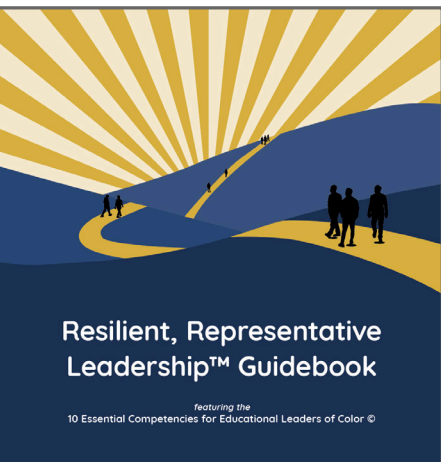




RESILIENT, REPRESENTATIVE LEADERSHIP™ POLICY BRIEF



We believe that prioritizing the personal and professional development of leaders of color is among the most powerful investments we can make in our students, schools, and society at large. Anchored by the 10 Essential Competencies for Educational Leaders of Color ©, our Resilient, Representative Leadership™ Toolkit includes a Framework, Guidebook, and other resources to help educators of color grow and thrive along our leadership journeys, including with the support of equity-minded allies and system-level officials.

Access the entire Resilient, Representative Leadership Toolkit: www.mcelleaders.org/RRLToolkit.



Our Policy Brief is designed to help local, state, and federal policymakers consider ways they can propel action to increase the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the nation's school and system-level leaders, including through policy and spending priorities; data collection; investments in more equitable leader preparation, hiring, and support; and the inclusion of equity-minded allies in generating and enacting solutions.

We highlight seven key actions public officials and other policymakers can take to use the Resilient, Representative Leadership™ Framework as a springboard to increase the strength and diversity of educational leadership in schools and communities across the country:

- ✓ **Present a clear, bold, unapologetic case for prioritizing the recruitment and support of educational leaders of color.**
- ✓ **Advance resilient, representative leadership through funding decisions.**
- ✓ **Collect and share demographic data on educational leaders.**
- ✓ **Foster more resilient, representative, and effective future school leaders.**
- ✓ **Promote more transparent and equitable hiring practices.**
- ✓ **Develop, support, and sustain school and system-level leaders of color on the job.**
- ✓ **Curate spaces and opportunities for equity-minded allies to collaborate and share best practices**

MCEL (Men of Color in Educational Leadership) is a national non-profit and network of educational leaders from across the educational leadership spectrum who are hyper-focused on eliminating achievement and opportunity gaps for all students. Based on research and lived experiences, MCEL supports male leaders of color who are uniquely positioned to disrupt current education ecosystems, lead through the lens of equity, and serve as critical levers to student success. Learn more at www.mcelleaders.org and access the entire Resilient, Representative Leadership Toolkit at www.mcelleaders.org/RRLToolkit.

Our first set of recommendations reflects overarching policy levers that public officials can deploy to set the stage for the innovation and rapid progress needed to strengthen and diversify the nation's ranks of educational leaders.

✓ Present a clear, bold, unapologetic case for prioritizing the recruitment and support of educational leaders of color.

- **LOCAL** officials can elevate school leader diversity as a top priority by incorporating metrics related to improving leadership representation into the district or charter management organization (CMO) strategic plan. Ideally, the strategic planning process would include: a review of current school leader demographic data; research on the value proposition of strengthening and diversifying school leadership as a critical strategy for closing opportunity and achievement gaps; robust stakeholder engagement and input to answer questions and build shared investment and accountability; and a clear roadmap outlining the specific strategies the school system will enact in the months and years ahead to make progress against clearly defined goals.
- **STATE** officials can marshal energy toward a bold vision with clearly defined goals related to increasing the strength and diversity of educational leadership. Further, they can use the “bully pulpit” to message clearly and consistently their commitment to dismantling inequitable policies, practices, and beliefs that too often prevent highly qualified people of color from pursuing careers in education, feeling supported and sustained in their work, and advancing into school and system-level leadership roles.
- **FEDERAL** officials can establish school leader diversity as a national priority by launching a campaign—backed by a congressional resolution, budget priorities, and public hearings—that calls for significant investments and measurable improvements in the number and geographic distribution of educational leaders of color across the nation. This campaign can highlight local and state bright spots as exemplars and models for mobilizing action in school systems across the country.

✓ Advance resilient, representative leadership through funding decisions.

- **LOCAL** officials can allocate existing resources toward leadership investments, with a particular focus on increasing diversity. According to the most recent survey on how districts use federal Title II dollars,¹ just 12 percent reported that leadership investments were a top spending priority. Further, just 15 percent reported using Title II dollars to increase equitable access to effective educators for underserved students, who research shows benefit enormously from greater access to teachers and leaders of color. Even absent increased funding, revisiting existing spending patterns to foster more resilient, representative leadership can enable districts and CMOs to achieve a much stronger return on each dollar invested in our schools.
- **STATE** officials can take advantage of existing set-asides in Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), most recently reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), to reserve up to 5 percent of funds for activities that include providing students of color with greater access to effective principals and other school leaders, and 3 percent of funds for statewide leadership investments. These federal dollars can support state-level activities as well as competitive grant programs for local educational agencies (LEAs).
- **FEDERAL** officials can direct existing funding toward grant projects focused on increasing diversity in educational leadership through invitational, competitive, and absolute priorities deployed via a wide range of grant competitions, such as the Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) program, the Teacher and School Leader (TSL) Incentive grant program, the School Leader Recruitment and Support Program (SLRSP), the Education Innovation and Research (EIR) program, and the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence program, among others.

¹ U.S. Department of Education. (2023). State and District Use of Title II, Part A Funds in 2021–22. Retrieved from <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2023/06/Title-IIA-UseOfFunds-2021-22.pdf>.

✓ Collect and share demographic data on educational leaders.

- **LOCAL** officials can systematically collect, use, and publicly share data on their progress in strengthening and diversifying leadership through public communications and other tools. For example, so-called “leader tracking systems” are a promising strategy for supporting data-driven decision-making regarding leadership investments; research has found such systems to be particularly beneficial in supporting district/CMO leaders to strengthen and diversify school leadership by “unearth[ing] strong candidates who otherwise might not have been on hiring radar screens, to more easily make good matches between school needs and job candidates and to remove some bias from hiring decisions.”² Such data can also be funneled into public-facing dashboards that illuminate progress against strategic plan priorities.
- **STATE** officials can collect and synthesize demographic data on their leadership corps, including the types of roles, schools, and school systems in which educators of color serve. While safeguarding privacy, officials can make data tools and syntheses available to stakeholders through public reports, dashboards, and/or recurring updates to boards and committees to demonstrate the scope of any representation gaps as well as ongoing progress.
- **FEDERAL** officials can update—via congressional directive and/or administrative action—the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) and the Title II Use of Funds survey to track critical educational leader diversity measures. The CRDC can ask for the demographics of principals and other school leaders, including principal supervisors, and the Title II survey can ask for information on state and local investments in efforts to strengthen and diversify educational leadership, including (but not limited to) through optional state set-asides.

Our next set of recommendations reflects policy moves that public officials can make to address areas of challenge and opportunity along the career trajectories and leadership journeys of educators of color.

✓ Foster more resilient, representative, and effective future school leaders.

- **LOCAL** officials can establish partnerships with entities, including institutions of higher education (IHEs) and nonprofits, well-positioned to help address local needs regarding school leader diversity. For example, if a school system lacks a diverse educator talent pool, district/CMO leaders can select principal preparation providers who have explicit strategies—and strong track records of success—in attracting more racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse educators into their programs. Further, school system leaders can inquire about whether/how prospective partners’ programming incorporates content and experiences that local school leaders of color have identified as being critical to their success.
- **STATE** officials can revisit program approval and reporting requirements for principal and superintendent preparation programs—via legislation and regulatory changes—to require that providers articulate how their programming will help diversify leadership across the state, outline the specific supports they provide to aspiring school and system-level leaders of color (including in partnership with districts and CMOs), and share data (e.g., on program completion, licensure, hiring, etc.) disaggregated by the race/ethnicity of participants. In conjunction with other data infrastructure upgrades, officials can share back actionable information to support programmatic improvement.
- **FEDERAL** officials can elevate programs that are well positioned to support states, districts, and CMOs in recruiting and preparing educational leaders of color, including programs run by Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and other Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), as well as nonprofit organizations with robust evidence of effectiveness in recruiting and preparing effective, diverse leaders. Officials can highlight what these programs are doing well, and encourage other providers to adopt best practices.

¹ U.S. Department of Education. (2023). State and District Use of Title II, Part A Funds in 2021–22. Retrieved from <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2023/06/Title-IIA-UseOfFunds-2021-22.pdf>.

✓ Promote more transparent and equitable hiring practices.

- **LOCAL** officials can ensure that performance and experience expectations for entry into leadership roles are clearly defined, directly correlated with success on the job (v. arbitrary requirements that may or may not have a relationship to improved school and student outcomes), and readily available to current and future candidates. Further, officials can offer—and even mandate—training for hiring teams at the district/CMO and school level on best practices for building diverse candidate pools and reducing bias in hiring decisions. Critically, such training should be made available to anyone engaged in hiring, including principal managers, principals, leadership teams, teachers, parents, and other community members.
- **STATE** officials can develop and make freely available training for anyone engaged in developing or carrying out hiring protocols at the school or system levels, including school board members, principals, teachers, and community members. Training can address such topics as screening for leadership qualities and experiences that matter (i.e., those that are actually associated with improved school and student outcomes), protocols to help guard against implicit bias (e.g., blind resume and work product reviews), and other salient topics.
- **FEDERAL** officials at the U.S. Department of Education can convene experts and stakeholders—including in partnership with Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs)—to develop evidence-based guidance and tools to support districts and CMOs in making their recruitment and hiring systems and processes more equitable. Officials can create or curate resources that districts and CMOs can use to audit their recruitment and hiring processes, elevate promising local and state models, and bring stakeholders together to access ongoing support and problem-solve.

✓ Support and sustain school and system-level leaders of color on the job.

- **LOCAL** officials can create fellowships, affinity groups, communities of practice, and mentorship opportunities for educational leaders of color, including in partnership local, state, or national organizations with relevant expertise and relationships. Further, officials can take steps to make leadership more effective and sustainable for all leaders, including leaders of color, by supporting distributed or shared leadership models, reducing administrative reporting burdens and other “red tape,” where possible, and ensuring principals and other school leaders have balanced accountability to oversee school-level decision-making in alignment with district/CMO priorities.
- **STATE** officials can create fellowships, affinity groups, communities of practice, and mentorship opportunities for educational leaders of color across geographies and school types, including in partnership with principal and administrator associations, professional development providers, and other community partners. Such efforts may be especially important for leaders of color serving communities that lack representative leadership, where robust local support networks of leaders of color do not exist and where opportunities for critical same-race mentorship may be scarce.
- **FEDERAL** officials can issue official guidance on educational leadership that includes opportunities for states to reimagine leadership roles, from principals to the superintendents, to be more effective and sustainable for leaders of all races, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds and at all stages of their careers. For example, such guidance can highlight opportunities to elevate within state leadership frameworks the importance of ensuring leaders have access to support in enacting distributed leadership approaches and developing strong, diverse leadership teams. Further, such guidance can highlight the specific leadership competencies that educators of color have shared are most critical to their success in navigating our schools and school systems, along with examples and models to help states, districts, and CMOs consider how they might supplement their leadership frameworks with other tools and supports designed to address the unique experiences and needs of leaders of color.

Our final recommendation reflects the reality that creating more equitable, joyful leadership journeys for educators of color takes all of us, working together.

✓ **Create spaces and opportunities for equity-minded allies to collaborate and share best practices.**

- **LOCAL** officials can advocate for opportunities to engage with other system leaders of all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds—for example, via convenings led by AASA (The School Superintendents Association), the Charter Schools Growth Fund, Chiefs for Change, the Council of the Great City Schools, and other networks and associations—to discuss a range of topics related to their school leader diversity goals.
- **STATE** officials can request that state conveners—such as the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the National Governors Association (NGA), Chiefs for Change, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), the National Council of State Legislators (NCSL), and others—create opportunities for cross-state working groups through which policymakers and stakeholders of all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds can more deeply explore educational leadership diversity issues, generate solutions, learn, and problem-solve together.
- **FEDERAL** officials can convene state and local policymakers and staff of all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds —via Comprehensive Centers, Equity Assistance Centers, State Support Networks, and other technical assistance opportunities—to develop and access support implementing initiatives to strengthen and diversify educational leadership. Ideally, these networks can include officials in a range of roles who can work cross-functionally to address systemic barriers and capitalize on opportunities to advance solutions that will truly transform the educational leadership landscape such that resilient, representative leaders can grow and truly thrive in our schools and communities.