

# Vermont Principals' Association

Supporting Leaders & Learners

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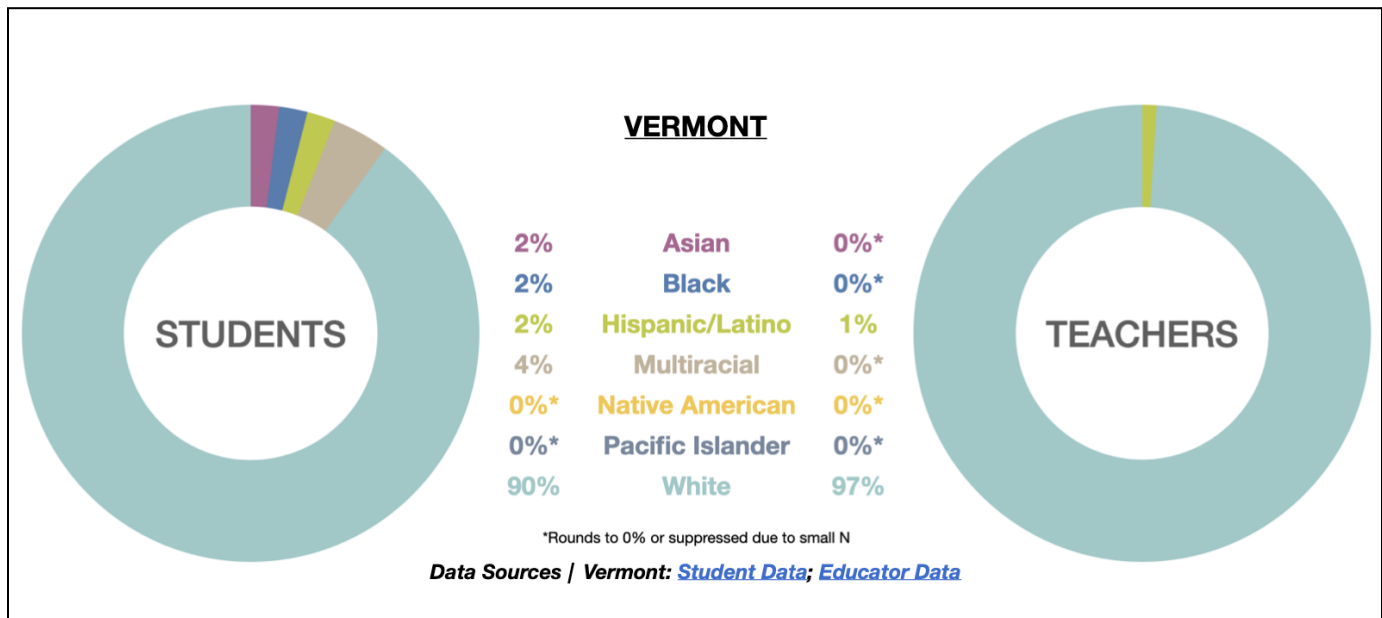
Testimony: House Education

Topic: Diversifying the Vermont Educator Workforce

Date: 2-24-23

VPA Rep: Mike McRaith, Associate Executive Director

“A growing body of research demonstrates the positive impacts of teachers of color on short- and long-term academic outcomes of all students. For students of color, the research finds that having just one teacher of color at any point between kindergarten and third grade can boost academic achievement, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment rates (Dee, 2004; Gershenson, 2018). Nationally, students of color represent 50% of total public K-12 enrollment, and by 2060, that number will climb to 66%. Yet, people of color currently make up only 20% of the educator workforce (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). The imperative is clear: A racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse educator workforce is vital to closing the inequitable gaps that persist between students of color and their White peers.”<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Opening paragraph and graph are taken from the Diversifying the Educator Workforce Collaborative Regional Landscape Snapshot of March, 2022. Authored by the Great Schools Partnership. ([Link to Document](#))

The research on the importance and effectiveness of learning that goes along with diversifying the educator workforce has been known for decades. **There is a positive impact for all students** and the positive impact on students of color is particularly profound. Vermont has an increasing percentage of youth of the global majority, while our educator demographic remains around 97% white. In my role at the Vermont Principals' Association, I've tried to take and initiate every meeting possible on this issue over the past three and a half years. In countless meetings and conversations, I've yet to meet anyone who disagrees about its importance and need, yet there is no comprehensive programming to address the challenge. Of specific importance are the hours that I have spent in conversation with longtime Vermont educational leaders: Mikaela Simms, Bonnie Johnson-Aten, and Lashawn Whitmore-Sells. Their leadership, lived experience, and insights significantly inform my thinking and communicated ideas here.

### **Key Learnings About the DEW Landscape:**

- There have been many localized attempts in past decades with mixed results but no significant change.
- There are several small-scale pockets of effort in some districts and educational non-profit organizations, some regional convening efforts, some regional official reports.
- Despite the clear and longstanding need to diversify the educator workforce, I know of no official state-level effort (ever?) to address the fact that our population is becoming more diverse while our educator workforce is not.

### **Recommendations**

- **Require demographic data to be collected and reported.** At this time, to my knowledge, Vermont does not collect demographic data on our educator workforce. Thus, we actually do not have a clear picture of when the numbers go up or down, no way to see longitudinal data. This needs expectations and resources to meet that expectation.
- **Have dedicated and committed leadership to diversifying the educator workforce.** There is no department, no task-force, no project management, no sprint team, no job role that is currently asked to focus on this issue at the state level. There is nobody connecting the dots between grassroots efforts, providing state convenings, building partnerships, providing research, or resources on best practices, nobody recruiting, nobody to advocate for appropriations, etc.
- **Attend to the Environment.** The issues that are impacting the educator pipeline and educator retention are true for educators of the global majority as well. In addition to those baseline challenges are the micro and macro aggressions experienced systematically and routinely by educators of global majority and other marginalized identities.
  - Follow the Recommendations Provided by the Vermont Educators of Color Association: [Vision Document for Sustaining Educators of Color in VT](#)
  - Fund a coordinated implementation of ACT 1 of 2019 to improve key knowledges, community engagement, equitable policies, representative

curricula, instructional practices, educational access, and related educator professional learning.

- Coordinate a network of support: utilizing some of the existing grassroots efforts for educator affinity spaces ([existing examples](#)) and expand with concentrated hours, funding, and focus.
- **Incentivize and Support the Pathways.** The various potential pathways include: retention, recruiting out of state, youth in state, licensing access (e.g. multiple languages), adult-ed programs, peer-review incentives, and university students. Each of these pathways could have its own programming, leadership, and appropriations. With that said, based on my discussions over the past several years, I suggest the two follow areas of focus:
  - Retention (see above on environment)
  - University Programs: I believe that a collaboration is possible between public pk-12 districts, Vermont teacher prep programs, philanthropy, and the state (AOE, Office of Racial Equity, or Dept. of Labor) to strengthen recruitment and placement. I believe a program that provided some targeted recruitment, loan forgiveness, early mentoring, and retention bonuses would lead to a sustained increase in our percentage of educators of the global majority.
- **Advocate for Long-Term Statewide Commitment & Investment.** Attending to the clear need to diversify the educator workforce is important and is only one area of needed attention on the need to improve racial equity in Vermont. This area would be more well supported by a comprehensive and long-term commitment by the state as whole, along the lines of the [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan from the State of Oregon](#) (for example).

**Additional Testimony to Consider:** I recommend the following people/groups for additional testimony and perspectives. I can connect you directly as needed/wanted.

- VPA Member and Burlington school administrator, Bonnie Johnson-Aten. Bonnie leads the VPA affinity group, “A Place of Our Own” for school leaders of color in Vermont
- The [Vermont Professionals of Color Network](#)
- Jess DeCarolis at the Agency of Education who co-authored the [study from 2019](#).
- DEI coordinator in the Champlain Valley School District, Lashawn Witmore Sells, who has been active in Diversifying the Educator Workforce initiatives in Vermont for the past 15 years
- A representative from the Vermont Office of Racial Equity
- Representatives from the ACT 1 Working Group with lived experience as an educator, student, and/or parent
- Carolyn Weir, Executive Director at the McClure Foundation

### **Listed and Related Resources/Information**

- [Great Schools Partnership & Barr Foundation: Diversifying the Educator Workforce Collaborative—Call to Action](#)

- [2019 Report: Increasing the Racial, Ethnic, and Linguistic Diversity of the Educator Workforce](#)
- [2022 Diversifying the Educator Workforce Regional Landscape Snapshot](#)
- [Known Affinity Spaces for Vermont Educators of Color](#)
- [Vision Document for Sustaining Educators of Color in VT \(spring, 2022\)](#)
- [Recent VPA podcast Episodes on Diversifying the Vermont Educator Workforce](#)
- [Spark Teacher Educator Institute](#)
- The VPA is working with the McClure Foundation to bring [NEMNET](#) for professional learning to VPA membership
- New [DEW Grant](#) launched at the Rowland Foundation
- [VT Partnership for Fairness & Diversity](#) provided [Recommendations for Recruitment & Retention of Educators in Vermont](#)
- [VPA Statement on Educator Workforce 11-4-22](#)
- [Educator Workforce Brief from VSA, VPA, & VSBA 3-3-22](#)
- <https://colorado.teach.org/> & <https://connecticut.teach.org/>
- [VPA Survey to Members of Work Force Issue, May 2020](#)
- [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan from the State of Oregon](#)