



THE CHARTING THE COURSE TO EQUITY COALITION:

USING THE POWER OF
RELATIONSHIPS IN EFFECTIVE
COMMUNITY-BASED POLICY REFORM

July 30, 2022

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ABSTRACT

Empirical data and research conducted across the country have long established that all students, and especially students of color, have better academic and behavioral outcomes - e.g., increased performance on standards assessments, lower rates of suspension, and stronger rates of college and career readiness - when they attend schools led by leaders who reflect and represent students' racial diversity. Yet in California, while 60% of students in K-12 public schools are Black or Latinx, only 20% of public schools have Black or Latinx leaders. The significant underrepresentation of leaders of color is what gave rise to the Charting the Course to Equity Coalition ("Coalition"), a powerful network of 13 local and national partner organizations who share a commitment to the work of building and sustaining a racially diverse pipeline of public school educators within California. Established in November 2019 by the Diversity in Leadership Institute ("DLI"), the Coalition has already achieved marked success in carrying out this work. The following case study explores the strategy behind those successes through the methodology of in-depth, one-one-one interviews with the Coalition's partner organizations, namely representatives of the Coalition's four working groups. In particular, the case study focuses on community-based policy reforms that have been spearheaded by the Coalition including, a recently adopted L.A. Unified School District resolution which calls on the District to better diversify, prepare, and retain Black educators, and the Coalition's statewide campaign to enact legislation that will support an increase in the pipeline of Black and Latinx school administrators through dedicated funding for community-based organizations, such as DLI. The case study posits, significantly, that these reforms are the result of DLI's intentionality around community-building among its Coalition partners, as well as with key external stakeholders and decision-makers. In light of the Coalition's early successes, the case study makes a strong recommendation that the Coalition, (1) focus its efforts not only on the passage of community-based reforms, but also on the successful implementation of those reforms; (2) continue to strengthen existing relationships and grow capacity through the strategic recruitment of new Coalition and community partners; and (3) advocate for increased funding to sustain and deepen its impact.

I. The Underrepresentation of Black and Latinx K-12 Leaders in Public Schools

In recent years, our country has become progressively more open to discussing the importance of racial representation across all industries and accepting a severe lack thereof, especially for individuals of Black and Hispanic/Chicano/Latinx descent. Within the public education sector of the United States, 78% of principals are White, in comparison to the 11% that are Black and 8% that are Latinx (NCES, 2019), meaning that many of the 43% of public school students identifying as non-White lack effective representation in leaders of color. Leaders of color include administrators, teachers, and adjacent authority figures in education who represent historically underrepresented groups, within this study referring specifically to Black and Latinx educators. Not only do leaders of color provide students with shared experiences and affirmation in their identities, but they also serve to expose all students to a diverse body of ideas, which leaders of color can provide. As stated by Dr. Susan Hockfield, 16th president of MIT, “creating a culture of inclusion is not an optional exercise; it is the indispensable precondition that enables us to capitalize on our diverse skills, perspectives, and experiences.” While educators of color are necessary to imbue diverse perspectives within schools, the nation faces a glaring deficit in representation among administrators and teachers, with only 7% identifying as Black and 9% as Latinx, depriving millions of students of culturally responsive school environments (Shaeffer, 2021).



California is often praised for its racial diversity. However, publicly available data from 2019 indicated that while 60% of students in K-12 public schools were Black or Latinx, only 20% of public schools had Black or Latinx leaders (Kress et. al, 2019). In fact, nearly 50% of California public schools do not have a Black teacher on staff, leaving 78,000 Black students without effective representation and mentorship (Ed Trust-West, 2022). This persistent gap is even more perplexing when conflated with the benefits provided to students when they have access to educators of color. A study conducted by the California Charter Schools Association (CCSA) in 2019 found that when examining public schools with a present leader of color compared to those without, all students on average showed greater performance on standardized testing, exhibiting a 10.3-point increase in Math and a 5.6-point increase in ELA (Kress et. al, 2019). Beyond performance, leaders of color also serve to decrease suspensions that disproportionately target Black and Latinx students and contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline (Barnes & Motz, 2018). For instance, when Black educators are present, Black students were shown to be 4.2 percentage points less likely to be suspended. Finally, leaders of color prove to be a fundamental support system in encouraging students towards entering college and forging their career paths after graduation (Kress et. al., 2019.) The CCSA found that when reviewing the results of the California 2018 College/Career Indicator (CCI), all students saw an average 3.9 percentage points increase in likelihood to be “prepared” in schools where leaders of color were present.



II. Formation of the Charting the Course to Equity Coalition

With this data in mind, the growing need to address the recruitment and retention of educators of color served as a catalyst for the creation of the Diversity in Leadership Institute (DLI) in 2019, a non-profit focused on strengthening the racial diversity, equity, and cultural responsiveness of school leadership. Under the guidance of Founder and CEO, Dr. Laura McGowan-Robinson, DLI has engaged in a number of projects to foster equitable outcomes for Black and Latinx students by recruiting a diverse body of culturally responsive leaders in education. Among those projects, a significant milestone towards DLI's vision is the creation of the Charting the Course to Equity Coalition (CCEC), an advisory group to DLI consisting of 13 partner organizations that focus on building systemic change in the California education system, through building and sustaining a racially diverse pipeline of public school educators. These partners include Loyola Marymount University, LA - School of Education (LMU), Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), United Negro College Fund (UNCF), California Charter Schools Association (CCSA), Education Leaders of Color (EdLoC), Energy Convertors, Teach for America Los Angeles (TFA LA), Education Board Partners, Innovate Public Schools, The Education-Trust West, National Charter Collaborative (NCC), Center for Powerful Public Schools, and Families in Action for Quality Schools: Oakland (FIA).

The CCEC was founded, in part, as a response to the Charting the Course to Equity: K-12 Leaders of Color and Student Success report that presented empirical evidence of the positive impact of leaders of color within public schools on the achievement of students of color and school-wide performance, spinning off work work began at CCSA to create a standalone non-profit (Kress et al., 2019). Presentation of these findings encouraged Dr. McGowan-Robinson to recruit collaborators to contribute to this report and form the CCEC, engaging other local education researchers and practitioners to bolster their efforts and research. Determined to keep the interests of students at the forefront of their work, Dr. McGowan-Robinson also used her platform with DLI to collaborate with the broader education community

orefront of their work, Dr. McGowan-Robinson also used her platform with DLI to collaborate with the broader education community, allying with organizations that represent students, parents, charter schools, public school administrators, and Black and Brown educators. This inculcation of multiple partners ensured that the CCEC represented a diverse body of interests aligned with educational equity, including the historical insight and lived experiences necessary to fully serve its community. The coalition first convened in September of 2019, during which members from ten organizations developed a call to action towards advocating for a more culturally responsive, racially diverse education leadership pipeline as a lever to create more equitable outcomes for Black and Latinx students. With that mission in mind, members agreed to participate in outlining the specific steps that would accompany the initial 2019 report (Hutching & McGowan-Robinson, 2022).

The CCEC was officially formed in November 2019, pushing for a collective effort by community members, policy makers, educators, and institutions of higher education in supporting the recruitment and retention of educators of color. The CCEC operates in accordance with a strategic plan, in which members have established goals to be executed over the course of a 1-4 year timeline that would contribute to the increase of the Black and Latinx administrator pipeline at both the state and local level. At the state level, the CCEC, by July of 2023, plans to successfully lobby the California legislature to enact policy that would push dedicated funding towards the administrator of color pipeline. At the local level, the CCEC hopes that by July of 2024, it will achieve successful implementation of a resolution it recently helped pass in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), mandating an effort towards the increased recruitment and retention of Black Educators.



III. Passage of the Black Educator Resolution

The LAUSD Board unanimously adopted the “Black Student Excellence through Educator Diversity, Preparation and Retention” Resolution (Res-014-21/22) on February 8, 2022, also known as the Black Educator Resolution. The resolution maintains that LAUSD must develop specific measures to diversify its number of Black administrators and educators, leveraging both new and existing state and federal funding to ensure the consistent recruitment and retention of these leaders (LAUSD, 2022.) While LAUSD has, in the past, demonstrated a commitment towards its Black students through the adoption of the Black Student Achievement Plan (BSAP), addressing a need for a more culturally responsive curriculum, it remains that only 9 percent of its 25,178 teachers and administrators are Black (Besecker & Thomas, 2022).

Prior to the resolution, conversation around California's teacher-student ethno-racial mismatch had already begun within its legislature. Under Assembly Bill 520, the Diversifying Teacher Grant Program was proposed by Assemblymember Mike Gipson to award charter schools, county offices, and districts competitive one-time grants totaling \$15 million in response to consistent efforts to implement strategies that advance Black and Latinx representation in their educator workforce (CDE, 2021). While this bill was ultimately rolled into funding under Assembly Bill 130 for the Educator Effectiveness Block Grant, totaling \$1.5 billion, it still stands as a call to action for the diversification of school employment and leadership prior to the Black Educator Resolution. Leveraging its ties to AB520 and Assemblymember Gipson, the CCEC utilized the partners and functions of its working groups to carry this conversation towards policy implementation in LAUSD.



IV. Structure of the CCEC Working Groups

The CCEC has structured its efforts into four working groups, in which members of partner organizations conduct regular meetings to strategize actions and projects that align with the goals outlined in its strategic plan. The coalition as a whole convenes monthly to strengthen their community and confirm quarterly tasks aligned with these overarching goals, creating a flexible space in which researchers, legislators, policy advocates, educators, and administrators are all able to contribute insight in planning the coalition's next steps. The four working groups consist of Research, Theory to Practice, Identify and Amplify, and Advocacy and Action. While projects are unique to each working group, there is notable overlap between tasks that together form a collective effort towards enhancing ethno-racial diversity in the California educator workforce. While not all working groups focused exclusively on passage of the Black Educator Resolution, what follows is evidence that each working group still played a fundamental role in the coalition's ability to achieve a unanimous agreement from the LAUSD board.

A. Research Working Group

The Research working group, while not focused directly on passing the Black Educator Resolution, provided data that was instrumental to its passage. As stated by group member Joanna French, Associate Director of Research & Policy at Innovate Public Schools, the Research working group deviates from traditional academia, in that their work is focused on "being actionable and having a direct impact on the lives of students and families." The Research working group provides research with the intention that it will be utilized by the coalition as a whole to further its efforts in policy implementation. As such, findings on disparities in education representation throughout California were cited regularly, supporting a need for a resolution containing tangible action towards recruiting and retaining Black and Brown educators.

As French notes, research projects of this group are rooted in participatory research that amplifies the voices of students, parents and educators, combining scientific data with education and policy action. One obstacle to the coalition's goals is a lack of published data within the state. California is "one of two states that does not publish student growth data," which French states is crucial to understanding equity and how the opportunity gap has changed over time. Another member of the group, Jennie Kress, Director of Research at the CCSA and lead author of its aforementioned 2019 report, noted that the California Department of Education (CDE) has significantly delayed the release of data on staffing and recruitment, with the most current data available being from 2018-2019 and new data for 2020-2021 being projected for release only later this fall. Kress also shared that this data often lacks clarity differentiating representation among districts' entire administrative bodies from that among leaders of schools, which is a key area of insight in examining how individual leaders of color positively impact school outcomes.

The LAUSD Board has made some progress in this area through the Black Student Achievement Plan (BSAP), requiring that multiple success metrics (math proficiency, literacy, etc.) be provided to evaluate schools' effectiveness in supporting students of color. The CCEC's Research group pushes for continued advocacy in this respect, asking that LAUSD commit to publishing data about its employment and retention of Black and Brown educators. As part of the resolution, LAUSD's Independent Analysis Unit (IAU) was required to provide a report on "Black Educators in L.A. Unified" within 60 days of the adoption of the resolution to identify current gaps within the district. The IAU report, issued May 11, 2022, shared that while 90% of students attended a school with a Black educator, this still leaves a third of schools without any Black teachers, as well as 2,000 Black students who lack contact with educators of shared identity (Besecker & Thomas, 2022.) Members of the Research working group maintain that regular communication with the district on publishing accessible and recent data will be essential for the CCEC's assessment that such gaps are actively being addressed.



The growing need to address the recruitment and retention of educators of color served as a catalyst for the creation of the Diversity in Leadership Institute

B. Theory to Practice Working Group

The Theory to Practice working group is where the CCEC finds the heart of its vision, spotlighting the voices of Black and Brown educators. This group fostered the Black Educator Pipeline ad hoc working group, which focused on projects such as the Black Educator Pipeline Survey, collecting responses from 104 racially diverse educators across California representing rural, suburban, and urban school districts. These respondents highlighted key areas of need and recommended strategies for the recruitment of teachers of color, given that 70% of respondents had no method of doing so within their districts. The Theory to Practice working group also connected leaders of color through roundtable discussions, including researchers and institutions of higher learning to band their ideas and address the challenges facing Black and Brown educators in California.

Hosting these critical discussions is an important step the coalition takes to strengthen trust between themselves and Black and Brown educators, given that trust serves as a key component in successful policy implementation. Theory to Practice group member Adonai Mack, Senior Director of Equity Services at the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), shared that, "when you're breaking down some of the systemic issues that exist for Black students, a lot of educators face resistance; it requires courage and changing the system." Grappling with a history of disconnect between policy makers and educators of color, it was crucial for the coalition to provide educators a space to inform policy decisions through their own experiences. Mack also noted that on the side of decision-making bodies, some are often wary of initiatives from outside organizations, fearing that such organizations will not "stay for the long haul" to support implementation once that process begins. The Theory to Action working group helped the CCEC to preemptively counter this skepticism by presenting the active interests of multiple leaders of color in passing the resolution, highlighting both the urgency of the issue and DLI's commitment to working directly with educators to see it through.

While the passage of the resolution does mark a first step towards success, some group members warn that there are more conversations that must be held before implementation can proceed. With increased statewide representation being an overarching goal, group member Dr. Alicia Montgomery, Executive Director for the Center for Powerful Public Schools, iterated that some communities simply are not ready to acknowledge conversations surrounding diversity and representation, and this requires district leaders to adamantly promote conversation on how to “prepare, accept, and love their leaders of color.” The CCEC will continue to promote discussion that relays the challenges faced by educators of color, but Dr. Montgomery notes that district leaders must utilize these conversations and publicly connect with community organizations that can rally around the resolution's causes. Voices of support, like those at the center of this group, will become increasingly crucial as the board moves forward with implementation.

C. Identify and Amplify Exemplars Working Group

Emphasizing the value of educator voices, the Identify and Amplify Working Group highlights the experiences of administrators who have demonstrated exceptional efforts in recruiting, retaining, and promoting leaders of color while fostering a fruitful and culturally responsive school climate for their students. While the work of the Theory to Practice working group is essential in collecting both diverse and shared experiences from a racially diverse body of leaders, elevating these voices to a public platform is necessary to gain visibility from state and local bodies and make the case for policies that will foster conditions for educators of color to thrive.

The Identify and Amplify working group has implemented campaigns and summits that highlight exceptional leaders of color who can speak to the positive impact that a racially diverse body of educators can bring to all students. Hosting yearly campaigns, its recent Spring 2022 social media campaign featured interview clips from five exemplary Black and Latinx principals who have demonstrated culturally responsive school leadership, sharing their

experiences in supporting their Black and Latinx teachers and students. Further examples of this working group's efforts to uplift educator voices can also be found through the Amplify Summit hosted in February of 2021 (Appendix A), which was a 2-day virtual event that allowed administrators to interact with a panel of exemplary Black and Latinx K-12 leaders, as well as engage with both professional development and restorative circles that addressed issues of racism and bias evident in public education. With low retention of educators of color stemming, in part, from issues of isolation and lacking support in schools, events like this serve to reaffirm leaders of color and strengthen the case for their recruitment.

D. Advocacy and Action Working Group

The Advocacy and Action group was most directly involved in the passage of the resolution. As the primary advocacy arm of the coalition, the group seeks to collectively leverage the coalition's stakeholder voices to push for policy reform surrounding issues of equity and inclusion. Jennifer Childress, one of the group's members, has been involved with the CCEC since its inception, bringing the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) to DLI as one of its inaugural partners and sponsors. Childress believes that their success as a group rests in the foundational relationships that were cemented prior to their advocacy efforts. She noted that while most advocacy groups often "want to jump into the action before building the groundwork," the CCEC built their coalition of partners and sponsors with common goals in education prior to deciding where to focus their efforts and whose voices to uplift. The Advocacy and Action group thrives on having individuals from a diverse collection of education backgrounds involved in its efforts; Childress stated while many individuals in the CCEC were united through a shared charter school background, the founder of DLI herself being a charter school founder and serving as COO for the California Charter Schools Association, the CCEC also made an effort to find connections outside of the charter school system, including those to the LAUSD Board that were salient to the Black Educator Resolution's passage.



60% of students in K-12 public schools are Black or Latinx, only 20% of public schools have Black or Latinx leaders.

KRESS ET. AL, 2019



Nearly 50% of California public schools do not have a Black teacher on staff, leaving 78,000 Black students without effective representation and mentorship

EDTRUST-WEST, 2022

Los Angeles Unified Board Member Tanya Ortiz-Franklin was a key player in fulfilling the CCEC's goals, being the board member to officially present the resolution. Ortiz-Franklin stated in a webinar presented by the CCEC and DLI on April 28, 2022 that while, in acknowledgement of extreme police brutality toward the Black community, "LAUSD has spent \$90 million investing in black student achievement," not nearly the equivalent has been funneled towards providing for the adults who serve them, many of whom share their student's identities (DLI, 2022). Black and Brown educators, especially with meager representation, face the cultural tax of being asked to solve and mitigate the impacts of systemic inequity by their peers, simultaneously managing the emotional labor of shouldering the grief and concerns of their Black students. Knowing Board Member Ortiz-Franklin had a vested interest in diversity among educators and could leverage her relationship to the superintendent, DLI and the CCEC connected her to community partners in the fall of 2021. Through collaboration, they provided Ortiz-Franklin with the drafted goals that would be unanimously adopted as the resolution that following February. Examining this success in policy passage, it is evident that action indeed proceeds policy, as was echoed in the DLI webinar. The CCEC's success in advocacy is owed to the focus they place on building relationships and leveraging their ties to the community, utilizing shared experiences as an impetus for resolution-building. A testament to this strong community is the collective letter that was sent to the LAUSD Board on February 7, 2022 prior to its vote on the resolution, affirming support for its passage on behalf of 54 partner organizations and individuals (Appendix B). While decisions within a policy-making body can often exempt underrepresented stakeholders, the CCEC supported a community that ensured the Black Educator Resolution would maintain the voices of Black and Brown leaders at its forefront.



V. Future Steps and Recommendations for the CCEC

With enactment of the resolution through LAUSD's 2022-26 Strategic Plan underway, the CCEC plans to uphold its goal for the resolution's successful implementation by July 2024, holding the district accountable for meeting the Strategic Plan's following measures for success: 1) ensuring that at least 50% of new applicants are members of underrepresented groups, 2) ensuring vacancy rates at high/highest-need schools do not exceed 6%, and 3) increasing retention rates of staff hired in 2021-22 and 2022-23 placed in high/highest-need schools. To ensure these goals are fully and punctually met, it may be prudent for the coalition to collaborate with the district to find funding within available and underutilized pots of money. As Advocacy and Action working group member Hannah Gravette, LA Regional VP of Innovate Schools, stated, funding towards training and recruitment could be supported through the BSAP, which has received an additional \$24 million investment for the 2022-23 funding year on top of its initial \$140 million investment (Carvalho, 2022). However, having the available funds still does not ensure that it will be responsibly allocated towards Strategic Plan goals that pertain to the Black Educator Resolution. Resolutions, as Gravette mentioned, do little outside of creating a mechanism for accountability; rather, pushing for a district committee focused solely on the resolution, public moments of board members sharing district data, and regular meetings with board members like Board Member Ortiz-Franklin are essential steps the CCEC should take to cement the resolution into practice.





Strengthening the case for hiring and retaining administrators of color still requires much support from the CCEC beyond the scope of LAUSD, given that the district's IAU report revealed that LAUSD actually leads California in recruiting Black administrators, with its ratio of nearly one in five (18%) being double that of administrators statewide (Besecker & Thomas, 2022). The CCEC is now appealing for state-level funding through the Department of Education, State Board of Education, and Commission on Teacher Credentialing, with the goal of creating funds accessible to Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) like itself that can be used to jumpstart programs for the credentialing and training of Black and Latinx administrators. In extending its reach across the state, the CCEC plans to continue bringing in new community partners that share their vision for education. While broadening the coalition's reach undoubtedly has its positives, Ebony Wheaton notes that increasing partnership mandates clarifying the roles within each group. Many coalition members work on a voluntary basis, leveraging their positions and influence within partnered organizations to serve the coalition's efforts. Statewide policy plays require ensuring that partners not only join the work, but also take an active role in shaping the goals of the coalition. The CCEC has succeeded thus far in forging strong relationships within the education community and uplifting Black and Brown voices, placing both as a foundation to advocate for policy that maintains its most vulnerable stakeholders at its center. As it extends the goals of the Black Educator Resolution on a greater statewide level, the CCEC faces the challenge of demanding greater and sustained involvement from these relationships as a critical means to carry its goals.

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Appendix A: AMPLIFY Summit Informative Flier

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Appendix B: Collective Letter to LAUSD Board

February 7, 2022

Dear Honorable Members, LA Unified Board of Education:

We the undersigned, write in support of the introduction and subsequent adoption of the Black Student Excellence through Educator Diversity, Preparation and Retention Resolution, which provides support for Black students, and all students, through a commitment to Black educators. As organizations, and individuals, that believe school leaders' racial diversity and culturally responsive leadership skills are critical levers in creating equitable outcomes for students of color, we strongly support the passage of this critical LAUSD board resolution.

Representation Matters. Black students, and ALL students, need to see Black educators in their schools. Educators should reflect, respect, and embrace the racial diversity of the school communities they serve.

Research shows all students do better with educators of color.

"Exposure to at least one black teacher in grades 3-5 also increases the likelihood that persistently low-income students of both sexes aspire to attend a four-year college."¹

Retention of Black educators must be a priority. LAUSD has made a commitment to support Black Student Achievement, and it is essential LAUSD supports Black educators.

LAUSD has talented Black educators, but they need greater access to opportunities, support, leadership development, networks, and professional affinity spaces at all levels.

The Black Student Excellence through Educator Diversity, Preparation and Retention Resolution will intentionally invest in cultivating conditions for the maintenance of a Black Educator pipeline and retention of Black Educators as a means to support Black, Brown, and all student outcomes, with clear budgetary and accountability metrics.

We urge you to support the resolution.

Sincerely,

Laura J. McGowan-Robinson, EdD, CEO, Diversity in Leadership Institute

Hannah Gravette, Regional VP Innovate Public Schools

Sarah Lillis, Executive Director, Teach Plus California

Lisa Ross

Speak UP

United Parents and Students

TRUST South LA

Educators for Excellence, Los Angeles

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)

Center for Powerful Public Schools Alicia Montgomery

Jennifer L. Childress

Loyola Marymount University School of Education, Michelle D. Young, Dean & Professor

Community Coalition

Pacoma Beautiful

Erin Browder, WestEd

Ed Trust West

Abigail Dugbarney

Angelica Sanchez, Community Coalition

Ana Ponce, Great Public Schools Now

Los Angeles United Methodist Urban Foundation

Families in Schools

Los Angeles Urban League

¹ Seth Gershenson et al., The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers (Bonn, Germany: Institute of Labor Economics, 2017), <http://ftp.iza.org/dp10630.pdf>.

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Malissa Barnwell-Scott
Jasmine Rasool
Terri Haywood, President of Black Parent Organization at LACES High School
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Allen Thomas
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