

Minority Education

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Who Will Teach Minority Youth?

The decline in the number of minority teachers in this country is of grave concern to all persons truly interested in today's youth. Minority teachers play a critical role as empathetic mentors for minority students and as non-stereotypical examples for majority students.

In the U.S. today, the student populations of many urban—and some suburban—districts are becoming "minority majority." Non-white children constitute about one-third of the preschool population, and their number is growing more rapidly than that of white children.¹ By the year 2000, African-American and Hispanic students together are expected to make up one-third of public school enrollments.² The following data, estimates from the National Center for Educational Statistics for 1984-85 (the last year for which data are available), show, for whites, African-Americans, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, and Native Americans, percentages of students in public schools and percentages of teachers from these groups teaching in public schools.³

	Students	Teachers
White	71.2%	89.6%
African-American	16.2%	6.9%
Hispanic	9.1%	1.9%
Asian-American	2.5%	.9%
Native American	.9%	.6%

This trend is also evident at the college level. Although there is an increasing number of minorities in the general population—an estimated 21 percent—they make up only 17 percent of the enrollment in higher education.⁴ Of those enrolled in colleges and universities, few intend to enter teaching, now that other and higher-paying careers are open to them; and the data on education majors document this. During the 1980-81 school year, 17 percent of educa-

tion degrees went to African-Americans and Hispanics, while during 1984-85 only 10.4 percent of education degrees were conferred on African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans combined.⁵ Teacher education institutions are renewing their efforts to recruit and retain minority students.^{6, 7}

Regardless of minority teacher-student ratios, the "humanistic" and primary responsibility of educating ethnic youth remains with minority group members, who continue to turn toward each other for strength, support, and direction. In the past, African-American colleges, although representing only 5 percent of U.S. universities and colleges in total enrollment, have produced 66 percent of African-American teachers.⁸ Further, national and community ethnic-group organizations must continue to provide after-school educational and cultural opportunities and forge partnerships with local businesses, government, and churches.

The real teachers, however, are the parents of ethnic-group children. These parents are the mainstays for their children's personal growth and school achievement. Parents must communicate interpersonal skills, enforce domestic responsibilities with both daughters and sons, establish high goals, and encourage their children to dream. Through demonstrated behaviors, teachers must reinforce present-day parental efforts with the old-fashioned remedies, such as "You have to work twice as hard as others ... be a credit to

your race ... and don't let me hear anything bad about you." Both minority teachers and parents live their lives under varying degrees of racism, prejudice, discrimination, and social contradictions; nevertheless, both are leading forces for their students and children, instructing by whatever behavior they demonstrate. Where are the minority teachers? They are in the homes of ethnic-group children. They just have to speak up. □

1. H. L. Hodgkinson, (October 18, 1988), telephone interview; and (May 1986), "Here They Come, Ready or Not," *Education Week*.

2. H. L. Hodgkinson, (February 1988), "The Right Schools for the Right Kids," *Educational Leadership* 45, 5: 10-14.

3. National Center for Educational Statistics, (1988), *Estimate of School Statistics* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office).

4. American Council of Education, (1986), *Fifth Annual Status Report on Minorities in Higher Education* (Washington, D.C.: American Council of Education).

5. W. Trent, (May 1986), "Equity Considerations in Higher Education: Race and Sex Differences in Degree, Attainment, and Major Field from 1976 through 1981," *American Journal of Education* 92, 3: 280-305.

6. E. J. Middleton, E. J. Mason, W. E. Stilwell, and W. C. Parker, (January-February 1988), "A Model for Recruitment and Retention of Minority Students in Teacher Education Programs," *Journal of Teacher Education*, 14, 18.

7. A. M. Garibaldi, (Summer 1987), "Recruitment, Admissions, and Standards: Black Teachers and the Holmes and Carnegie Reports," *Metropolitan Education* 13, 3: 17-23.

8. V. L. Clark, (Summer 1987), "Teacher Education at Historically Black Institutions in the Aftermath of the Holmes/Carnegie Reports," *Planning and Changing* 18, 2: 74-79.

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