State and Local Strategies for Diversifying the CTE Educator Workforce
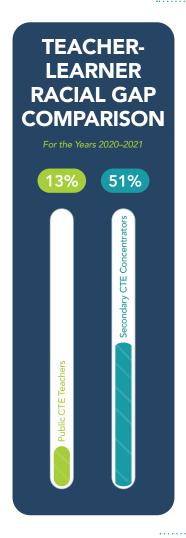
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A major barrier to achieving equitable access and success in Career Technical Education (CTE) programs is the lack of diversity among CTE educators. An analysis of data reported for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V) reveals that 51 percent of secondary CTE concentrators were learners of color in 2021–22;[1] however, only 13 percent of CTE teachers in public schools were people of color in 2020–21.[2]

While efforts are emerging across the country to recruit and retain diverse CTE instructors, diversification is a real challenge as the CTE field also faces teacher shortages, even without taking diversity into account. To investigate the full scope of the issue and identify promising practices, Advance CTE and the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) engaged with national, state and local experts in CTE, teacher preparation and teacher diversity to consider this critical issue and gather a variety of perspectives and potential solutions for diversifying the secondary CTE educator workforce.

The two resources that emerged from this collaboration are designed to assist state and local CTE leaders with strategically planning and developing policies and practices to increase diversity in the secondary CTE educator workforce. One is a report that provides state and local CTE leaders with recommendations gleaned from national, state and local experts as well as from focus groups held with CTE teachers and administrators of color, informed by data and research. An accompanying resource — a list of organizations that represent industry professionals, current and future educators, and learners from underserved sectors of the population — attempts to address one issue identified by experts and focus group participants: where to begin when recruiting diverse professionals to become CTE educators.

TEACHER-LEARNER RACIAL GAP COMPARISON

For the Years 2020–2021

13% **51%**

Public CTE Teachers | Secondary CTE Concentrators

ADVANCE>>CTE
State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work

ACTE
ASSOCIATION FOR CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION®

MAKING THE CASE

Research has demonstrated the benefits of racial and ethnic diversification in the educator workforce generally. Teachers of color are associated with improved academic performance for learners of color; learners of color with teachers of color are less likely to be chronically absent or suspended; and learners of all races and ethnicities report feeling that their teachers of color care about them.[3] Teachers and administrators of color also provide learners examples of Black and brown professionals and leaders, showing learners of color that a career in education is a possibility for them. In addition, greater diversity among educators can make teachers and administrators of color in the field feel less isolated, increasing retention.

Despite these benefits of educator diversity, more than 80 percent of the public school teacher workforce in the United States in 2020-21 identified as white.[4] While the teacher workforce has become more diverse in recent decades, the percentage of teachers of color falls far short of the percentage of learners of color in public schools.[5] Diversity of the teaching workforce is a challenge across urban, suburban and rural communities, with rural communities becoming increasingly racially and ethnically diverse in the past decade.[6]

The CTE teacher workforce is similar in racial demographics to the overall public school teacher workforce. And while little research has focused on the racial and ethnic demographics of CTE educators or the impact of diversification in CTE specifically, diversity in CTE has the added benefit of showing learners examples of successful professionals of color with experience in the career fields that interest them.

> "It's really hard for kids to be who they can't see."
>
> PARTICIPANT OF THE CTE EDUCATOR DIVERSITY FOCUS GROUPS

Educator diversity may be particularly impactful for high-wage, in-demand CTE programs of study in which learners of color are under-represented. For instance, on a national level, Black learners were under-represented as secondary CTE concentrators in the Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) Career Cluster® in 2021–22.[7] Increasing the number of CTE teachers of color in STEM program areas could help close this equity gap.

In addition, while diversifying the CTE educator workforce is particularly relevant because of how it could affect equitable access to programs that prepare learners for high-wage career fields, communities should ensure that lower wage education roles can serve as launchpads to higher wage education careers. In this case, CTE programs of study must prioritize incorporating credit transfer agreements, credential attainment and other program elements that help all learners who choose important but less remunerative occupations, particularly historically underserved learners, to pursue further education and credentials after high school or later in life.

RESOURCE 1: STATE AND LOCAL STRATEGIES FOR DIVERSIFYING THE CTE EDUCATOR WORKFORCE

The first resource that grew out of this work is a report describing a number of strategies that state and local CTE leaders may consider pursuing to assess and improve diversity in the CTE educator workforce.

- *ASSESS THE CURRENT STATE OF CTE EDUCATOR DIVERSITY:* Before state and local CTE leaders can act on diversifying the secondary CTE educator workforce, they must first define and understand the scope of the issue. Strategies in this section include analyzing data to understand CTE educator demographics and incorporating an evaluation of educator diversity into the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment required under Perkins V.

- *PROMOTE CTE AS A CAREER CHOICE:* Once state and local CTE leaders have identified the most pressing educator diversity gaps and their root causes, they can begin identifying strategies to promote the profession to current and potential educators of color. Relevant strategies include collaborating with organizations to promote CTE teaching careers to individuals of color and developing inclusive marketing materials and messages.

- *SUPPORT MULTIPLE PATHWAYS FOR TEACHER PREPARATION:* Preparation is an important point in the teacher pipeline where prospective educators of color can run into barriers. State and local CTE leaders can support multiple options for teacher preparation that enable future CTE educators of color to find the preparation model that best meets their needs. Strategies addressed include developing education and training pathways and youth apprenticeship programs for secondary learners and creating alternative certification, apprenticeship and residency programs for adults looking to enter the profession.

- *PROVIDE OPTIONS AND SUPPORTS FOR LICENSURE AND HIRING:* Even if individuals from diverse backgrounds are interested in and prepared for CTE teaching, policy and practical barriers built into the licensure and hiring process can derail their entrance into the profession. State and local CTE leaders can diversify the CTE educator pool at this stage through strategies such as building flexibility and financial assistance into teacher licensure, crafting competitive salary and benefits packages and using diverse hiring practices.

- *PRIORITIZE RETENTION AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING:* Once state and local CTE leaders have recruited teachers and administrators of color into the profession, they must work to retain these qualified educators by creating inclusive work environments, providing professional learning communities and mentorship programs for CTE educators, and offering leadership preparation and development for CTE administrators.

- *INVESTIGATE POLICY AND FUNDING LEVERS:* To implement the strategies outlined in this report, state and local CTE leaders can leverage relevant funding and policies that enable them to direct resources toward diversifying the CTE educator field. This work includes identifying funding streams that can support CTE educator diversity and promoting CTE educator diversity through state legislation and regulation.

RESOURCE 2: RECRUITING DIVERSE EDUCATORS: A DATABASE OF ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTING UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

The second resource that grew out of this work is a contact list of organizations that represent underserved populations, including industry professionals, learners, and current and future educators of color. The list offers a starting point for local, regional and state CTE leaders looking to develop the educator pipeline and recruit educators from under-represented populations to teach in CTE.

In March 2023, Advance CTE and ACTE staff hosted four focus groups with CTE educators of color: one with early career CTE teachers of color with four years or less of experience, one with veteran CTE teachers of color with five years or more of experience, one with early career CTE administrators of color, and one with veteran CTE administrators of color. One of the key findings of the focus groups was that CTE educators are often haphazardly recruited. Without chance encounters, several of the focus group participants would not have been aware of the opportunity to bring their expertise to a secondary classroom.

Based on this information, Advance CTE and ACTE staff and the national, state and local partners engaged in this work decided to create this contact list, which includes organizations such as the following, among many others:

- National Association of Asian American Professionals;
- National Association of Hispanic Nurses;
- National Association of Minority Contractors;
- National Black Nurses Association;
- National Indian Education Association;
- National Organization of Minority Architects;
- National Pan-Hellenic Council;
- One Million Teachers of Color; and
- Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers.

The Google spreadsheet is filterable by a number of columns, including community of interest; program area, industry or occupation; Perkins subgroup; and location. The document includes a hyperlink to each organization's website; however, users will need to investigate further to identify the appropriate state-, regional- or local-level contacts that will be most useful for their individual context.

Recruiting Diverse Educators: A Database of Organizations Representing Underserved Populations informs the CTE field about these organizations and opens the door for the field to work with the identified organizations to make diverse populations aware of the opportunities associated with being a CTE educator. As the nation attempts to solve high teacher and administrator turnover rates and a lack of diversity in the education field generally and within CTE specifically, this tool can help the field reach and communicate with the communities they serve to find the next generation of the CTE workforce.

ENDNOTES

[1] Perkins Collaborative Resource Network. *National enrollment profile.*
https://cte.ed.gov/pcrn/profile/national/enrollment/2022/concentrator/secondary/race/allstudents

[2] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *National Teacher and Principal Survey: Public school teacher and private school teacher data files, 2020–21.*
https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/estable/table/ntps/ntps2021_7182a_t12n

[3] Carver-Thomas, D. (2018, April). *Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color.*
https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Diversifying_Teaching_Profession_REPORT_0.pdf

[4] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *National Teacher and Principal Survey: Public school teacher and private school teacher data files, 2020–21.*
https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/estable/table/ntps/ntps2021_7182a_t12n

[5] Carver-Thomas, D. (2018, April). *Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color.* https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Diversifying_Teaching_Profession_REPORT_0.pdf

[6] Rowlands, D. W., & Love, H. (2021, September). *Mapping rural America's diversity and demographic change.* https://www.brookings.edu/articles/mapping-rural-americas-diversity-and-demographic-change/

[7] Perkins Collaborative Resource Network. *National enrollment profile.* https://cte.ed.gov/pcrn/profile/national/enrollment/2022/concentrator/secondary/race/allcareerclusters; Fabina, J., Hernandez, E. L., & McElrath, K. (2023, June). *School enrollment in the United States: 2021.* American Community Survey Reports. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2023/acs/acs-55.pdf