

Researchers find that many minority teachers sign on but do not stay

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Research from the University of Pennsylvania has found that success in recruiting minority teachers for low-income schools is being undone by continuing problems with teacher retention.

For a report entitled “[Recruitment, Retention and the Minority Teacher Shortage](#)” Richard Ingersoll and Henry May of the Penn Graduate [School](#) of Education analyzed two decades of data from the Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Education in what is the most comprehensive and in-depth analysis conducted on minority teacher recruitment and retention.

They wanted to find out if numerous well-funded efforts to recruit more minority teachers, especially to schools in low-income, minority communities, were successful in diversifying the teaching workforce.

Since the late 1980s, the number of minority elementary and secondary teachers has grown from 325,000 to 642,000, outpacing growth in both minority students and white teachers, their data show. Moreover, minority teachers have been overwhelmingly employed in public schools that service high-poverty, high-minority and urban communities.

However, the research also indicates that these recruitment efforts have been undermined because, while minorities have entered teaching at far higher rates than whites in recent decades, they have also left teaching at far higher rates.

While the racial and ethnic characteristics of a school’s students and staff appear to be highly important to minority teachers’ initial employment decisions, this is not the case for their later decisions about whether to depart. What does matter, the study finds, are school working conditions.

The same difficult-to-staff schools that are more likely to employ minority teachers are also more likely to offer less-than-desirable working conditions, according to the study, and these conditions account for the higher rates of minority teacher turnover.

Ingersoll and May found that the most important working conditions were the amount of faculty input into school decision-making and the degree of instructional autonomy teachers were allowed in their classroom.

Ingersoll and May concluded that “the data suggest that poor, high-minority urban schools that improve these [working conditions](#) will be far more able to retain their minority teachers and to address their shortages.

“Unlike reforms, such as teacher salary increases, allowing teachers to have input and discretion as professionals should be less costly financially – an important consideration, especially in low-income settings and in periods of budgetary constraint,” Ingersoll and May wrote.

Provided by University of Pennsylvania

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