

# CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP: IMPACTING THE CLASS ROOM THROUGH INCREASING CULTURAL COMPETENCY

## RADICAL ADVOCATES for CROSS-CULTURAL EDUCATION-R.A.C.C.E.

### Can Minority Educators Make A Difference?

**National:** The answer to this question is YES. The National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force (NCDTF, 2004) report suggested that teachers of color can help close the academic achievement gap, particularly if they are skilled at culturally responsive instruction and hold high expectations of their students. More importantly the NCDTF reported that “students of color tend to have higher academic, personal and social performance when taught by teachers of their own ethnic group. There is decades of data that supports this claim, but little has been done to improve this educational dilemma. Fortunately, the number of elementary and secondary minority teachers has dramatically increased over the last 20 years from **325,000 to 642,000**.

**Connecticut:** Decades of data exists to support the above claims, but little has been done to improve this educational dilemma in our state. Pointing out that our state colleges and universities have only 5% of their Teacher Preparatory programs enrolled with both Black and Hispanic candidates is not enough. We also have to acknowledge that some of the laws governing teacher certification are more burdensome to minority teacher candidates in our state, and severely restrict our school district from recruiting highly qualified minority candidates from out of state. Combining how minority teachers can help reduce achievements gaps and our state being acknowledged multiple times for having the largest achievement gaps in the nation by National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) it only makes sense to take action that brings more minority teachers to Connecticut.

**Waterbury:** Let’s be clear, we **do not** believe our school district is filled with unqualified, inexperienced, inept White school professionals, but we have a clear understanding of the impacts of having culturally competent and culturally similar teachers and school professionals working with non-white students, which is based heavily in data, as well as socio-cultural. However our city has a huge dilemma. We have struggling schools with school children who are affected by generational poverty, mass incarceration, and language barriers. Our student body is 78% non white and is served by a professional staff that is 88% white. This gap is one of the largest in the state. This gap contributes to a disparate disciplinary rate for Black and Hispanic students and makes closing the the achievements nearly impossible. Waterbury has partnered with ACES (\$100 million non-profit) to recruit minority teachers but little has been accomplished. Over the last 7 years Waterbury has hired 1059 teachers and has only hired 90 Black or Hispanic teachers. Accountability reforms and retirements force Waterbury to hire large numbers of teachers every year. We must formulate programs that lead to significantly greater hiring rates and retention rates of non-white school professionals.

### R.A.C.C.E. RECOMMENDS

- *Create and fund a local Minority Teacher Recruitment Center. Where both the the W.T.A. and S.A.W. aggressively promote our district as a preferred destination for newly certified, as well as a pathway to promotion for certified teachers and administrators with established success.*
- *Create Mentorship program that hires retired non-white teachers to mentor newly hired non-white teachers.*
- *Create statewide initiatives to fund teacher preparation programs that specifically target minority teacher candidates.*
- *Our district should invest in creating professional development that focuses on cultural competency, works to identify implicit and explicit bias, and sets specific goals to minimize the effects on students.*
- *Support the repeal of legislative barriers to hiring non-white teachers, such as **Section 36 of Public Act 12-116**, which requires an applicant for a professional educator certificate to hold a master's degree (7/2016).*
- *Make sure legislators fund mechanisms, for **Public Act 15-243** which allows Teacher Preparatory Programs to be judged by their quality of teacher preparation, how new teachers help their students learn, and efficacy of programs abilities to recruitment minority teacher and administrator candidates. **Despite having one of the nations most rigorous certification requirements, Connecticut Teacher Preparatory Programs' were poorly rated going (D+,2009, B-, 2013 ) by the NCTQ.***
- *Make sure legislators fund mechanisms for **Public Act 15-108**, so that it can be successful. Especially the section that requires our CSDE Commissioner to create certification reciprocity agreements with states. As citizens, we must make it clear that the CSDE target states that produce high numbers of qualified Black and Hispanic teacher candidates first.*

