moreover, teaching can place students of color in financial instability, as they have to pay off these loans with a teacher's salary. **While D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) offers salaries among the highest in the nation, DCPS salaries still rank 21st in the country when accounting for cost of living—a key factor in considering teacher retention over the long term. Moreover, D.C.'s charter schools, which include many schools with high Latinx populations, have widely varying salaries. Thirty-five D.C. charter schools currently have starting salaries below a livable wage (a wage that would allow them to rent a studio apartment at average market value in DC) - a major deterrent for all applicants, but especially for applicants with significant debt or student loans.**

Another critical priority is diversifying the college faculty responsible for preparing the next generation of educators. In an interview, Desiree Carver-Thomas stated, "Research done with students of underrepresented groups got better grades when their teachers were faculty members of color – there is a connection there." Ultimately, this supports the well-documented idea that the architects of a system build that system with people like themselves in mind.

Carolyn Parker, Director of the Master of Arts in Teaching Program in the School of Education at American University, reinforces this idea when she argues "Our [education] system is institutionally racist against people of color. People of color are often seen as not part of the community. There is a lot of research on people gravitating towards people that look like them." In very similar ways, the impacts made on a high school level are repeated in higher education when students can't see themselves reflected in staff.

Though not a formal support structure, strong relationships with administrators can prove crucial to overcoming personal, academic, or social problems faced by students of color. Especially at the

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2011/11/09/10636/increasing-teacher-diversity/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://studentloanhero.com/featured/study-student-loans-weigh-heaviest-black-hispanic/>

graduate level, students are often juggling more than just academics, and, indeed, may be in the midpoint of their careers. Dr. Greer, from Trinity Washington University, spoke about efforts to connect with students facing these types of challenges: “We get to know our students individually. We determine the support that they need, in terms of academic support, personal issues in terms of making sure that they know that they the counseling services are available to them, and that all of the academic support systems are there.” **With all of the barriers students of color in graduate-level education face, a lack of access to diverse faculty only accentuates the barriers, as professors and mentors who could recognize some of the unique challenges they face are in low supply.**

Dr. Greer also spoke of the importance of students and future educators seeing themselves as change-makers in the process of reform: “I think there needs to be more preparation programs that emphasize what we do--curriculum reform. I think that people are willing to come into a profession where they can see that programs are going to help them change the existing system and to be reformers. To be change agents, even though this is an exhausting task on top of [everything]. I think this is how you recruit more Latinx and other people of color.” In her view, to enter the profession, “you have to be willing to be a change agent.”

### **Teacher Preparation for Teacher Retention**

While many teachers of color enter the profession through alternate licensure programs where they receive comparatively little clinical practice, according to the Learning Policy Institute, **“Teachers who enter the field with little preparation are two to three times more likely to leave their schools than those who had comprehensive preparation”** (Carver-Thomas, LPI, 2018, p. 11).

According to Ms. Carver-Thomas, comprehensive preparation consists of “comprehensive, theoretical, and clinical practice.” Some examples are “courses on learning theory, how children learn and develop, teaching methods, granting opportunities to teach for at least a semester if not longer, to observe Master teachers, and receive feedback on their own teaching.”

Teacher residencies are partnerships between districts and universities that subsidize and improve teachers’ training to teach in high-need schools and in high-demand subject areas (Carver-Thomas, 2018, p. 19). A quality teacher residency program includes learning from an accomplished veteran teacher, a service commitment, and cohort clusters (Carver-Thomas, LPI, 2018, p. 25). With this model, soon-to-be teachers gain a better understanding of what it takes to be a teacher, how to be effective, and imitate strategies from other peers to improve their practice as teachers. Forty-nine percent of students in residencies are people of color (Carver-Thomas, LPI, 2018, p. 25), which suggests that future teachers of color prefer this model of education. When teachers are well prepared for classroom practice, they are more likely to remain in the profession year after year, and retention rates increase. An October 2019 report from the New America Foundation profiled Chicago’s bilingual teacher residency program as a model of successful clinical experience.<sup>12</sup>

Once students of color complete their teacher preparation program, they continue to encounter challenges to become a licensed teacher, including passing the Praxis exam. The Praxis exam

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/paving-way-latinx-teachers/profile-chicagos-bilingual-teacher-residency-program>

“measures the academic skills and subject-specific content knowledge needed for teaching.” Data show that “teacher candidates of color, on average, have lower scale scores on most national and state-level assessments”<sup>13</sup> (Taylor NEA 2017). This finding, along with other national studies of how racial demographics are related to achievement on standardized tests, suggests an institutional obstacle to becoming a licensed teacher, outside of the control of an otherwise-qualified candidate of color.

Apart from scoring lower, Latinx teachers can also face additional challenges when English is not their first language. Ms. Parker addresses the added obstacles for Latinx teachers: **“There is a lot of research that has shown standardized exams can be biased against students of color and against Latinx students, particularly against Latinx students who grew up speaking a language other than English at home.** The academic language to be able to do well on those exams are biased against students for whom English is not their first language.”

Standardized testing, as connected to licensure, is still the norm against which a teacher’s qualifications are measured, despite the concerning implications of race-based differences in scores. On Praxis I, for example, Hispanic test-takers had a 21% lower pass rate on the mathematics portion, 16.8% lower in reading and 16.5% lower in writing.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, similar racial-gaps exist in SAT and ACT pass rates. Until this stops being the case, the best way to support students navigating licensure is by providing resources, guidance, and support as administrators and staff.

## Support and Retention

Latinx teachers, and teachers of color in general, take on additional responsibilities outside of their official duties because they are most likely to be the resources for students of color on multiple issues (Carver-Thomas, LPI, 2018, p. 12). For example, some Latinx teachers who are bilingual go beyond professional duties to provide educational resources for Latin[x] children and their parents (Griffin, EdTrust, 2018, p. 9). Latinx teachers become a resource for the entire school and their community without being compensated for their labor<sup>15</sup> (Griffin, EdTrust, 2018, p. 9). A report about perspectives and reflections from Latinx teachers frames it as being “taxed with negotiating relationships between parents, students, and school staff” (Griffin, EdTrust, 2018, p. 9). The additional labor that these Latinx and/or bilingual teachers provide is usually uncompensated. Schools should create policies that delineate how this type of work is shared and compensated. To prevent the additional work from potentially falling on one to two teachers, schools should prioritize hiring more staff with bilingual capabilities and skills as community liaisons.

In order to retain teachers of color, school communities should ensure that teachers of color receive the support they need to be successful. To this end, school administrators must ensure that all staff feel supported in their roles and that supports are differentiated to meet all teachers’ needs. Often, teachers of color feel as though they do not have adequate support from their administrators. We spoke with Beatriz Quintos, an assistant clinical professor at the University of Maryland in Math Education, who told us “[I]f teachers don’t feel they fit [into] the majority and the schools are not

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/Minority%20Teacher%20Candiadtes%20and%20High-Stakes%20Assessments.%20NBI%2016%202017.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/ETS-NEA-2011-01.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <https://edtrust.org/resource/our-stories-our-struggles-our-strengths/>

culturally relevant for the teachers, it may be a challenge to feel accepted and part of the community.”

In order for teachers of colors to feel confident in their roles and receive the support they need, administrators and districts should create mentorship programs between experienced teachers of color and newly-entered teachers of color. These programs can go a long way to ensuring that teachers of color feel capable of doing their jobs well. Dr. Greer says: “My students don’t feel prepared supported when they get into the schools. [T]here isn’t anyone to mentor them that is another Latinx person.” It is best practice to “have a mentor for every teacher. . .but especially in terms of teachers of color and especially the Latinx population.” She puts the responsibility for changing this on the school system, lamenting that “our school systems [don’t] understand” that the Latinx population is a “real minority,” in need of supportive practices.

### **Retaining Latinx Teachers in D.C.- The Teacher Experience**

Latinx teachers in our sample describe using their cultural, language, or ethnic/ national background to create a familial environment for their students. Justin Lopez-Cardoze, 2020 D.C. Teacher of the Year, describes his experience as a Latinx teacher at Capital City Public Charter School as being “able to share culture and share how we speak about our experiences at home.” He notes that Latinx teachers are able to build strong relationships based on shared culture with students, but also with their parents. Lopez-Cardoze reflects on the strong bond that comes from sharing his heritage from El Salvador with the families he works with, especially when he discovers some families come from the same state in El Salvador. “It has been an incredible experience because these are the people who I grew up with. This reminds me of family and how important having that connection is.”

As teachers knock down barriers to build trust with students and their families, teachers noted that one of their key strengths was being a role model and showing students the possibilities life has to offer by highlighting their own success. **A Special Education Teacher at Creative Minds International Charter School, Christian Roman states that “As a Latino teacher, one of my most important roles is to make sure I am a living role model, to show that they can do more, not just see that Latinos are the ones in construction, paving roads, working as carpenters... but that we can pursue intellectual endeavors which receive a college degree. It destroys prejudices.”** As role models, Latinx teachers believe they can motivate and inspire students in order to contribute to their academic and professional aspirations.

Lavinia Aguião, a Afro-Latina Special Education Teacher in English and World History at Capital City Public Charter School, highlighted the importance of cultural affirmation. “My speciality is culturally relevant pedagogy which means that if I am teaching Black and Latino students, you should have Black and Latino people as points of reference. If I am teaching math, let’s talk about all the great Black and Latino mathematicians. If I am teaching English, I am not just going to center around White authors, take a great books that centers on people of color.” For Latinx teachers, acknowledging who students are and where they come from by incorporating educational practices into the classroom means they can serve their students better by shaping the curriculum to include multicultural materials and culturally relevant pedagogy that recognizes and honors their students.

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**Latinx educators also serve as critical advocates for their Latinx students. An Interventionist teacher at KIPP D.C. Quest Academy, Victoria Will, encapsulates the role of Latinx teachers by stating, “these kids and families do not need someone to save them, they need someone to fight for them. They need someone to advocate that we will treat these students equally with funding and materials.”** At H.D. Cooke Elementary School, Angelica Guerrero was originally offered a part-time third-grade teaching position and a part-time position as an instructional coach for the ESL (English as a Second Language) Team. However, when the school received 20 newcomers, Guerrero had to step up to the plate and provide services to newcomers as well. She shared, “As a teacher of color, I cannot be okay with the way the students of color are served. I am not okay with newcomers sitting in a classroom with no services. We make sure those services become priority.”

### **Teacher Perspective on the Latinx Teacher Tax**

Embedding a bilingual curriculum, being pulled aside to translate, or serving as the main points of contact for Latinx students are all examples of what some refer to as a “Latinx teacher tax”- extra responsibilities taken on by Latinx and bilingual educators without additional compensation and often without recognition. Although Latinx teachers are often more than happy to provide these services, it often means a higher workload for one of few Latinx teachers who assumes responsibility for all the Latinx families in their school. Israel Tovar, a 10th grade teacher at Capital City Public Charter School, notes that “I take on more responsibility. In the sense that I am able to authentically engage parents because I speak Spanish, more parents are in contact with me. Students tend to feel more comfortable with me that they want to eat lunch with me and spend more time. It is wonderful! But at the same time, I am spending more time than a white teacher communicating with parents through translating letters sent home.” Tovar’s experience describing the additional workload is affirmed in the report by The Education Trust in which one Latinx teacher states, “So how is [teaching] different from my partner? Well, she does everything in one language. I have to figure out a way that if you don’t get it in English, then you have to get it in Spanish. If you don’t get it in Spanish, you have to get it in English. So it’s like double the work, you know. It’s what it is right now. You have to work with what you have and move on from there.”

### **The Principal Perspective**

With the imperative need to have a teacher workforce that properly represents the increasingly diverse population, we talked with principals within D.C. public and public charter schools to evaluate their views of the importance of having Latinx educators in their schools. A common trend amongst the D.C. principals interviewed was the commitment to maintaining a diverse faculty and student population. A Ward 6 DCPS principal told us **“It is critical to recruit and retain more Latinx educators in DC because all students should have access to diverse learning environments where both different languages and cultures are celebrated.”**

A charter school principal in Ward 1 stated that during the recruitment phase, identifying those candidates and making sure that they prioritize specific candidates who fit the profile and the demographics of the student population that they serve, is their goal. A DCPS principal in Ward 4 identified a crucial issue in Washington D.C. “The challenges often come with making sure that D.C. has a candidate pool available for interviews to make sure that schools have individuals to grow

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with and bring into this narrative. It has been difficult because this isn't just a teacher aspect. It goes across the board when looking for educational aides. When looking for behavior techs, we search for front office staff support. When searching for these support teams, we look into attendance counselors. **The challenge in hiring Latinx staff stretches along with all positions through my school, not just teachers.** What are these principals doing to retain Latinx educators? Some have recognized that in order to keep Latinx teachers, they must continue to empower them and help them achieve new goals. One of the principals explained that establishing a relationship with open lines of communication with the teachers within their schools provides an opportunity for the school, teachers, and students to move forward. **"We have to ensure that the school culture is really supportive of all our teacher's voices in the curriculum and procedure."**

Policy makers and district officials must help provide pathways for Latinx educators to enter the principal pipeline as well. **With a growing demand for dual language and multilingual education in DC, we must place a priority on recruiting and retaining Latinx, Hispanic and multilingual principals to the district. Just as it's critical for students to see themselves in their teachers, it's critical for both students and staff to see themselves represented in leadership- and for others to be exposed to talented, diverse and culturally responsive leaders.**

Ensuring we retain our Latinx educators means taking teacher voice seriously. When asked about how these principals combat challenges related to stereotypes or biases within their schools, many principals elaborated on practices they have incorporated within the hiring process and ways they have developed their staff culture in anti-bias work. A principal from Ward 4 stated that when opening up for the hiring process, their school remains as clear and transparent as possible. "It is essential that we accept the feedback from our teachers and staff to ensure we are properly providing to all our students." This principal also tapped into community partners in order to have race and equity conversations with the staff that will help them push students to do the same.

The principal of a public charter school in D.C. incorporated a seminar during their professional development that included a discussion about cultural sensitivity, especially amongst the Latinx community. This principal recognizes the importance of understanding that everyone is different and encourages the school's faculty to come together through various ways of appreciating each other's cultures and sharing different cultural knowledge.

### **The Policy-Maker Perspective**

Despite a consensus among policymakers that Latinx teacher diversity is crucial, in interviews with several high-ranking policy makers there does not yet appear to be a coordinated strategy to recruit and retain Latinx educators in the district. **A common theme of our discussions was the consensus that a lack of Latinx representation at the top levels of DC education policy-making must be addressed, and likely contributed to the lack of focus in this area to date.**

Policymakers agreed that representation at all levels of D.C. education is crucial to spur representation in the teaching force. Multiple interviewees remarked that DCPS does not have a single Latinx individual serving in senior leadership, and that reality must change if meaningful

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Latinx teacher diversity is the goal. Steve Bubmaugh, a member of the Public Charter School Board, said “I can't off the top of my head think of a single Latinx senior-level executive at DCPS, and that's how you recruit.” LeKisha Jordan, the legislative aide to Council Chairman Phil Mendelson, echoed this concern: “I'm wondering if there are enough folks at the central office, or in charge of recruitment and hiring for the district that do identify as Latinx that are helping to or are involved in the recruitment process,” Jordan shared. **“The visibility of Latinx teachers or Latinx professionals in the education space overall is lacking,”** said **Akeem Anderson, Director of the Committee on Education at the DC Council** agreed, echoing the importance of representation in all levels of the D.C. education system and said that those who hold power either need to become more diverse or be more intentional about listening to diverse communities.

So whose job is it to take on this challenge? Individuals working within the D.C. Council seem to agree that increasing Latinx teacher diversity requires school and agency driven approaches. “We put the ball in DCPS's court, they have to programmatically solve the problem,” said Ward 1 Councilmember Brianna Nadeau. “In some ways, it's not something necessarily that the council would be taking on but something we would [be] monitoring.”

LeKisha Jordan shared that having buy-in from the community in terms of policies and practices goes further in terms of sustainability than legislation does. “I'm sort of conflicted because I do think that having the power to have something in law really gives the opportunity to bring light to that particular thing,” Jordan said. “At the same time, I want to live and work in a world and space in which that is the norm without having to be spelled out legislatively.”

Additionally, while DCPS can craft policy aimed at increasing Latinx teacher diversity that affects schools across the district, the charter sector must tackle this issue school by school, because of the individual accountability valued by the D.C. Public Charter School Board. The passage of pending school transparency legislation before the D.C. council could provide those working in D.C. education with a fuller sense of Latinx diversity in the charter sector.

Schools also have an important role in taking on this issue individually, to ensure that their staff reflect the student body. Steve Bumbaugh provided some context for why this may be a challenge for schools to take on. Considering the reality that high stakes testing is a top priority for schools and districts, a shift away from test scores in the evaluative frameworks for schools can actually result in stronger policy and practice around issues like teacher diversity and cultural competency. “We've been in this ed reform phase for 20, 25 years where we have applied corporate principals to education. I think that's largely been counterproductive, but the most tangible byproduct of that has been reducing quality down to an actual number, and that number in D.C. is a PARCC score. So in the charter sector, 70% of the way an individual school is measured is through the PARCC score, and I think it's a terrible way to evaluate a school. You can guess right now which schools get punished and which schools get elevated when that's your evaluative framework. **But when principals and superintendents and teachers are working so hard to elevate scores on the PARCC, things like cultural competency and the composition of your teaching staff don't get particularly emphasized, and that is, in my 31 years of being in this work, what actually turns education into a social mobility engine, is to have absolutely excellent teachers, is to have tight-knit relationships with parents, but you produce what you are measured on, schools aren't measured on that, and it's baffling to me actually.”**

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In reality, the responsibility to take on this challenge belongs to all of us- educators, principals, policy makers, teacher preparation programs, advocates and the broader community. But the demand is clear. Ward 1 Council Member Brianne Nadeau, who represents the ward with the largest gap between Latinx students and educators, says “We have in my ward a very large Latino population, so one of the things we have been working on as a council is expanding language immersion programs, not only because they have such a great academic benefit for our native English speakers but also because it does help our ESL students transition and become more fluent in English...We as a council have definitely committed to the idea that we need more language immersion programs, but the challenge is the workforce.”

Finally, policymakers recognize the effect stakeholders have in keeping the conversation about this issue active. **Parents, teachers and students have a unique role in gaining the attention of policymakers to address their needs.** By contacting DCPS leadership, testifying at DC Council oversight hearings for DCPS, the Public Charter School Board, the Deputy Mayor for Education, OSSE and providing public comments at the monthly State Board of Education meetings, stakeholders can make clear this issue is a priority. Moreover, parents, teachers and students should ask their own school officials if they have a strategy to build a diverse and reflection workforce and ensure the issue stays on the radar of school leaders- who can in turn ask for the policy-backing and support they need.

## Existing Policy Consensus

**Council Member Brianne Nadeau said it best- “Politically, no one is opposed to expanding [and diversifying] the workforce, there just isn't a strategic plan for it.”** Our review found that there is a strong existing consensus from all stakeholders that we must confront this issue. There is a deep reservoir of support and demand in wait of a plan.

Washington, D.C. has already begun experimenting with a limited “Grown Your Own” program pilot to recruit a diverse, qualified, supported teaching force, beginning in high school in a collaboration between DCPS and American University. We recommend these programs be expanded, funded and widened to include schools with high Latinx populations. LPI also reports that involving teachers of color in the hiring and recruitment process in a meaningful way can result in an increasingly diverse teaching force (Carver-Thomas, LPI, 2018), the benefits of which can be coupled with Bellwether Education’s finding, based on DCPS teacher exit surveys, that teachers of color desire more leadership opportunities<sup>16</sup> (Bellwether Education, Retaining High Performers, 2018).

## Conclusion

As we have demonstrated, a widespread consensus exists that this is a challenge we must confront and the will exists to solve it. There is action that can be taken both administratively and legislatively beginning immediately to enhance the recruitment, support and retention of Latinx educators in the District. Policy-makers, agency leaders and school leaders can take immediate steps as outlined in our recommendations to begin to move us in the right direction. Education leaders at all levels agree

<sup>16</sup> [https://bellwethereducation.org/sites/default/files/DCPS%20Retention%20Deck\\_5.7.18\\_FINAL.pdf](https://bellwethereducation.org/sites/default/files/DCPS%20Retention%20Deck_5.7.18_FINAL.pdf)

that representation matters, agree on the value of diversity and the need for culturally responsive curriculum. Policy makers agree that Grow Your Own programs have a proven track record of success, that we must invest in early childhood education and meet the growing demand for multilingual education- including for the purpose of preserving the heritage and native language of our growing Latinx population. We also want to highlight the unique contributions of our Afro-Latino educators and urge policy makers to prioritize recruitment of these uniquely valuable educators. **We believe the recommendations offered in this report and the roadmap for action provided can serve as a guide for the large coalition of organizations and individuals that care deeply about the need to further support DC’s Latinx community beginning in our education system.**

**Credits:** Thank you so much to Dr. Emily Gasoi and her Georgetown University “Education, Advocacy and Equity” students for their contributions to this report. A big thank you to EmpowerEd’s teacher fellows for their involvement, especially the Teacher Diversity Teacher Action Group, and most importantly, to all of the Latinx, Hispanic and bilingual educators making a difference for our students every day.

# Recommendations

1

## **Increase Latinx representation in education policy-making, school leadership and higher education**

More Latinx and bilingual principals are desperately needed for schools with high Latinx student populations. Building more representative leadership at the city's education agencies and among senior DC education policy makers will also add critical voices and knowledge to prioritize Latinx education representation. Higher education institutions in the DC area should work to increase Latinx representation in their faculty - especially with former Birth-12 educators to ensure future Latinx educators feel well prepared for the unique challenges they face entering the classroom for the first time.

2

## **Investigate and act to remove certification barriers for Latinx teacher candidates**

OSSE and/ or the new Research Practice Partnership, should conduct a full review and publicly report on what current certification requirements are obstacles to increasing the pool of Latinx teachers in DC including PRAXIS test requirements and the transfer of education credentials and experience from other countries.

3

## **Increase and fund "Grow Your Own" programs, Develop a new generation of LatinX DC teachers**

The city should expand programs that encourage and support Latinx DC students to study education and commit to teach in DC. To impact both sectors, we recommend this be coordinated through the Deputy Mayor of Education and funded by the DC Council in partnership with DCPS and charter schools. Since teachers of color who go through traditional, university-based and clinical preparation programs are shown to stay significantly longer, we recommend the city fund and universities contribute to upfront student scholarships for students who commit to a minimum stint teaching in DC upon graduation.

4

## **Fund additional ELL, dual language positions and prioritize bilingual counselors/ social workers**

Spanish-Speaking teachers regularly report a "Latinx/ Spanish-Speaking teacher tax" whereby they are asked to perform tasks beyond their job description, like regularly translating and supporting additional classes where students don't have a bilingual teacher. ELL Teachers also report regularly being pulled into other roles because there aren't enough ELL teachers to push-in to all of the classrooms that need it. This leads to much faster burnout for these teachers. We should fund additional positions over and above the current CSM for any school with above a certain percentage of Spanish-speaking or dual language students or students enrolled in a dual-language program. In those schools, our city must also prioritize and invest in recruiting and retaining Latinx and Spanish-Speaking counselors and social workers- a key priority given the high levels of trauma experienced by so many of our immigrant youth.

5

## **Value diversity and cultural competency in school & teacher evaluation**

OSSE's school report card and the STAR school rating framework should measure and count teacher diversity to incentivize recruiting and retaining diverse staff. Teacher evaluations should give appropriate credit for the value a teacher's cultural competency brings to their students.

# Recommendations



## Fund Birth to Three & ensure all D.C. schools have starting salaries above the living wage needed to live in the city

First, ensure early care providers are well paid through Birth to Three and that regulations do not discount experience and training outside the United States. Second, ensure that all schools have starting salaries above the DC living wage. Currently, many of the charter schools serving a high population of Latinx youth have starting salaries below the wage needed to rent a studio apartment in DC (\$56,000 annually). Additionally, paraprofessionals in DCPS and the charter sector have salaries well below the living wage. When Latinx students graduate they have on average higher student debt than white counterparts. If we're serious about recruiting a diverse workforce, we must pay them like we value them.



## Support and spur growth in bilingual & dual language education programs in D.C.

Consistent research demonstrates the broad positive impacts multilingual education has on all students, regardless of race or previous language experience. Dual language learning increases cognitive dexterity, cultural awareness and helps close achievement gaps. Additional programs will not only help fill the huge demand for these programs and the demand for multilingual speakers in the workforce, but also ensure that our young Latinx students who may not speak or practice Spanish at home can preserve their heritage through language and have the potential to become future Latinx dual language educators. Currently, only 20% of English Learners In DC are enrolled in dual language programs. We should prioritize growth among ELs in dual language programs.



## Build culturally responsive curricula for schools

As OSSE and the State Board of Education work to revise DC's social studies standards, they should consider the cultural relevancy of current standards to our Latinx students (and all students). We should also work to ensure Latinx representation in curriculum design and ensure culturally relevant curricula in university and other teacher preparation programs.

## Pass a Clean DREAM Act

At the national level, passing a clean DREAM Act is vital and will go a long way to ensuring the safety and security of many of our current students, allowing their families to feel secure and able to fully participate in their school community, reducing the trauma caused by the constant fear of deportation and allowing immigrant youth to pursue a career in teaching.



## Federal funding for the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH)

By ensuring funding for federal TEACH grants, we can provide a more secure path for teacher candidates of color to pursue their passion to teach in an urban community like D.C. D.C. should also consider its own grant program in conjunction with local Grow Your Own initiatives.

# Roadmap for Action

## Mayor & DC Council

1. Consider hiring Latinx staff in senior roles relevant to education policy
2. Plan and ensure budget funding for Grow Your Own programs for educators of color.
3. Fully fund Birth to 3 and ensure requirements on child care providers don't push Latinx early childhood providers out of the field
4. Spur further expansion of dual language programs
5. Ensure Latinx representation on the new Research Practice Partnership.
6. Require all schools to pay educators a living wage
7. Exercise oversight of education agencies and plans to recruit, support and retain Latinx staff- including OSSE certification requirements

## DCPS

1. Hire/ promote Latinx leaders to senior leadership roles
2. Develop comprehensive strategy for recruiting, supporting and retaining Latinx educators
3. Create a pipeline for and promote Latinx leaders to school leader roles
4. Add an Additional ELL position in CSM
5. Ensure all schools with above a 3 % population of ELLs have a Language Access Coordinator
6. Thoughtfully, but urgently, grow dual language programs and educate EL families (and others) on the benefits.
6. Value cultural competency in the evaluation of educators

## OSSE

1. Conduct thorough review of certification requirements and potential barriers for Latinx educators and the transfer of education credentials and experience from abroad.
2. Count and measure teacher diversity in the STAR evaluation framework to prioritize and incentivize the hiring and retention of diverse staff and report it on the school report card.
3. Work with local universities and the Deputy Mayor for Education to help facilitate the development of a new, systemic Grow Your Own program In DC.
4. Hire and promote Latinx leaders into senior leadership roles.

# Roadmap for Action

## Principals

1. Ensure proper support for Latinx educators and value their cultural competency
2. Ensure Latinx educators are not charged a "Latinx teacher tax" by being asked to perform additional responsibilities without additional compensation because of language ability or cultural competency
3. Include Latinx educators in school leadership positions including on hiring committees
4. Identify and support current Latinx staff who may be interested in becoming certified classroom teachers.
5. Help identify and provide career counseling to students at the high school level as potential future educators
6. Identify teacher race or use pictures on your website/ school directory so parents can see representation

## Educators

1. Show appreciation for your Latinx colleagues.
2. Advocate for Latinx colleagues to take on positions of school leadership.
3. Help identify and provide career counseling to students at the high school level as potential future educators
4. Share your own stories as a Latinx educator with policy makers, principals and others.
5. Seek out quality training in cultural competency, equity and inclusion.



## Advocates

1. Join the Campaign for Latinx Representation in DC Education
2. Call and Email DC Council Members:
  - Ask for support for more dual language programs
  - Full funding for the Birth to Three law
  - Funding scholarships for future educators of color
  - Requiring a living wage for all DC teachers
3. Share this campaign with teacher colleagues/ friends, community members and fellow advocates.
4. Vote for Latinx candidates for local office. Greater representation will ensure these issues stay on the agenda!
5. Support the organizations in this coalition. Sign up for email list and make a donation to organizations working to support Latinx educators, the immigrant community, culturally responsive teaching and multilingual education.

# *Join the ¡Presente! Coalition*

We're looking to build a large and diverse coalition to ensure our city prioritizes our Latinx community and educators. Go to [www.weareempowered.org/latinx](http://www.weareempowered.org/latinx) to join the Latinx Educators ¡Presente! Coalition by signing on to help us advance at least one of the recommendations in this report and helping us bring others into this coalition. Together, we will ensure a more diverse educator workforce that serves all students and values our educators as the professionals they are.

