

# Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

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## Collective Efforts to Diversify the Teaching Workforce in Minnesota

Despite the multiple efforts to increase the number of people of color in the teaching workforce in Minnesota – anecdotally, these conversations have been underway for over 20 years – the numbers remain dismal: Only 4% of teachers in Minnesota are people of color (Black, Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian), while 96% are White. The percentage of students of color in Minnesota’s classrooms, however, is 29.5%, and that number is projected to trend upward. By 2024, it is expected that 38% of the student population will be made up of non-White students. The reasons for this increasing gap are numerous and certainly complex, but we must engage collective efforts to change the current trend, the mismatch between students in Minnesota’s classrooms and the adults who teach them.

One category that demands our attention is the persistent barriers to teaching for people of color. We know that teacher testing, the rising cost of higher education, and the lack of scholarships (to name a few) keep many people of color and first generation college students out of teacher preparation programs. In addition, we know that increasing the number of teachers of color must involve specific interventions at all three phases of a teacher’s professional journey – recruitment, induction, and retention. I am here this morning to report on MACTE’s continuing efforts toward diversifying the teacher workforce in Minnesota.

In addition to long-standing conversations about and support for policies that support diversity in multiple forms, we have recently partnered in a grassroots effort called *The Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color in Minnesota*. The Coalition, which was officially created in November 2015 by a small group (9) of teacher educators and urban school district administrators, was preceded by a panel discussion led by teacher educators from various Minnesota education institutions that gathered at the fall 2015 MACTE Collaboration. In December 2015, the Coalition grew to over 40 people who came together to plan next steps and to affirm the goal of a 5-point platform to increase the number of teachers of color in Minnesota. MACTE members were part of this group, and the 5-point platform includes:

1. Provide induction and retention support
2. Support pathways to teaching for diverse youth, paraprofessionals, and career changers
3. Eliminate discriminatory teacher testing requirements
4. Provide scholarship incentives and student teaching stipends
5. Offer loan forgiveness for teaching service

Most recently, the Coalition planned and executed a summit and call for action on Saturday, February 6, held at MCTC called “Increasing Teacher Diversity in Minnesota: An Ongoing Community Conversation and Call to Action.” Over 200 people from dozens of organizations and institutions from throughout the state came together toward a common goal, increasing the percentage of teachers of color in Minnesota to 20 percent by 2020.

Our partners in this Coalition include:

Minnesota Educational Equity Partnership, Education Minnesota, Educators for Excellence, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, Minneapolis Community & Technical College, Metropolitan State University, Minnesota’s Private College Council, Augsburg College EAST Program, and Educational Equity Resource Center at the University of Minnesota

In addition to MACTE’s active involvement with the Coalition, we are currently engaged with the formation of a new program at the University of Minnesota called the Teacher-Scholars of Color Program for incoming students of color in our initial licensure programs. Though early in the planning stages, this program will kick off in fall 2016, and will seek to help retain students of color in our preparation program by offering mentoring and emotional support throughout the program. If successful, we believe this program could serve as a model and be replicated across many MACTE institutions.

One final note from an African-American parent and current member of a local school district’s equity team, “more than anything, we need to increase the number of teachers of color [and] dollars to recruit teachers of color or have the university be intentional about recruiting teachers of color.” MACTE certainly supports this parent’s sentiments and our on-going actions demonstrate our intentionality.