

# Attracting, Supporting, and Retaining Strategies for SETs of Color

---

DR. ELIZABETH BETTINI

DR. LARON A. SCOTT



# Agenda

---

- Why focus on special educators of color?
- Attracting special educators of color
- Supporting and Retaining special educators of color

# Why Focus on Special Educators of Color?

---

# Significant Positive Effects on Students

---

Dee, 2004:

- 11,600 students randomly assigned to classes in K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade
- Assignment of Black students to a Black teacher for one year led to:
  - 3-5% increase in reading scores
  - 2-4% increase in math scores
  - Effects were largest for students attending high poverty schools

Many studies since then have confirmed these results (e.g., Eddy & Easton-Brooks, 2011; Egalite et al., 2015; Rocha & Hawes, 2009)

# Why Do These Effects Occur?

---

## Possible Explanations:

- **Cultural Match/Mismatch:**

- Teachers competent in students' cultural backgrounds may be more likely to:
  - Hold high expectations for students
  - Interpret student behavior accurately
  - Incorporate culturally relevant content and methods into instruction

(Brown, 2009; Mahatmya et al., 2016)

# Why Do These Effects Occur?

---

## Possible Explanations:

- **Implicit Biases:**

- Teachers who hold implicit biases about a student's race/ethnicity
  - Provide less rigorous instruction (Jacoby-Senghor et al., 2016)
  - Refer students less often to gifted education (Rocha & Hawes, 2009)
  - Write more discipline referrals (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015)
  - Have students who make smaller achievement gains (van den Bergh et al., 2010)
- Meta-analysis of 37 studies (Redding, 2019)
  - Black teachers were more likely to rate Black student behavior positively and academic achievement positively, compared to white teachers
  - Latino/a teachers were more likely to rate Latino/a student behavior positively and academic achievement positively, compared to white teachers

# Why Do These Effects Occur?

---

## Other Possible Explanations:

- Role models
- Student engagement
- Support for navigating racist systems
  
- Qualitative evidence indicates that these possibilities do occur (e.g., Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011; Borrero et al., 2016; Phillip, 2013; Rueda et al., 2004)
- Quantitative studies have not been conducted examining to what extent these may explain the positive effects of teachers of color on students of color

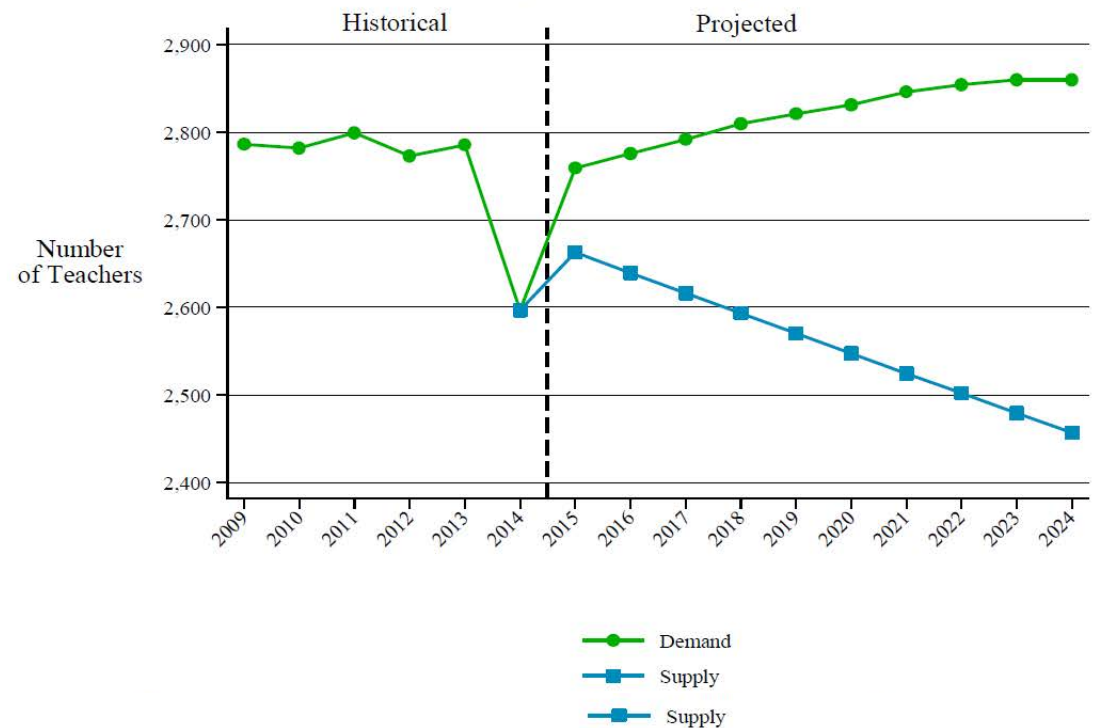
# Shortage of Special Educators of Color

## Shortage of Special Educators Nationally

## Particular Shortage of Special Educators of Color, Nationally

- Special educators:
  - 18% are Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Students:
  - Almost 50% of students with disabilities are Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

Figure 20. Historical and Projected Statewide Supply and Demand for Minority Teachers in Terms of FTEs in the Commissioner’s Districts Region, 2008-09 Through 2023-24

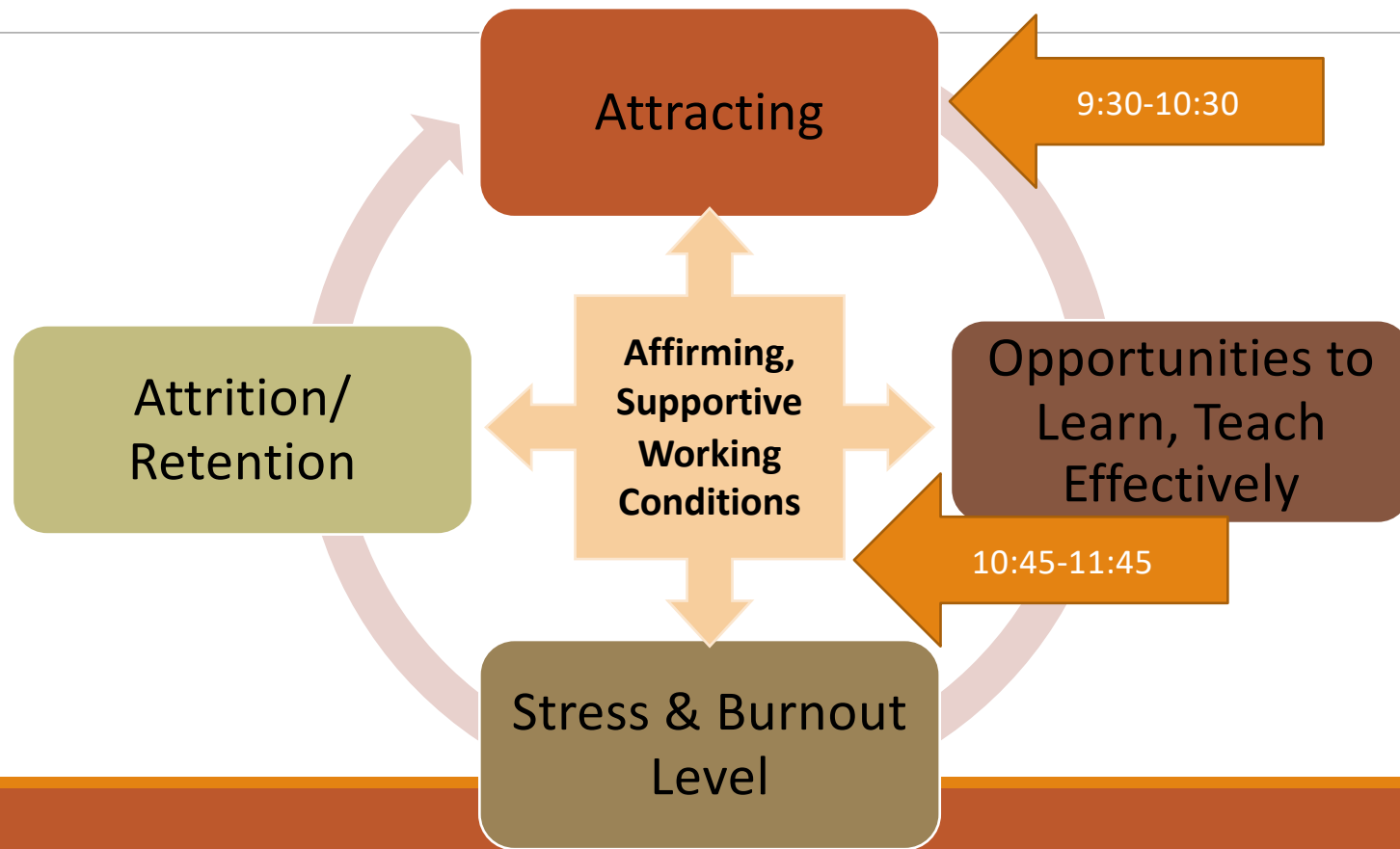




# Attracting, Supporting, Retaining

---

# Cultivating a Racially/Ethnically Diverse Special Educator Workforce



# Attracting Special Education Teachers of Color

---



# Promising Programs & Strategies:

---

## **School-University Partnerships**

- Grown Your Own Programs
- Residency Programs
- Scholarships or Stipends to Offset Tuition and Training Costs

## **Anti-racist** and **Ableist** recruitment, admissions, and hiring policies

- Hire recruiters to implement strategic recruitment strategies to increase the enrollment of SETs of Color
- SETs of Color as Ambassadors in Community, Schools, and IHEs
- Culturally Competent Strategies



# It's a big ask folks....

---

Attracting: Supporting: Retaining: SETs of Color Requires

- Acknowledging our country, including the educational systems failures
  - Racism is a failure
  - Trauma is a failure
  - Lack of cultural competency is a failure
  - Lack of family engagement is a failure

# Opening the Door...

---

## **Anti-Racist Mission and Vision Statements**

- Explain their positions on how systemic and structural discrimination issues are addressed in their organizations

## **Representation from Recruiters, Faculty, and Students of Color in Special Education**

- Must consider the racial diversity of the faculty members and students within their programs

## **Assorted Pathway Programs**

- Developing creative and multiple pathways to obtain SET certification

Does the partnership engage and strengthen all parties involved?



- Culturally Responsive Approaches
- Communication with the community
- Diverse teaching experiences
- Diverse field experiences

# School University Partnerships

---

Assets of  
Inclusive Urban  
Communities

Culturally  
responsive  
pedagogy

Field  
experiences

Effective  
collaborators

Student  
teaching  
experience

Collaborative  
relationships



# Assorted Pathway Programs

---

General Assembly appropriated \$437,186 for traineeships and program operation to public Virginia institutions of higher education

Employed in the public schools of Virginia, state operated programs, or regional special education centers as special educators with an active Provisional License in Special

Implement college/university and school division partnerships (personnel) in the development and implementation of the proposed project, including how project personnel will contact, disseminate, and market the project to school divisions.

- Letters of support, cooperation, and/or commitment from school divisions are encouraged.

# VA Strategies

## Advancing Diversity in SET Workforce

---

Provide an explanation of the design of the proposed project and why the program will meet the needs of the local community.

Provide a description of participants (e.g., numbers, characteristics) to be served by the project and how participants **will be recruited and selected**.

Provide a description of course delivery methods available and how participants will access courses offered (i.e., delivery methods such as courses offered on site or online).

Provide a list and proposed schedule of the coursework (e.g., fall, spring, and/or summer sessions), **activities, and field experiences to be offered that meet the required competencies** for Special Education License

# Residency-style Instructional Assistant Pathway Program

---

b. Increase number of SETs of color, improve retention, specifically Black men.

c. Connecting novice SETs with exemplary experienced SETs, and promote cultural pedagogy and mentoring

d. Provide multiple field experiences through coursework to scholars

a. Attracting and retaining provisionally licensed SETs

Certifying Online  
Virginia Educators

e. Provide virtual communication regarding program processes, course dates, program updates to district leaders and students.

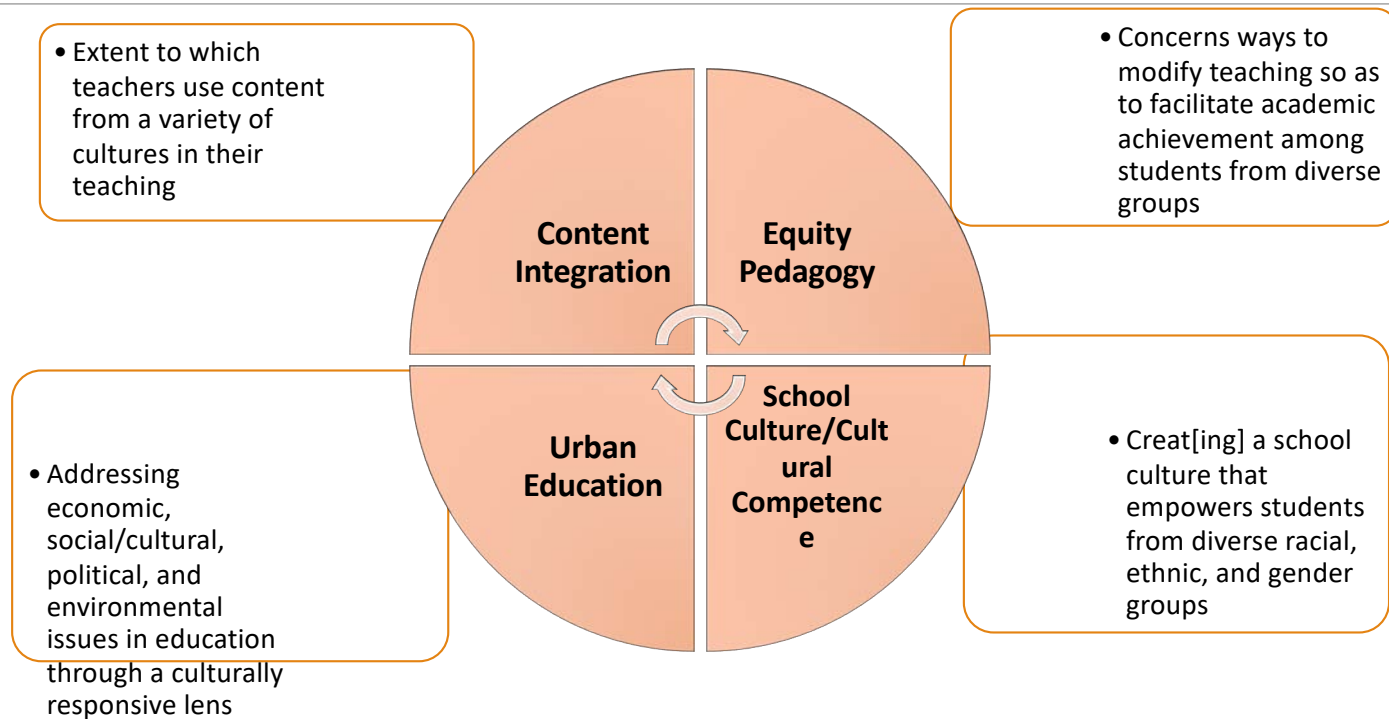


# Key Reflective Questions....

---

1. What did you learn from this exercise?
2. Have you established any goals for yourself or program regarding diversity?
3. What challenge goals have you set for yourself and what is your progress toward achieving them? For you?
4. In what specific ways do you act to include those key theoretical frameworks in courses, school curriculum, school experiences?
5. What might you do differently as a result of this exercise?

# School-University Mapping Diversity in Educator Preparation



# Program Outcomes

---

- Since 2007: 800+ Provisionally Licensed SETs
  - 15% SETs of Color
- Since 2014: 40% SETs of Color
- Since 2020: Recruited 34 new SET IA Residents
  - 32 Black = 94%

**SHIFTING THE SOE CULTURE AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

# Break

---



# Experiences of Beginning Teachers of Color

- **Racialized positioning within schools**

- Cultural Brokering
- Stereotyped Pedagogical Role
- Hypervisibility/ Invisibility
- Questioning Expertise
- Isolation

*“They [general education colleagues at his school] would bring me all the little Black boys that were mouthing off or who were sleeping in their classes, or who weren’t listening. Instead of trying to understand and build a relationship, they [colleagues] would rather kick them out their class and send them to me... the only Black special education teacher in the building.”*

(Scott, 2020, p. 10)

# Experiences of Beginning Teachers of Color

- **Witnessing racism perpetuated in schools**
  - Witnessing colleagues express/enact biases
  - Curricular norms and materials perpetuate racist hierarchies

*I would love to have more flexibility to apply more context in the curriculum, having more opportunities to teaching about African American history, more about inequality, and more content that I think would give Black students an opportunity to engage more in the classroom.*

(Scott & Alexander, 2019, p. 8)

# Experiences of Beginning Teachers of Color

- **Learning about sociocultural differences with students, without support**
  - Because of race/ethnicity, others assumed they wouldn't need learning experiences related to sociocultural differences with students

*"I thought I was ready to work with ELs because of my background. But I realized that the Spanish speaking youth were not at all from Mexico or Mexican-American. I had students from El Salvador and other countries from Central America. I could not relate at all because we were from diverse backgrounds. Our Spanish dialect was different. My students saw me in a different light it was tough... I only saw one perspective. I was just viewing my students and lowering my expectations by how they spoke Spanish.... I was thinking this way. I have to really learn a lot about my students and the talent they bring so I can be better prepared."*

(Ramirez et al., 2016, p. 26)

# Experiences of Beginning Teachers of Color

---

- **The Double Bind:** Personal commitments to communities of color in conflict with professional obligations as a teacher

*Tensions between personal ties (i.e., cultural, linguistic, familial affiliations and connections that play a critical role in shaping an individual's thinking, and thus choices) and systemic ties (i.e., written, spoken, hidden, and/or invisible institutional policies, features, and practices that have direct power and influence over individuals and groups).*

(Gist, 2017, p. 931)

*Supporting Teachers of  
Color Requires Reducing  
the Double Bind by Making  
Schools **Affirming Places  
for Students of Color***



# Take away the stereotype

---

**How many times have you hired because you thought a school needed a Black man who you assumed reflected the student population?**

**How many times have you hired a Latinx teacher because there was a need for this SET to interpret for other teachers and administrators who need to communicate with Spanish-speaking families?**

**How many times have you hired a SET because the shortage was just too great?**

**How many times have you hired a Black/Latinx SET because the individual was a strong instructor?**

# Supporting and Retaining SETs of Color

---

- 1. Racial affinity groups**
- 2. Culturally competent support**
- 3. Tuition support**
- 4. Emergency funds**
- 5. Adopting anti-racist curriculum and pedagogical knowledge**
- 6. Erase the TAX**



# Racial affinity groups

**Affinity groups refer to individuals grouping together and networking based on common action, activism, ideology, or interest (Pour-Khorshid, 2017).**

- Used for cultivating a diverse teacher workforce, including providing supports for reducing trauma and supporting their personal and professional needs

**Racial affinity groups based on connection, hope, engagement, inspiration, advocacy, and connectedness around systemic and structural racism, ableism, and other intersection issues**

- Linked to the increased productivity of teachers of color during their preparation programs (Kohli, 2018), and implicitly with Black male SETs, as mechanisms to support them while enrolled in their preparation programs and across their K-12 careers (Scott & Alexander, 2019).

**Costs to establish or sustain affinity groups that build community and promote program completion for SET of Color**



# Culturally Competent Supports

---

Current research suggests that ongoing mentoring and induction supports, specifically culturally competent peer support mentoring models, can improve the experiences for teachers of color (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Scott, 2019)

- Training costs and additional stipends for SET mentors of color
- Focus on equity and cultural needs of SET of color
- IHE and Division representatives trained and match based on SET of color roles, educational settings, and career goals.

# Tuition Support

---

Research on recruiting and retaining teachers of color consistently cites the rising costs of teacher preparation as a barrier

The same research notes that reducing the costs of tuition, providing scholarships, and offering loan forgiveness are valid ways to improve the teacher of color pipeline (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Dee & Goldhaber, 2017; Scott, 2019).

**IA Pathway Program: Providing candidates with tuition (and living stipend/\$22,000), not inclusive of health insurance.**

Test prep expenses or licensure support for Black candidates

# Emergency Funds

---

Costs associated with teacher preparation programs as barriers for teachers of color.

In addition to covering tuition costs, we proposed the **development of an emergency fund**

Researchers indicate a need to address the different needs of teachers of color, instead of taking a “silver bullet” approach across this group (Hanover Research, 2016).

Menu of incentives for attracting and retaining SETs of color by addressing their individual strengths and needs:

1. transportation costs
2. housing subsidies
3. relocation incentives
4. subsidized meals
5. performance-based rewards
6. health insurance
7. Childcare
8. housing
9. professional development

# Adopting Anti-Racist Curriculum and Pedagogical Knowledge

---

Emphasis on differentiated professional development for teachers of color to address unique needs has received considerable attention in research and policy (Watson, Bristol, White, & Vilson, 2019).

Recognize that many SET of color, are never exposed to differentiated learning experiences to develop or improve themselves based on the distinctive challenges they will face.

Provide SET of color with high-quality equity and culturally relevant academic and social experiences tailored to their interest and needs.

- Co-curricular activities during the year
- National conference (i.e., NAIS People of Color Conference) for networking w/other SETs of Color.
- Making personal connections & having time to exchange ideas on critical topics
- Meeting other educators of color who share a similar background and story



## Erase the Tax

---

Erase the burden refers to the “tax” that SET of color often pay, because they are one of only a few in their programs/schools



# VCU

Minority Education Center  
School of Education





# About Us

The core mission and vision of the Minority Educator Recruitment Retention & Education Center (MERREC) is to improve society's respect for underrepresented minoritized educators, particularly those of color. We are particularly interested in attracting, supporting, and retaining minoritized educators of color. At MERREC, we believe equity is justice for all minoritized educators, especially our educators of color.

We believe that correcting these deep-rooted injustices will improve the recruitment and retention pipeline for educators of color and we are committed through our advocacy and comprehensive supports to enrich the experiences of minoritized educators, particularly educators of color.



# Our Goals

---



1. Provide ongoing culturally-centered mentoring and induction support to improve the success of minoritized educators.
2. Offer culturally-centered co-curricular experiences tailored to the academic and social interest and needs of minoritized educators.
3. Administer a financial program to support minoritized educators.
4. Conduct research to improve the recruitment, supports, and retention of preservice and in-service educators of color.





# Our Engagement

---

## Equity: The Podcast

This is a series on student-driven topics on issues of equity in education and a way for our students, faculty, and staff to address their ongoing problems of practice in the field. We will also have inspirational discussions with those leading the charge on issues of diversity and inclusion in Education.

## Equity: The Series

A virtual co-curricular series, our 2021-22 sessions will focus on Equity for SET Educators of Color and is designed to address problems in the teacher education pipeline specific to School of Education students and those working in our urban and high-needs communities

## Student Advocacy

MERREC is continually empowering our students and alumni to become champions in their educational fields. We are continually adding various ways people can learn, grow and connect with one another through the creation of various organizations centered around Diversity & Inclusion. Groups include the **Advocacy and Leadership Association of Minority Educators (ALAME)** and several **Affinity Groups** which cater to specific areas like race, gender, religion and programs of study. To date there is the **Male Teachers of Color, Wellness for Black Doctoral Students and Teachers of Color.**



# *Distinguished Gentlemen*

Character building  
Leadership skills  
Advocacy





# OUR REACH

---

## 350K+ IN FINANCIAL SUPPORT

We have provided well over 200 future and current educators of color with over 301k in tuition assistance, as well as, over 35k in funds to be used on rent, books, VCU admission costs and standardized testing fees.

---

## 20K+ PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

We have provided access to over 200 future and current educators of color by providing registration funding for local and national conferences and trainings. Simultaneously, we continue to offer "in house" trainings to assist our RTR population.

---

## 200+ ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS

SOE students, RTR Residents, and alums of color directly benefiting from all programs and services.

