

ED-RED Equity Ad Hoc Committee Work
Subcommittee on Increasing the Interviewing, Hiring, Retention and Number of BIPOC Teaching Candidates

Equity Ad Hoc Committee Background: Over the summer, ED-RED created an Equity Ad Hoc Committee as a forum for ED-RED member school districts to discuss the work, both past and present, that ED-RED districts are doing to close the equity gap. The goal of this committee was to use this work as a foundation for developing policy recommendations for future legislative negotiations around closing the equity gap and ensuring equitable educational access and opportunity to lead to improved outcomes for students of color.

Given the overwhelming response of members (over 40 school board members and administrators) that signed up for the Equity Ad Hoc committee, the group was divided into four subcommittees. Those subcommittees are: 1) Student Discipline and SRO/Police Presence on School Grounds; 2) Data Reporting (Discipline and Arrest Data); 3) Curriculum; and 4) Increasing BIPOC Candidates/Hiring/Retention. These subcommittees were tasked with delving deeply into past legislative proposals intended to increase educational equity, access and opportunity for students of color in our schools and to develop Guiding Principles for moving those proposals forward.

Below is an overview of the original legislation that gave rise to the Subcommittee on Increasing the Interviewing, Hiring, Retention and Number of BIPOC Teaching Candidates, along with the Guiding Principles and Recommendations to guide future negotiations on these issues.

Subcommittee on Increasing the Interviewing, Hiring and Retention and Number of BIPOC Teaching Candidates

HB 4029: Legislative Overview

This subcommittee met over the last three months to discuss and review HB 4029, sponsored by Representative Maurice West (D-Rockford). The intent of HB4029 is to increase the number of minority teachers by:

- Requiring districts to recruit and interview a minimum percentage of minority teaching candidates. That percentage would vary by district depending on the district's overall percentage of minority students.
- Districts that failed to interview a minimum percentage of minority candidates for each vacant position, would be required to establish a program to assist minority employees of the school, who are interested in obtaining a Professional Educator License, to pursue one.

The subcommittee started its work by hearing directly from the sponsor, Representative West, regarding his intent with and goals of the legislation.

Guiding Principles

- It is critical that school districts increase efforts to recruit and interview BIPOC teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals. While research shows that a diverse teaching staff benefits the entire school community, it is a critical component in fostering a sense of belonging and improving outcomes for students of color in our schools.
- Many ED-RED school districts are currently employing innovative strategies for increasing and retaining BIPOC teaching staff, including:
 - Partnering with local BIPOC education organizations to build teaching candidate pipelines;
 - Providing targeted training to the interviewing team to eliminate bias in interviewing process;
 - Setting baseline demographic targets for those who serve on the interviewing team, as well as who will be interviewed;
 - Developing objective criteria for reviewing applications;
 - Assessing what external factors may be impacting a district's appeal for BIPOC candidates including barriers for housing.
 - Increasing "Grow Your Own" programs in which current students are encouraged to participate in experiences that expose them to the field of education, supports them in their postsecondary studies and maintains their connection to the school district;
 - For current employees, implementing tuition reimbursement initiatives and/or working with university cohorts to increase the accessibility of these teaching programs; and
 - Implementing exit interviews to determine why BIPOC candidates are leaving the district or moving between schools in the district so that districts can improve retention rates and provide needed supports that address equity concerns.

Recommendations

- The term BIPOC or "persons of color" is recommended to be used rather than "minority" given the rapidly changing demographics of this country and State.
- School District efforts to expand the hiring of BIPOC employees should not be limited to teachers and should include administrators and paraprofessionals.
- While increasing interviews and hiring of BIPOC teachers is critical, designating a specific percentage of BIPOC teachers that districts must interview and/or hire is not recommended.
- Rather than trying to meet a minimum number/threshold of BIPOC candidates to interview each year, districts should be incentivized and encouraged to employ multiple short and long-term strategies that make sense for their own district.

- Increase State efforts to attract more BIPOC teachers to the teacher candidate pipeline so that there is a larger pool of BIPOC teacher candidates from which school districts can draw.
- Continue past efforts by ED-RED, the State Board of Education, and all education stakeholders to push for a streamlining of professional development requirements that may be impacting teacher retention.
- Encourage the State Board of Education to streamline out-of-state licensure and alternative licensure program approvals to provide additional opportunities for BIPOC candidates to obtain an Illinois Professional Educator License.
- Encourage institutions of higher education, community organizations, and education stakeholders to work collaboratively with school districts to provide incentives and supports for school district BIPOC candidates to obtain Professional Educator License.

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