

Who and What Is Missing In the Quest to Improve the NYC Teacher Workforce?

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May 2013

“No reform is more critical to closing the nation’s shameful achievement gap than boosting the quality of teachers in high-poverty schools.”

(Chancellor Klein, Houston Chronicle, February 20, 2010)

In 2002, Mayor Michael Bloomberg achieved what his predecessor Rudolph Giuliani could only long for- mayoral control of New York City’s public schools. Among his first orders of business was the appointment of Joel I. Klein as Chancellor to the country’s largest school district. A former anti-trust lawyer, Bloomberg seemingly plucked Klein from obscurity to bring change to a public school system of 1.1 million children which was underperforming; even staking his entire mayoral legacy on his ability to improve the school system.

Early in their tenure Bloomberg and Klein sought to make important improvements to the system that would result in improved outcomes for students. Among the numerous significant changes was the need to improve teacher quality thereby positively impacting the achievement of NYC students; including narrowing the achievement gap between students of color and their white peers. The result of these changes has been a radical restructuring of the processes used to recruit, select, and evaluate teachers in the system’s 1,500 plus public schools. To be sure, this aspect of school reform has clearly been a massive undertaking with multiple complex and moving parts. The purpose of this policy brief is not to attend to all components of the Bloomberg DOE’s teacher quality initiatives, but to instead focus on the policies implemented to recruit and select teachers for the country’s most diverse student population.

Citing *Unintended Consequences: The Case for Reforming the Staffing Rules in Urban Teachers Union Contracts* (2005) in their analysis of NYC educational reforms, Goertz, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2010), describe teacher recruitment and staffing in the years prior to 2002 as a “bleak” and deeply flawed process (p.159). The process was messy, cumbersome, and fraught with bureaucratic hurdles. Each year, the city was unable to fill critical vacancies with the most promising teaching prospects until late August, by which time many of these individuals had taken teaching positions elsewhere in the state (p. 161). As a result of multiple bureaucratic hurdles which impeded recruitment of a highly qualified teacher workforce, Bloomberg and Klein deemed it necessary to create an “ambitious” and comprehensive plan that would result in overhauling the systems designed to recruit, select, and retain only the most effective teachers for the city’s schools.

One would be remiss to fail to acknowledge that efforts to improve the state of new teacher hiring and foreseeably teacher quality actually pre-dated Bloomberg and Klein with some

success. Acting on research that was shown to have a direct correlation between teacher certification and student reading scores, in 1998, Commissioner Richard P. Mills and the State Board of Regents (including then-Regent Harold O. Levy) required that every teacher in New York State be certified by 2003. This timetable also mandated that failing schools (which were conceivably most in need of certified teachers who could improve reading achievement) enact the mandate even earlier, by September 2000 (NYT, August 14, 2000).

Despite this significant mandate, approximately 60 percent of all new teachers hired during the 1999-2000 academic year were uncertified. Moreover, recruitment was particularly difficult in the schools that had particularly low levels of achievement (Kane et. al, 2007). Ironically, in 2000, Mills was ultimately forced to sue Chancellor Harold Levy for breaching the 1998 policy that restricted the hiring of uncertified teachers into failing NYC public schools after September 1999 (NYT, August 2000). The suit resulted in the creation of the NYC Teaching Fellowship program which provided an alternate route into the teaching profession for high-quality, dedicated individuals with deep subject-area knowledge. Currently, though a small fraction of teachers who begin teaching in schools each year, the NYC Teaching Fellowship has been a significant element of the NYC DOE's approach to teacher quality. Fellows also now comprise approximately 11% of the city's teaching population (DOE website).

To their credit, Bloomberg and Klein deeply understood the need for profoundly upending human capital practices by prioritizing and accelerating the emphasis on teacher quality. In doing so, the recruitment, selection, and evaluation of NYC public school teachers has been a crucial component in their Children First reforms. Like most of the Bloomberg/Klein reforms, these sweeping human capital transformations were made in the spirit of "disrupting the status quo", "destabilizing the system", and deeply ingraining new ways of thinking and working that would be all but impossible to "roll the clock back on". These changes also have been fraught with controversy.

As stated previously, the purpose of this brief is to undertake an analysis of Bloomberg teacher quality reforms with a specific eye toward recruiting and selecting talented teachers who can positively impact student achievement. This brief has three goals. First, I intend to acknowledge and applaud the tremendous importance of the human capital reforms and their attention to data and rigorous research about teacher quality. Second, and to my mind more importantly, the purpose of this paper is to also provide a critique of these policies as currently enacted. Specifically, in striving to implement policies to strengthen the NYC teacher workforce, the Bloomberg DOE has promulgated strategies that have knowingly or unknowingly worked at what I believe to be cross purposes to facilitating higher academic achievement for an increasingly diverse student population. My specific critique is that despite extensive attention to only two components of effective human capital practices and teacher quality, there is overwhelming evidence that there is still much to do in terms of identifying, recruiting, and selecting the teachers we need for the city's rapidly growing population of poor students, ELLs, and students of color. Low standardized test scores, stubbornly persistent dropout rates amongst

these learners, and high levels of remediation and attrition at the college level provide just a small portion of the evidence that we have yet to recruit that may be prepared with the cultural competence needed to provide high levels of academic achievement. The third and final goal of this brief is to offer informed proposals for recruiting and selecting teachers for the city's diverse student population.

Human Capital Reform in NYC: Where they got it right

In an analysis of the strategic management of human capital, Goertz and Levin (2008) describe the critical role that human capital has played in the NYC's school improvement strategy and the effective changes that have been implemented (p. 7). The authors describe a series of changes that were made to improve the hiring of city teachers. First, they acknowledge the creation of the Talent Office. After years of chaotic recruitment practices, the creation of the Talent Office meant that the important function of teacher recruitment, previously undertaken by the NYC DOE's Division of Human Resources, became a shared responsibility, with the Talent Office functioning to directly support principals in the management of human capital in their schools (Goertz and Levin, 2008, p. 7).

Second, the NYC DOE also significantly invested in a series of recruitment initiatives which included: creating new pathways into teaching, raising entry level salaries, providing additional financial incentives for teachers in shortage areas, and initiating earlier hiring. Through the combination of these strategies, the DOE has increased the supply of qualified teachers, particularly in shortage areas and high need schools, and eliminated all "emergency certification" teachers (p. 8). The use of alternative routes to teaching, particularly through the Teaching Fellows program and TFA and a variety of smaller alternate route programs, has increased teachers' academic qualifications and narrowed the gap in qualifications between high- and low-poverty schools (p. 12).

Finally, and most tellingly, as has been the case across many of the reforms resulting from the Children's First Initiative, the NYC DOE has become far more rigorous in their use of research and data to inform the recruitment and selection of NYC teachers.

Figure 1 below provides an illustrative example of the administration's approach to using data-based and data-informed decisions for improving teacher quality across the system. The goal has been to create a comprehensive approach to doing so that would focus on each component of the talent pipeline from recruitment and selection to ongoing development of teachers. In order to accomplish this significant investment, the use of data has been necessary. As an aside, even the most cursory glance by the reader should also reveal that though identified as elements of a comprehensive approach, development and ongoing development/retention of teachers are two areas which continue to receive little attention from this administration.

Ensuring High-quality Teaching Requires A Comprehensive Approach To Talent Management

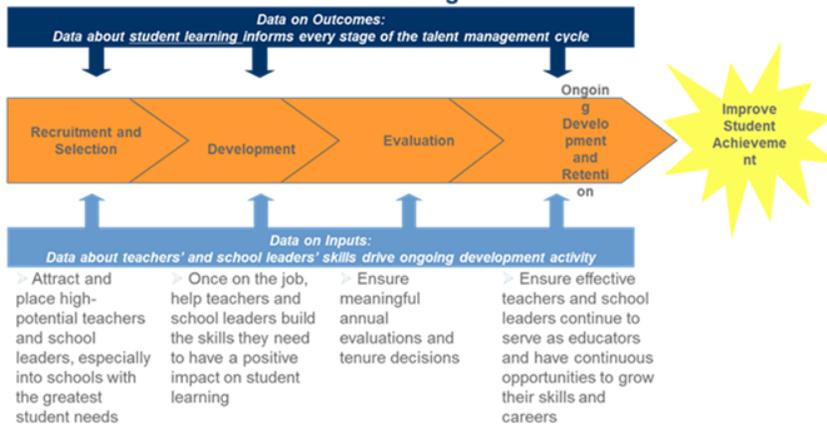


Figure 1

In addition to an assortment of studies conducted by university researchers (i.e. the Pathways study), the NYC DOE systematically collects data on observed characteristics of their teacher applicants, such as GPA, selectivity of degree-granting institutions, SAT scores and scores on state certification tests. The District plans to track changes in the qualifications of their applicant pool over time to inform their selection processes (p. 14).

Researchers Rockoff, Kane, and Staiger, quoted below, have been among those whose extensive research has been done on and informed decisions about teacher quality in the NYC DOE.

When we looked at the persistent component of teacher effectiveness, we found that the best teachers have a large positive impact on their students' academic performance relative to that of a less effective teacher. For example, the top quarter of elementary-school teachers improve student achievement in math by 33 percent of a standard deviation more than the bottom quarter of teachers do. Among middle-school teachers, the difference is slightly less but still important, at 20 percent of a standard deviation. To put this in perspective, the advantage of being the student of a teacher in the top quarter of effectiveness rather than the bottom quarter is roughly three times the advantage of being taught by an experienced teacher rather than by a novice, and more than ten times any advantage created by teacher certification! (Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2007)

Two additional studies have also been instrumental in guiding the DOE's human capital efforts. The first is *Examining Teacher Preparation: Does the Pathway Make a Difference?* (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, Wyckoff, McDonald and Hammerness, 2008), and more frequently referred to as the *Pathways Study*. The second study is titled *The Narrowing Gap in New York*

City Teacher Qualifications and Implications for Student Achievement in High-Poverty Schools (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff, and Wyckoff, 2008) published by the National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER).

The *Pathways Study* sought to determine:

1. Which teachers are most effective in improving student outcomes? What characterizes their preparation, pathways into teaching and qualifications to teach?
2. How are the attributes of teachers and their pathway into teaching related to:
Who teaches where and why?
Who stays in teaching and why?
Who transfers, why and to which schools?
Who quits teaching and why?
3. What is the cost effectiveness of various pathways into teaching? (p.1).

The study's findings revealed that there is more variation within the varying pathways to teaching than between the different routes that teachers may use to pursue certification (Boyd et. al, 2008).

In *The Narrowing Gap...*, the researchers used NYC DOE data to determine how the policies implemented within the city to attract qualified teachers to the schools that needed them impacted upon the distribution of teacher qualifications and student achievement (p.1). The questions posed by the researchers were:

1. How has the distribution of teaching qualifications between schools with concentrations of poor students and those with more affluent students changed between 2000 and 2005?
2. What effects are the changes in observed teacher qualifications likely to have on student achievement?
3. What implications do these findings have for improving policies and programs aimed at recruiting highly effective teachers? (p. 1)

The researchers concluded that “the selection of teachers with stronger qualifications has made an important difference in New York City public schools and that recruitment and retention of teachers with stronger measurable characteristics can lead to improved student learning” (p.4).

Moreover, the findings from both of these important studies were used to accelerate recruitment of alternatively certified teachers. That these studies were integral to the thinking and design of the department's human resource initiatives can be seen in the following PPT slides, from a 2008 presentation on *Managing for Teacher Effectiveness*. The presentation and these slides in particular, were used to assess the state of the DOE's teacher effectiveness goals and more

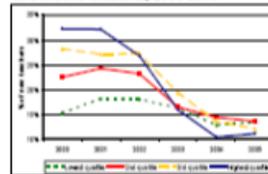
importantly to set priorities for continued improvements. The first slide (**Figure 2**) specifically refers to the 2008 study by Wyckoff et. al. mentioned above lauds the narrowing gap between the quality of teachers working in high-need and non-high-need schools. The second slide (**Figure 3**), is complementary and makes the case that the NYC DOE should to continue to use alternate routes to meet shortage-area needs.

Distribution: Some progress has been made on narrowing the qualifications gap.

A 2008 Study by Wyckoff, et al. found:

- > A significant narrowing of the teacher qualifications gap from 2000 to 2005 between high and low need schools (measured by poverty, student performance or percent minority)
 - Qualifications include experience, percent passing the LAST on first attempt, scores on certification exams, competitiveness of undergraduate institution, SAT scores.
- > The researchers attribute almost all of the gap narrowing to new hires through the Fellows and TFA alternate routes.
- > The researchers found over the same time a narrowing of the performance gap between high and low need schools and modeled that it in part could be explained by the narrowing of the qualifications gap, particularly when the qualification variables were combined.

Figure 2: LAST Exam Failure Rate of New Teachers by Poverty Quartile of School's Students, 2000-2005



Source: The Narrowing Gap in New York City Teacher Qualifications and its Implications for Student Achievement in High-Poverty Schools, May 2008. Donald Boyd, Hamilton Lanford, Susanne Loebe, Jonah Rodloff, and James Wyckoff.



17 **Figure 2**

Projected Trends: Continue to use alternative certification, especially to meet high needs.

- > Alternative Certification continues to be an important source of new teachers, especially in shortage subject areas.

New Hires by Source	2006 7,435 hires		2007 7,424 hires		2008 5,725 hires	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Teaching Fellows	1,709	23%	1,668	22%	1,317	23%
TFA	491	7%	477	6%	475	8%
Total Alternative Cert.	2,278	31%	2,203	30%	1,881	33%
Alt Cert as % of Shortage		50%		50%		49%

- > Will likely need to resize cohorts in relation to declining need.



13 **Figure 3**

More evidence of the DOE’s desire to focus on data collection efforts to support the hiring of high quality candidates can be seen in the standardized procedures by which they now collect information for teaching candidates. In 2008, systematic process changes were made to three areas of the recruitment process. The first of these changes included a new on-line application which standardized the collection of data about GPA, experience – full time and student

teaching, standardized test scores, and demographics. The second change included creating a standardized review process for applications. This process is such that scoring is now based on the following research-based competencies:

- Communication Skills
- Content Knowledge & Practice
- Instructional Knowledge & Practice
- Strategic & Data-Driven
- Achievement & Results Oriented
- Personal & Professional Responsibility
- Commitment to NYC Public Schools/Children

Third, was the creation of a Candidate Quality Index (CQI). This index is the calculation of a relative score for each applicant based on measurable characteristics that research has linked to teacher effectiveness. This score is the result of application data in combination with a score determined by a pre-screen of the applicant. The larger significance of the CQI, however, is not to be missed. CQI provides rich data for further study, including the particular source of a candidate and it will prospectively be correlated to value-added data. (December 2008 Teacher Effectiveness Document).

Not content that these systematic process improvements served to bring recruitment efforts to heights unimagined by previous administrations, the hard-driving charge to use evermore robust metrics to recruit and select excellent teachers can be found in numerous presentations, concept papers, and proposals to funders and policymakers throughout the Bloomberg tenure. By way of example, in 2008 Concept Paper to the Arnold Foundation, the NYC DOE wrote,

When the DOE is recruiting and selecting teachers, the available teacher applicant data, such as SAT scores and undergraduate grade point averages, are shown to have only limited predictive power of a teacher's classroom effectiveness. (October 2008 Concept Paper, p. 3)

This laser-like focus on providing effective teachers for every classroom is a laudable goal which should indeed be commended. Further, that the administration has been significantly more invested in improving access to and utilizing data which will enable this to happen is even more notable.

Human Capital Reform in NYC: Where they got it wrong

There is ample research which posits that the most significant within- school factor impacting student achievement is the teacher. Nonetheless, there have been two particularly conspicuous problems with the Bloomberg administration's myopic focus on teacher quality. First, the city's

recruitment and selection processes have resulted in a far less diverse teaching force. While attending carefully to the significant extant research that attests to on the impact of teacher quality on student achievement the NYCDOE has not sufficiently addressed or taken into serious consideration the need for diversity within its teacher ranks. The population of NYC public school teachers has become less diverse as a result of the strategies endorsed. Second, there has been little, if any, acknowledgement of other factors which influence student achievement beyond the impact of the teacher and the need to include in the recruitment and selection process more attention to cultural competence as a critical factor that indeed impacts student achievement. After identifying other factors connected to improving achievement for all learners, the remainder of this brief will be devoted to the need for sufficient attention to the diversity of NYC DOE teachers and the need to screen for the cultural competence of all incoming NYC teachers.

What Matters in the Quest for Student Achievement

Teacher Quality Matters but it is not the only factor

First, unlike the this administration, my intention here is not to identify the teacher as the only, or even most important, factor in producing improved student achievement outcomes. Instead, it is to situate the teacher as one predominantly important within-school factor in student achievement. Despite the very real importance of the teacher, it must also be acknowledged that much research has been undertaken validating the impact of poverty on student achievement. Further, there is also more than substantial evidence of the deep inequities in the allocation of resources to schools serving low income and students of color which serve to further exacerbate the differential outcomes for students of color (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005, p. 238). Research focused on disparities in the educational outcomes for students of color posits that beyond the individual teacher, the organization of schools, the curriculum, and the assignment of students to classes also contribute to the stark differences in academic achievement (Ibid.). Similarly, the informal and formal structures within schools also result in differential treatment towards students of color, language minorities, and poor students providing them with messages about “what and who matters in the school and has strong consequences for whether students feel they belong in the school ...and whether they believe they can achieve... (Ibid, p. 241)”

In addition to these important school-based factors, I deeply understand the larger forces at work that serve to disadvantage students of color and ELLs. Noguera (2003) stresses the relationship between race and academic performance is shaped by broader social, political, and economic forces, while other scholars prioritize the impact of the larger macroeconomic structures and policies in disadvantaging students of color, poor students and English language learners. Anyon (2005) too asserts that the problems of urban education cannot be addressed and solved through pedagogical improvements, curriculum overhaul, professional development, or other similarly

focused educational reforms. She deems such reforms necessary but insufficient. Anyon contends that there is a need for the systemic restructuring of macroeconomic policies and rampant inequities in urban areas that work in concert to maintain urban poverty and blight urban schools. She explicitly, she maintains that policies affecting living wages, access to adequate housing, and transportation to available jobs must be rectified if there is to be any hope of reforming urban schools (Anyon, 2005).

With the above in mind, there is still robust agreement that teacher quality is a major factor influencing outcomes in schools serving diverse student populations (Hollins and Guzman, 2005). The research to date bears this out. Some, like Sanders (1998), Wenglinsky (2000), have argued that teacher quality is comparable in size to that of student socioeconomic status and that “teacher quality is the single most important influence on school success and students’ achievement, surpassing socioeconomic status, class size, family background, school context, and all other factors that influence achievement” respectively (Gaiber, 2009, p.17). Sanders and Rivers (1996) also concluded that “the quality of a student’s teacher is the number one within-school determinant affecting student achievement outcomes” (Gaiber, 2009, p.15). Still others have concluded that there are significant positive long-term impacts from being taught by an effective teacher. Recently, Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff (2011) concluded that “students assigned to higher VA teachers are more successful on many dimensions. They are more likely to attend college, earn higher salaries, live in better neighborhoods, and save more for retirement. They are also less likely to have children as teenagers” (Executive Summary).

Taking into consideration the clearly complex and long-standing debate regarding teacher impact, I make no assertions as to the magnitude of influence teacher quality has on student outcomes. It cannot be disputed that access to effective teachers is indeed strongly correlated with increased student outcomes. I am also mindful of Stigler and Hiebert’s, caution that, “overemphasizing the importance of non-school factors that are often, frustratingly, beyond the reach of public policy can become an excuse for not trying to improve.” (Gaiber, 2009, p.14

While Noguera, Anyon, and others rightly attend to the pressing need to radically transform economic, political, and social policies, my focus is instead on the need for recruiting teachers who are capable of effectively facilitating high levels academic achievement for the city’s diverse and underachieving student population. To my mind, this is possible in two interconnected ways. On one hand, this may happen in part through ensuring a more diverse teaching force reflective of the student population. On the other hand, this is also possible by adding to the current mix of recruitment and selection strategies processes for selecting highly capable teachers who have cultural competence and have the skills to engage in culturally responsive pedagogies.

The Demographic Challenge and the Need for a Diverse Teacher Workforce

Nationally, we have seen that decades of pronouncements, reform agendas, policies, and initiatives aimed at improving the educational outcomes of students of color, English Language Learners (ELLs), and poor students, have done little to curb the systematic failure of large swaths of students. This is disquieting in light of the statistics which bear out to the growing diversity of the student population. Merely forty years ago, students of color constituted 22 % of the school-aged population. By 2000, this population had increased to 39% with African-American students in particular, representing 17% of public school enrollment (Hollins and Guzman, 2005). Current demographic projections speculate that by 2035, the population of students of color will have grown so substantively that they will, in fact, comprise the majority of the U.S. student population and by 2050 they will make up 57% of the student population (Villegas and Lucas, 2002).

In stark contrast to the growing diversity of the U.S. student population, data compiled by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2003), reveal that 84% of public school teachers are White, 7.8% African-American, 5.7% Hispanic, 1.6 % Asian American, and .8% Native American. In essence, the population of teachers is largely homogeneous. In light of these statistics, it is unsurprising then that teaching candidates in the nation's preparation programs are also primarily white and working and middle class. Likewise, they grew up in largely suburban or rural backgrounds effectively limiting their exposure to and interaction with individuals from different backgrounds (Frankenberg and Orfield, 2006). This growing incongruence between U.S. teachers and the students they serve, poses significant challenges in the recruiting and selecting teachers for diverse classrooms that have yet to be considerably addressed ins schools systems across the country; including in New York City.

In *Fewer Blacks, More Whites Are Hired as City Teachers* (2008), *The New York Sun* tackled the issue of declining diversity among black teachers. Additional statistics about the ethnic makeup of NYC public school teachers show that the downward trend in hiring for black teachers was not unique (see **Figure 4**). Green's article, while focused on black teachers, also included reaction from then union President, Randi Weingarten, a DOE representative, and others troubled by what seemed to be alarming statistics.

The percentage of new teachers in New York City public schools who are black has fallen substantially since 2002, dropping to 13% in the last school year from 27% in 2001-02, city figures show.

The change has dramatically altered the racial makeup of the new teacher workforce, which last year included about 400 more white teachers than it did in 2002 and more than 1,000 fewer black teachers.

The overall teaching force has been less affected: Black teachers

made up 20% of the workforce in fiscal year 2008, down from 22% in 2001, while the percentage of white teachers has stayed constant at 60%.

The changing demographics come in a school system that is increasingly made up of non-white students.

Educators and advocates said they have been troubled by the data for several years — and they said they are especially troubled this year, the 40th anniversary of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville crisis, in which black community leaders challenged the city to make school staff more representative of the city. (Green, 2008)

The Ethnicity by New Hires Report published for the years between the 2002-2003 and the 2008-2009 school year validates the steadily downward trend for all non-white ethnic groups with the seeming exception of the final recorded year.

Ethnicity of New Hires* by School Year: 1990-91 through 2008-09					
School Year:	Ethnicity				
	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other/Unknown
1990-91	49.3%	16.0%	11.9%	3.2%	19.4%
1991-92	58.4%	16.0%	15.3%	3.2%	7.1%
1992-93	59.6%	17.9%	15.1%	2.9%	4.4%
1993-94	59.6%	18.4%	13.9%	3.1%	5.0%
1994-95	53.9%	23.4%	15.4%	3.2%	1.1%
1995-96	54.1%	22.9%	15.4%	3.1%	1.6%
1996-97	60.3%	19.0%	14.4%	3.4%	2.9%
1997-98	56.7%	20.1%	15.3%	3.5%	4.0%
1998-99	57.3%	22.1%	15.2%	3.8%	1.3%
1999-00	53.8%	24.8%	16.4%	4.4%	0.7%
2000-01	53.3%	25.5%	16.3%	4.2%	0.6%
2001-02	53.3%	27.2%	14.3%	4.9%	0.4%
2002-03	61.1%	20.1%	12.7%	5.6%	0.5%
2003-04	65.0%	16.7%	10.6%	7.2%	0.5%
2004-05	63.3%	16.0%	11.1%	8.3%	1.3%
2005-06	65.0%	14.5%	11.7%	7.2%	1.6%
2006-07	66.1%	14.0%	12.3%	6.3%	1.3%
2007-08	66.0%	12.8%	13.0%	7.1%	1.1%
2008-09	64.6%	15.4%	12.6%	6.4%	1.0%

*New Hires includes teachers who were hired between 8/25 through 10/31 of each year.

Figure 4

More recent data about teacher recruitment statistics reveal that in the years between 2011 and the current school year, there was more of the same with regard to the demographics of the city’s classrooms. In 2011, of the 4071 new teacher hires, 1172 (28.78%) were identified as teachers of color. The demographic breakdown follows:

2011

- American Indian - 0.4%
- Asian- 5.57%
- Black/African American- 11.2%
- Hispanic (non-white)- 11.49%

In 2012, 4845 new teachers were hired to the NYC DOE. Of this entire population of new recruits, 26.72% are identified as teachers of color.

2012

- American Indian - .2%
- Asian- 4.89%
- Black/African American- 10.2%
- Hispanic (non-white)- 11.39%

In 2013, there was a slight uptick in the recruitment of Asian, Black/African American, and Hispanic teachers recruited to teach. .2% are American Indian, 6% are Asian, 11.8% are Black/African American, and 13.9% are Hispanic (non-White).

To be fair, I will acknowledge that the confluence of regulations (including NCLB and Highly Qualified teaching statutes) are in part to blame for a NYC teacher workforce that is less reflective of the diversity of the student population. However, it is troubling that this downward trend continues.

In focusing on teacher diversity my goal is not to imply that students of colors can only be taught effectively by teachers of color. Instead, I seek to make clear that our classrooms and other social institutions should be reflective of the larger society. More importantly, I am hoping to point out that in our quest to improve teacher quality we have not adequately kept diversity in mind- *almost as though we can only have one or the other*. If one were cynical, one might even hypothesize that when carefully considered together (the significant decline in teacher diversity and the desire to “improve teacher quality” and the ensuing heavy emphasis on alternative pathways to teaching) there is an ugly presumption that the only way to get “high quality teachers” is to troll the halls of the country’s elite institutions.

Moreover, while far more research must be undertaken, there is already a little research to indicate that having teachers of color in the classroom “passive” and “active” teacher effects may be at play (Dee, 2005). Dee describes passive teacher effects as those “triggered by a teacher’s racial, ethnic or gender identity, not by explicit teacher behaviors, while active teacher effects refer to the unintended biases in teacher expectations of students and in their interactions with students who have different demographic traits (Dee, 2005, p. 160). This research is limited and more is clearly necessary, but it should be included in the line of inquiry that supports recruitment and selection efforts.

Two additional thoughts guide my thinking on the need for more teacher diversity for New York City school children. The first is a thought from Maxine Green who I am told once stated, “You can’t become what you can’t imagine”. Large numbers of school children in this city are in need of a vision of what their lives can be like. Those visions should come, in part, in the forms of the professional with whom they interact on a daily basis. A second related thought can be connected to both the issue of increased diversity discussed here and the issue of cultural competency screening for all new teachers as discussed next. While there is only a smidge of evidence linking improved student achievement to teacher diversity, I wonder if there is not something more that might be said about improved motivation, engagement, and perhaps persistence on the part of diverse student populations who have teachers that are culturally competent or are teachers of color?

The Need for Culturally Competent Teachers

It is important to consider this trend toward an increasingly less diverse NYC DOE teaching workforce carefully. In *Preparing Teachers for Diversity*, Hollins and Guzman (2005) allude to the fact that many teacher candidates begin their programs “expressing negative or deficit attitudes and beliefs about those different from themselves... However, they also often express a willingness to teach in urban areas despite limited experience and conflicting attitudes and beliefs (p. 485)”. Further, Irvine's (2003) research also revealed that even after taking courses in multicultural education, some pre-service teachers maintain low expectations and harbor negative beliefs about students of color (Barnes, 2006; Irvine, 2003) thereby lending additional credence to Stangor’s proposition that stereotypes are behaviors that are easily learned, but difficult to unlearn (Stangor, 2000, p.10). To think that these potentially lingering negative sentiments about student academic potential follow candidates into their own classrooms when they become teachers-of-record is profoundly unsettling. This is so particularly when considering the lack of comparable academic achievement between students of color and their white peers and the markedly inequitable resources available to the schools that serve them. These beliefs attest to the need for attentiveness to recruiting and selecting teachers who have the pedagogical skills, attitudes, and beliefs to facilitate high academic achievement, enact cultural competence, and develop the critical consciousness sorely needed to ensure the success of students of color.

A number of researchers have proposed multicultural teaching practices and culturally relevant pedagogy as promising means by which to acknowledge and effectively engage cultural diversity in order to meet the academic and social needs of students of color (Ladson-Billings 1995; Gay, 2000; Howard, 2003). Ladson-Billings (1994) specifically has argued that one of the central principles of multicultural education, and culturally relevant pedagogy in particular, is an authentic belief that students from culturally diverse and low-income backgrounds are capable learners that if treated competently will ultimately demonstrate high degrees of competence (as cited by Howard, 2003). In light of the overwhelming research that teacher candidates feel ill-

prepared to teach in urban areas and frequently maintain negative beliefs and attitudes about individuals different than themselves, careful attention must also be paid to recruiting those teacher candidates that will teach in a city as diverse as New York City. Here, recruiting and selecting teachers who have substantive abilities to facilitate culturally relevant teaching, as theorized by Ladson-Billings or Gay could prove useful.

Ladson-Billings has been particularly focused on effective practices of teachers of African-American/black learners. Between 1990 and 1995 Ladson-Billings examined the teaching practices of eight teachers (both black and white) successful in teaching African-American/black learners. The culmination of her research was the *The Dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African-American children* (1994), which delineated the characteristics of culturally relevant teaching practices. Though Ladson-Billings' work has been focused on African-American/black students, her framework is useful for the range of diverse learners. Ladson-Billings defines culturally relevant teaching as a set of practices which enable students to actively choose academic success while maintaining their cultural identity. Teachers who engage in culturally relevant pedagogy: believe their students are capable of academic success, see their work as an art, see themselves as part of the community in which their students live, carefully construct learning communities with dynamic student-teacher relationships, foster student collaboration and accountability for one another, and understand their critical role as facilitators and bridge builders in the teaching and learning process. Consequently, their classrooms demonstrate that knowledge is fluid, must be viewed critically, and must be assessed in varied ways (Ladson-Billings, 1995, pp. 478-482).

Gay (2002) also maintains that teachers who practice culturally responsive pedagogy are focused on: (a) academic achievement—making learning rigorous, exciting, challenging, and equitable with high standards; (b) cultural competence—knowing and facilitating the learning process to include the range of students' cultural and linguistic groups; and (c) sociopolitical consciousness—recognizing and assisting students in the understanding that education and schooling do not occur in a vacuum (Gay, 2000). However, while Gay also maintains that culturally relevant teachers must have deep knowledge of cultural diversity, she also insists that they also have detailed factual information about the cultural particularities of specific ethnic groups (Gay, 2002).

Other theorists of multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy suggest that effective teachers insist on learning about the cultural knowledge of students (González, Moll, & Amantí, 2005) and then subsequently build upon that knowledge to support classroom instruction. However, in order to do this, McAllister and Irvine maintain that teachers must first recognize and understand their own worldviews (McAllister and Irvine, 2000, p. 4). Drawing on Gudykunst and Kim's theories of cross cultural competence, McAllister and Irvine argue that existing teacher preparation programs do not effectively develop the needed cross cultural

competence in teacher candidates. To this end, McAllister and Irvine advocate a process-based approach to developing cross-culturally competent educators.

This preliminary research by McAllister and Irvine is important and could be used for determining progress in teaching and better yet to determine which teacher candidates should be allowed to work in diverse settings. A recruitment and selection approach that not only attends to depth of knowledge, but also keeps in mind cross-cultural competence has the potential to alleviate some of the racial and cultural incongruence between teachers and students.

A Very Small Measure of Progress to Date

There is some evidence of strategies on the part of the NYC DOE to diversify the city's classrooms. These have included: recruiting at historically black colleges and support for candidates who begin the application process. There are also a small number of recruits into a program called Gotham Gives Back and an Urban Community Teacher Program whose impact is unknown at this time. However, to date, the rhetoric does not seem to have resulted in any truly comprehensive strategy to recruit teachers who can effectively work with diverse student populations. It is clear that this issue has not achieved the level of a priority within the NYC DOE across any but the NYC Teaching Fellows pathway. The NYC Teaching Fellows program now boasts that its recruitment of black and Latino candidates is upwards of 35 percent. Unfortunately, this diversity has yet to be seen in the traditional pathways to teaching.

Our commitment to recruiting a diverse teaching force has produced noticeable results: **38 percent of our latest cohort self-identified as black or Latino, compared to 12 percent of all teachers nationwide.**^[1] (NYC DOE Teaching Fellowship website)

Inadequate attention to issues of poverty; the limited diversity within the teacher workforce; the lack of attentiveness to race and racism and cross cultural competency, and the failure to invest the needed resources in studying what works have resulted in merely symbolic attempts to prepare a teacher work force that can support the needs of students of color. If the NYC DOE is truly committed to recruiting and selecting effective teachers who can facilitate higher student achievement for our diverse student population, they would do well to attend carefully to these issues.

Recommendations

A few policy proposals bear consideration by the incoming administration:

- Continue the current excellent use of data to inform decision-making which supports the recruitment and selection of teachers. However, do not solely rely on the use of quantitative metrics such as GPA, university selectivity, etc. to make decisions about selection. Instead, look also to competencies and dispositions that can serve as a proxy for candidates' levels of cultural competence and include these as predictive variables for determining teacher quality.
- Use the entire research base to determine what supports increased student achievement. Seek to avoid partisanship and by looking at research from a variety of researchers. Thomas Dee's research, mentioned earlier, while limited in scope, provides a potential line of inquiry that may prove useful for looking more deeply at teacher student interactions as well as passive and active teacher effects on student achievement. Such research should not be overlooked for ideological reasons, if in fact we want to walk the talk of Children First.
- Actively pursue teachers of color. Devote comparable resources for marketing to these potential teachers as are currently invested in partnerships with TFA and the city's other smaller pipelines of teachers. Research has shown that recruiting teachers of color takes significant time and resources. High quality candidates of color now have multiple career paths open to them that they were previously denied. Prioritize investing resources that will enable NYC DOE recruiters to cultivate relations with this group of individuals that show they are a valued commodity for the city's classrooms.
- As identified above, the Teaching Fellows program now boasts higher rates of teachers of color than is the case nationwide. This attests to the fact that recruitment of greater numbers of teachers of color is indeed possible. Rather than treat NYC Teaching Fellows as a protected class, use the marketing and recruitment strategies that have been successful in making this possible to recruit teachers of color from the larger pool of traditional teacher recruits in education programs in the city and in the surrounding states.
- Reallocate monies to support incentives like the housing program that was started some years ago. Incentives might include, but are not limited to, the following: housing subsidies, lower-cost loans for housing through MCU, and loan forgiveness programs that go above and beyond federal loan forgiveness programs.
- Work closely with city universities, specifically those that do not prepare Fellows, to ensure that they also implementing robust mechanisms for recruiting and graduating aspiring teachers of color. Use this as a carrot to support coveted student teaching placements in city schools.

- Finally, while not the explicit focus of this paper, it must be noted that to date there has been little acknowledgment that the vast majority of NYC teachers are not new teachers (or even teachers seeking tenure). This is a serious point when we consider that the goal of improved teacher quality is for the purpose of increased student achievement. If this is indeed the case, should there not be substantively more (if not equally) intensive human capital strategies focused on teacher quality for these teachers- and by this I mean both ongoing development as well as evaluation? While I briefly addressed other school-based and non-school-based influences on student achievement, the failure to provide a systematic and comprehensive human capital reform for the majority of the teaching population will mean that many students, who most need high quality teachers, will continue not to have them.

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