

Resource 7. Approaches to Promoting Equity Through Teacher Leadership

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, all states must submit, create, and implement a State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators that outlines how states and districts will identify and close educator equity gaps. Many states have gone beyond equitable access to effective educators to prioritize equity more broadly, working to ensure that all students have equitable learning experiences and opportunities. Many districts, however, have limited capacity among central office staff to support equity-focused initiatives. In addition, there is persistent evidence that low-income students and students of color are consistently taught at higher rates by inexperienced, out-of-field, or less effective educators.

Some states have begun to explore how teacher leaders may support equity-focused initiatives to build local capacity for this work and encourage educator engagement with these efforts. States and districts may consider the following approaches to utilizing teacher leaders to support equity-focused initiatives:

- **Run equity labs.** As effective and experienced educators, many teacher leaders may have strong data analysis skills and experience analyzing a myriad of local data sources to better understand gaps in student performance. Likewise, many teacher leaders may have strong facilitation and presentation skills (especially those charged with leading professional learning or teacher teams). These teachers may be uniquely suited to managing local equity labs in which they can help groups of stakeholders analyze student data, identify equity concerns or gaps, discuss root causes, and consider strategies for improvement.
- **Analyze data.** For districts and schools, the work to promote equity is not complete after the conclusion of a local equity lab or the development of an equity plan. Teacher leaders can help to support ongoing efforts to promote equity by continuing to analyze data—including formative assessment and other student data—to monitor progress and refine strategies over time.
- **Provide professional learning around culturally competent practice.** Beyond equitable access to effective educators, equity often includes access to educators who not only can understand and respect differences in student cultures and backgrounds but also can communicate and teach in culturally competent ways. For many states and districts, the teacher workforce does not reflect the racial and socio-economic backgrounds of students and families in the community, which can lead to challenges regarding culturally competent practice. Teacher leaders can help to bridge this gap by providing professional learning and support to their colleagues on how to implement culturally competent practices for direct instruction, student support, and family engagement.⁵

⁵ Implicit bias and teacher expectations contribute to the opportunity gap for students of color, especially those of non-Black teachers. Diamond, J. B., Randolph, A., & Spillane, J. P. (2004). Teachers' expectations and sense of responsibility for student learning: The importance of race, class, and organizational habitus. *Anthropology &*

- **Recruit and retain diverse educators.** Research suggests that an ethnically and racially diverse workforce is important for raising the achievement of all students. In many schools, the teaching workforce is disproportionately White compared to the surrounding community. This may lead to a teacher equity gap in which White students are more likely than others to have access to teachers of their own racial or ethnic background. Districts may utilize strategies such as Grow Your Own programs (in which teacher leaders recruit diverse students to become future educators), team teaching approaches (in which teacher leaders work with teams of diverse paraprofessionals working to develop teaching skills and certification over time), or community outreach efforts (in which teacher leaders share information about teaching as a fulfilling and sustainable career choice with families in the community).
- **Support social-emotional learning practices for students and other teachers.** Empathy and social-emotional support are often at the heart of equity-focused initiatives. Addressing implicit bias, promoting instructional practices that integrate social-emotional support, and promoting meaningful student and family support structures can help to promote equity by focusing on positive supports and proactive strategies (rather than gaps or challenges). Teacher leaders can help other teachers improve social-emotional supports for students and promote more culturally competent approaches to student and family engagement.
- **Reach more students via team instruction.** The most direct approach to increasing equitable access to effective educators may be to expand the reach of effective teachers using teacher leadership models. Teacher leaders may reach more students than they would in a traditional classroom model by applying a multiclassroom teaching model (e.g., the Public Impact Opportunity Culture model), either within a single school or via virtual instruction.

Education Quarterly, 35(1), 75–98; Gershenson, S., Holt, S. B., & Papageorge, N. W. (2016). Who believes in me? The effect of student–teacher demographic match on teacher expectations. *Economics of Education Review*, 52, 209–224; de Boer, H., Bosker, R. J., & van der Werf, M. P. C. (2010). Sustainability of teacher expectation bias effects on long-term student performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102(1), 168–179.