The need for school leaders whose culture matches changing student demographics is well-established, but there is a shift from recruiting minority leaders as the only solution to providing major improvement in administrator preparation.

In the last two decades, demographics for public school students have changed drastically in the United States. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, White students enrolled in prekindergarten through 12th grade in U.S. public schools decreased from 60 percent to 52 percent from 2001 to 2011, and a further decrease to 45 percent is expected by 2023. At the same time, the enrollment of minority students increased from 40 percent to 48 percent and is expected to increase to 55 percent by 2023.

Even though there are many urban centers with a good representation of minority teachers and administrators in their education systems, these cities have an overwhelming number of minority school students with a White majority of teachers and administrators as their role models.

For many decades, we have known about the need to have minority leaders as effective role models and mentors who can serve as cultural connections, demonstrating the possibilities and opportunities available to their communities. However, we still have to have an awareness of the need to make this role modeling and cultural connection integral in the preparation of all leaders in education.

As many research studies have already shown, minority leaders and teachers can provide unique contributions to students’ levels of comfort, motivation and academic achievement, especially when communities comprise a vast majority of minority students. Role modeling is essential to helping students develop self- and cultural-identity, create future aspirations and connect their academic career with family, community and the global environment.

This mentoring and modeling process is best accomplished with leaders who are connected to students’ culture and needs, and are consequently aware of the importance of their task in the community.

In 1996, Jordan Irvine, a professor at Emory University in Atlanta was quoted in the New York Times addressing this issue with the statement: “... increasing the ethnic diversity of the teaching pool is not necessarily the solution. Middle-class Black or...”
Hispanic teachers can be as ill-prepared for inner-city classrooms as middle-class Whites.”

The selection of beneficial role models has to be based not only on their ethnicity, but by their qualifications and capacity to perform their teaching and administrative duties with efficiency and dedication. This aspect leads us to think that the question is no longer how to recruit minority educational leaders but how we prepare high quality educators with the basic skills, knowledge and sensitivity for success.

As we can derive from the available research performed on the minority presence in American education, the reasons for the lack of non-White educators rely on many variables. Some of these reasons include the status of the current education pipeline – fewer minority graduates, fewer minority teachers and consequently fewer minority administrators; discrimination based on cultural and linguistic attributes; the lack of decisional power in middle management; the lack of effective training in teacher and administration preparation programs; and the resistance to change by the “old order.”

Many researchers have concluded that in order to improve the student condition, we have to improve our teacher and administrator training programs. According to the research, these programs have to establish successful mentoring procedures and create in-service experiences that will help our current and future educational leaders with the development of empathy and sensitivity to the historic and current role of race in our society.

Some knowledge that could help the progressive educator and deserves inclusion in any successful training would be:

• Public policy information, including local officials, legal and legislative procedures.
• Information about the complete educational structure, including accreditation of preparation programs, certification of professionals in education, effect of labor unions and community members in the educational process, and current funding of programs.
• In-service practice on effective and non-effective scenarios.
• Basic finance and fundraising strategies.
• Public relations and marketing.
• Community, city, state, national and international connection and collaboration.
• Mentoring of students, parents and school staff into pedagogical careers.
• Effective strategies for empathy development in culture and community needs.
• Evaluation and curriculum development that includes all aspects listed above and use of technology.

There are many programs around the nation that provide such training, but they are still a minority. While training initiatives may continue to have resistance by the older rule, the seed is being planted. If we continue to apply these inclusive concepts as an additive approach to the existing curricula at the training and in-service levels, a significant change could take place in the near future.

The current education situation of our national minority populations, which will be our majority of students and future leaders in a few years, cannot be ignored by education stakeholders. The results of this negligence...
are increasing and approaching steadily as a well-announced tsunami toward our education system and, consequently, American society.

**Resources**


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