

# Transformative professional learning: Critical affinity groups for veteran K-12 Teachers of Color

Kimberly Ann Gonzalez <sup>1,2\*</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>University of Massachusetts Lowell, Lowell, MA, USA

<sup>2</sup>Middlesex Community College, Bedford, MA, USA

\*Corresponding Author: [gonzalezk@middlesex.edu](mailto:gonzalezk@middlesex.edu)

**Citation:** Gonzalez, K. A. (2025). Transformative professional learning: Critical affinity groups for veteran K-12 Teachers of Color. *International Journal of Professional Development, Learners and Learning*, 7(1), e2509. <https://doi.org/10.30935/ijpdll/15807>

## ABSTRACT

As teachers gain experience beyond the first one third of their career (approximately 7 to 10 years), students not only make academic gains, but they also make non-academic gains such attendance improvements, fewer disciplinary offenses, increased time spent on reading for pleasure, and decreased time needed to complete homework. When students are taught by Teachers of Color (TOC) not only are these academic and non-academic gains experienced, but they are also particularly increased in Students of Color (SOC). However, TOC leave the profession at higher rates than their White counterparts. As such, if educational institutions want to continue supporting their SOC, they must consider implementing strategies known to support experienced TOC. One way to keep TOC in the profession is to offer these educators targeted professional learning (PL) opportunities in the form of racial affinity groups. Racial affinity groups support TOC because they affirm TOC goals, values, racial identities and humanity, while also providing mentorship and a sense of community that ultimately retains TOC in the profession. This study examines the PL experiences of six experienced TOC participating in a racial affinity group. Through semi-structured interviews, these TOC educator shared how participation in a racial affinity group as a PL experience transformed their teacher identities.

**Keywords:** professional learning, affinity groups, veteran teachers, Teachers of Color

Received: 20 Aug. 2024 ♦ Accepted: 19 Dec. 2024

## INTRODUCTION

Students of Color (SOC) make up 51% of the K-12 student population, yet only 21% of their teachers identify as a Person of Color (POC) (Carver-Thomas, 2018; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2020). The lack of racial parity between SOC and their teachers is a direct result of school desegregation. Post *Brown v Board of Education* (1954), Teachers of Color (TOC) faced recruitment and retention issues. Desegregation of schools meant TOC were “deemed unfit to teach white children” (Carter Andrews et al., 2019, p. 7). In newly desegregated schools, retention of White teachers was prioritized, leading to TOC experiencing unbalanced hiring and firing practices, demotions, transfers, lack of contract renewal, increased licensure standards, and workplace hostility (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Stovall & Sullivan, 2022). Today, barriers continue to exist affecting the numbers of POC in the teaching profession. TOC face unique challenges compared to their White counterparts, such as navigating, negotiating, and fighting racist educational structures and micro-aggressions that oppress POC in educational spaces (Lynn, 2002; Kohli 2016; Warren-Grice & Parker, 2017). TOC also experience isolation from being the “only one”, or “one of few”, in their schools (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008). Additionally, despite schools having fewer TOC,

these educators are often required to perform additional roles and responsibilities, such as coaches, mentors, and disciplinarians to POC within their institution (Patterson, 2019). Lastly, TOC have their work judged more harshly than their White colleagues (Drake et al., 2019). Considering challenges faced by TOC in educational spaces, school districts must find ways to support and retain these educators.

One way to support and retain TOC is through professional learning (PL) that address TOC needs, assets, and commitments to the field (Gist et al., 2021). Critical affinity (CA) groups are a re-emergent, specialized form of PL focused on providing educators the time and space to understand their own racial identity (Pearson & Fuglei, 2019; Racial Equity Tools, 2020; Warren-Grice, 2021) while providing mentorship, leadership opportunities, and a sense of community focused on retaining TOC in the profession (Warren-Grice, 2021). CA groups can also provide White teachers opportunities to learn about White culture and privilege, thereby creating POC allies and opportunities to enact antiracist school policies (Denevi, 2004).

Anchored in critical race theory, this study examined veteran K-12 TOC perceptions of a TOC CA group, asking the question: How do experienced K-12 TOC describe the benefits of participation in a racial affinity group? Critical race theory provides a useful frame because it explains how racial inequalities are structurally embedded into

educational institutions, even if unintentionally (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Embedded racist policies, such as forced teaching of problematic mandated curricula, standardized tests, biased teacher evaluations, and professional development and school practices that maintain, perpetuate, and normalize White supremacy keep minoritized individuals on the periphery of opportunities afforded to White persons in educational settings (Kohli & Pizarro, 2022; Pour-Khorshid, 2018). These racist policies portray POC through a deficit lens and may explain why TOC leave the teaching profession at greater rates than their White counterparts (Kohli, 2016).

## SUPPORTING VETERAN K-12 TOC

### Veteran and TOC Attributes

Veteran K-12 teachers and educators with 10 years or more classroom experience are important to retain in the profession (Carrillo & Flores, 2017; Christensen et al., 1983; Donaldson et al., 2008). As teachers gain experience beyond the first 7-10 years of teaching, students make academic and non-academic gains, such as attendance improvements, fewer disciplinary offenses, increased time reading for pleasure, and decreased time needed for homework completion (Podolsky et al., 2016).

TOC also benefit the profession. TOC improve students' non-academic gains, such as increased attendance (Farkas et al., 1990), fewer suspensions, and increased graduation rates (Meier et al., 1989), as well as academic gains, such as improved reading, math, vocabulary, economic literacy skills, and test scores (Clewel et al., 2005; Dee, 2004). Importantly, TOC and diverse faculty schools also increase the number of SOC entering into gifted programs and matriculation into vocational schools and college (Fraga et al., 1986; Meire, 1993; Meier et al., 1989; Morgan, 2019). TOC also improve White students' school experience by providing contrast to a one-sided Eurocentric perspective; thereby preparing White students for an increasingly racially diverse world (Anderson, 2015).

Considering the benefits both veteran and TOC bring to the profession, it stands to reason that supporting the retention of veteran K-12 TOC is necessary to address the instability of the U.S. teacher workforce. Prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, TOC left the field of teaching at higher rates than their White counterparts; 19% versus 15%, respectively (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Pearson & Fuglei, 2019). However, the pandemic caused many veteran teachers to leave the field early as they became concerned for their health and experienced increased burnout due to changing modalities (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2023; Goldhaber & Theobald, 2023). The pandemic also caused White teacher attrition to rise by 17%; however, TOC attrition only rose by 5%, despite viral infection increasing adverse health effects in POC (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2023). The decision to stay in the field during a global pandemic may speak to the fact TOC consider teaching a "calling" (Irvine, 2002), or a way to "raise the race" (Casey, 1993) and "give back to the community" (Dixon & Dings, 2008). School districts can capitalize on TOC retention post-COVID-19, particularly veteran TOC, by offering PL that supports their unique context.

### Professional Learning for Veteran K-12 TOC

PL is meant to address the continued growth of educators across the trajectory of their career (Cochran-Smith et al., 2017). White veteran

K-12 teachers are able to develop their self-concept throughout their careers because most career development opportunities are Eurocentric and employ White curricula based on White, middle-class values (Milner et al., 2013). Failure to account for differences in race and culture in PL denies the experiential knowledge of TOC (Sleeter, 2017). Since TOC face PL constraints, opportunity exists to expand PL parameters to center multiple identities and to address the hostility, racial hierarchies, and oppression TOC experience in the workplace (Cabrera-Duran, 2016). This type of expanded PL may allow for TOC to process and heal from racial trauma and stay in the profession (Kulkarni et al., 2022).

### Critical affinity groups

CA groups can address the toxicity TOC experience in their workplace by utilizing critical professional development (CPD) to center TOC "racial identities and experiences" (Pour-Khorshid, 2018, p. 320). CA groups provide tools and techniques to address racism and oppression systemically embedded into educational culture (Great Schools Partnership, 2020). CA groups are dialogical in nature, allowing TOC to speak to their unique experiences and to engage in deep listening as a means of understanding and connecting to others (Kohli et al., 2015; Mosely, 2018). CA group curricula, focused on the experiences, beliefs, and practices of TOC, allows TOC to see themselves in educational spaces (Kulkarni et al., 2022). CA groups create a space for TOC to

- (1) learn about, and heal from, racial trauma,
- (2) strengthen their racial literacy, and
- (3) reimagine educational spaces as areas of activism and resistance (Pour-Khorshid, 2018).

The personal transformation TOC experience within CA groups allows these educators to dismantle structural and systemic forms of oppression, thereby serving as critical race change agents (Kulkarni et al., 2022; Mosely 2018; Pour-Khorshid, 2018).

## METHODS

This study was informed by considering how CA groups, which are anchored in critical race theory, support PL for veteran K-12 TOC.

### Study Design

This study drew on qualitative methods to examine whether participation in a TOC CA group met the PL needs of veteran K-12 TOC in the Urban Public School (UPS) district in Massachusetts. Since both veteran teachers and TOC are understudied populations, the experiences and perceptions of veteran K-12 TOC in the district's CA group were of particular interest since this program supported this particular population. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the participants in the study. Semi-structured interviews were an appropriate choice for this study because they yield targeted data to research questions while allowing for probing and follow-up (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013) and semi-structured interviews are a "personal form of research in which the interviewer speaks and relates directly to the interviewee" (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013, p. 371). Questions asked these teachers to describe their experience(s) in the UPS district, why they chose to participate in the CA program, what benefits they gained from the program, and areas they thought could use improvement (**Appendix A**). Interviews lasted approximately 30-

**Table 1.** TOC characteristics

Participant	Years of teaching	Grade level and content taught	Social identities	Reason for teaching
Moises	5	High School science (biology & chemistry)	Young, Haitian-American male, Black African American, first-generation American, & Able-bodied	"It's a calling."
Jeanne	22	High school math	Immigrant, Cambodian-American, & straight female	"I come from a family of teachers. It's a part of me."
Jasmine	20	Elementary ELL	Hispanic/LatinX, she/her, & Portuguese & Spanish speaking	"I grew up around teachers."
Marta	30	High school ESL math and Spanish	Bicultural (Puerto Rican & French), U.S. citizen raised in Puerto Rico, & heterosexual female	"Happenstance. I was going to be a lawyer."
Elizabeth	25	Middle school music	Asian (Chinese) & she/her/hers	"I gave my friend's sister tutoring in high school, and she ended up getting all B's and I felt successful. At that time I started thinking about if I wanted to be a teacher."
Krystle	22	Middle school ESL	Cambodian woman, immigrant, & she/hers	"By accident because before I was a social worker."

60 minutes, were recorded and transcribed using the Zoom platform, and then cleaned by the researcher to improve readability. Each transcript was read in its entirety to provide a general sense of the information via repeated handling (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Evaluation of the data involved grouping repeated words or synonyms together to develop themes via inductive coding and thematic analyses; moving "small units of information to uncover a larger picture that emerges" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 435).

### Setting

The UPS district chosen for this study demographically resembles state and national teacher trends. Specifically, the UPS school district employs 1,092 full-time educators, with 98% of these teachers being licensed in the profession, approximately 87% of teachers being considered "experienced", and roughly 12% of the educators identifying as a non-White teacher (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MA DESE], 2020).

### Participants

TOC affinity group participants were recruited via email (N = 11). Six TOC agreed to participate in the study (55% participation) (Table 1).

## FINDINGS

CA groups, which are groups of people sharing a common characteristic, such as race, provide CPD aimed at giving TOC tools and techniques to address racism and oppression in educational institutions (Mosely, 2018). The findings below edify which components of the CA group the UPS District TOC believe supported their PL. According to these teachers, having a space to gather, having curricula taught by Experts of Color, and having the opportunity to serve as change agents within the district provided PL serving as the antithesis of the generic, White, Eurocentric development to which most TOC are accustomed (Kohli et al., 2021). The CPD the UPS TOC received highlights how lived experiences can drive social change within school districts (Kohli et al., 2021).

### A Space to Gather

The TOC affinity group provided a space for participants to establish norms when engaging in racial dialogue. Marta stated,

We established norms as a community of learning. Some of our norms were to be respectful and non-judgmental, to have open and clear communication, to use active listening, and to develop confidentiality and trust.

The establishment of norms led to trust, allowing these teachers to openly express themselves. Jasmine "found my professional voice" because "this was the first space that I could be safe enough to find it". Elizabeth agreed.

I'm transformed. I'm always the quiet one in the group, but I'm not anymore. I always speak up and I find the right moment to ask questions. I feel so comfortable talking to people who are a different skin color, not just White skin. Maybe this is the thing that made me feel comfortable to speak.

Jeanne's experience in this space taught her how to navigate racist social situations.

I learned about racial injustices and how to have that conversation ... how to call people out, how to not be confrontational when things happen, but to understand body language and know what microaggressions look like. All of this was because my experience with racism and social injustice was completely different than others. That was eye opening to me. Sometimes the stuff I saw I thought was not a big deal. Now I am thinking "how is that going to affect my colleagues who actually experience that. My radar is a lot quicker at picking up stuff. Before, it wouldn't even bother me. Now, I hear it, and I turn around and I'm not afraid to stop people and ask them to restate what they were saying. Before, I was just like "let's just move on". Now I'm not."

TOC are frequently forced to navigate schools whose demographics mirror "White, middle-class, Christian, female, cis-gendered, heterosexual, U.S. born, and for whom English is a first language" (Carter Andrews et al., 2019). However, participating in a TOC affinity group gave these experienced educators a safe-space; a space not occupied by White colleagues, but instead a space where they could openly participate in racial dialogue and listen to the lived experiences of their colleagues without having to worry about offending White colleagues (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). Not having to uphold the status quo of their institutions meant that the TOC affinity group became a safe haven for Jasmine and Elizabeth to speak their truths. In this same

space, Jeanne learned how to identify and reject White supremacy, which then allowed her to call out overt racism in her institution. As seen, having a space to gather with other TOC provides an opportunity to feel seen, heard, valued, and empowered, thereby alleviating the effects of a racially toxic workplace (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Pour-Khorshid, 2018).

### **Curricula**

The curricula offered within the affinity program centered on social identity and addressing racism. According to Jasmine,

We had content talking about racism, identity, gender; all of the content we don't usually have access to. It was organized in accessible ways. Two instructors talked not only about gender, but also biases and how they permeate our school choices. We talked about best practices. We talked about leadership skills and what we need to do to continue on this path because the ultimate goal is to create leaders, diverse leaders, who are not just influencers, but can take on roles in the system.

The curricula empowered these TOC and taught them how to navigate predominately White institutions—an important skill considering teacher education programs often fall short in preparing TOC for racially hostile schools (Kohli, 2019). Helping TOC navigate and persist in schools creates an opportunity to transform the racialized context of schooling and prevents TOC from being pushed out of the classroom (Kohli, 2019).

### **Expert Instructors of Color as presenters**

Hearing from a variety of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) facilitators afforded the opportunity to learn from field experts. Jeanne spoke about the variety of presenters:

We learned from different facilitators. The program leader brought in facilitators who were Native American and Black and who wrote different protocols on how to run meetings. They came with feelings they are passionate about, and they ran the meetings. There were facilitators who were writing DEI curriculum. We also had a professor from the local university come in to teach us all about the Asians ... about their history and how that became an issue in America.

Hearing from educational experts who are POC was valuable PL because Experts of Color provide critical perspectives and sense-making that TOC need to address issues of equity for SOC and their families (Kohli, 2019). The curricula offered by the Experts of Color, which centered on equity, anti-racism, and critical pedagogy encouraged the TOC to discuss their own race and ethnicities and how to use their identity to become change agents. Hearing from Experts of Color also allowed for the TOC to see themselves in the profession, thereby creating a sense of belonging for these educators (Pour-Khorshid, 2018).

### **Impact of Teachers of Color as Change Agents**

The curricula supplied by the program facilitators provided leadership development, as well as policy participation. These educators were expected to utilize their CPD to update district policies that negatively affect POC within the system. Elizabeth's policy work examined differences in family communication amongst the district schools.

For my first year we chose a project to make an impact in the district. My group looked at the newsletter format. One of the principals used the SMORE format. We found that the SMORE format has different translations. We talked about the difficulty getting messages to parents, because across the district, every parent or family night, not many parents participate. Maybe it's the language... they don't understand. The SMORE newsletters gives Chinese and Cambodian translations instantly. Our team advocated that every principle should use this tool. We found only a small percentage were currently using SMORE. We set a timeline and presented exactly how many principals in the district were using SMORE. At the beginning of this year, my principal started using the SMORE format. At least I know there's some influence.

Elizabeth and her colleagues were able to utilize their personal experiences and the critical PL they received to directly change her school's correspondence method to be linguistically inclusive. Shared policy making with school leadership is a factor TOC identify that would keep them vested in the profession (Furner & McCulla, 2019). According to a 2022 RAND study on the state of the American Teacher, 24% of surveyed TOC said they would stay in the profession if they were offered a say in school policies (Doan et al., 2022). Shared responsibility for school success is one way to empower and retain both veteran and TOC (Cosenza, 2013; Yee, 2021). Since administrators and school conditions play a role in retention of TOC, training TOC, particularly those who have chosen to teach in hard-to-staff schools, in creating policies that improve their schools is a high impact practice that can keep experienced TOC in the profession (Carver-Thomas, 2018).

### **Challenge of impact**

All teachers indicated the need for more school administrator involvement. Elizabeth states,

I'm telling you honestly, I don't think my principal or assistant principal know about this program. They do not know that I have been in the program since the beginning. If they knew they would have approached me to say, "Hey, how's your training?" I heard that principals were invited to go to our workshops. My principal never showed up, and I didn't realize that they were invited. Maybe the administrators do not see us as important as this program thinks.

For Krystle administrator involvement shows they support TOC, which would help with recruitment and retention.

I think more administrative involvement would be great. We opened it up for the principals to come and join the Saturday trainings, but one or two principals showed up a few times. That would make a difference. It helps to sell the program and gives us credit ... "Hey, these teachers are trying to make a difference ... these teachers are trying to help retain TOC". I want them to see BIPOC teachers as being as important, because kids learn more... the research supports this ... they do better when they have teachers that look like them.

Veteran teachers want their administrators to show their investment in them by supporting and encouraging their professional development (Dixon et al., 2019). Administrator recognition increases leadership capacity for veteran and TOC by increasing visibility, which

in turn, promotes a collegial environment (Brown & Wynn, 2009; Grissom & Keiser, 2011). Furthermore, when administrators specifically support racial justice professional development among their teachers, it shows TOC that their principals embrace disruptive leadership models in their schools, and they are empowering their TOC to serve as change agents for POC in their institutions (Dixon et al., 2019).

## DISCUSSION

These findings reveal how the UPS veteran TOC believe their participation in a CA program met their PL needs. Most professional development, “happens to” teachers, and is often presented as one-time workshops, seminars, or lectures; a one-size-fits all approach (Scherff, 2015). However, PL is sustained when it is customized to teachers’ needs, encouraging teachers to take responsibility for their learning and to practice their learning in an applicable context (Scherff, 2015). The customization of CA programs allows for the development of connectivity, learning, healing, skill building, and strategic action that supports the specific needs of veteran K-12 TOC (Bates, 2023). For the UPS veteran TOC, the curricula of the affinity group, coupled with learning from diverse Experts of Color, empowered these teachers to exert their impact as leaders in their schools and the district. Serving as change agents who influence school and district culture is a known high impact practice that supports career development and retention of both veteran and TOC (Day & Gu, 2009; Furner & McCulla, 2019). The affinity program provided these veteran TOC system-wide thinking skills to enact district wide change.

The veteran TOC testimonies in this article confirm that participating in a CA group can address push out factors. Having a space to gather, where norms were established, created a space for these TOC to feel safe in expressing their experiences (Pour-Khorshid, 2018). Learning with other TOC lessened feelings of isolation by facilitating a sense of collectivity (Kohli & Pizarro, 2022; Pour-Khorshid, 2018). The CPD within the affinity group assists Educators of Color in dealing with workplace hostility and racism (Cabrera-Duran, 2016; Kohli, 2016; Warren-Grice & Parker, 2017). Participating in policy revisions addresses the lack of promotion and leadership opportunities both veteran and TOC experience (Warren-Grice, 2021; White, 2022). Importantly, changing district policy to reflect inclusivity also enhances the visibility of TOC; showing that they are “smart, good, and wise” (Kulkarni et al., 2022, p. 56). Lastly, the fact that the veteran TOC in this study wanted to work collaboratively with their administrators demonstrates their desire for recognition of their social justice expertise and how they can assist in transforming educational spaces into more equitable systems (Kohli et al., 2021).

### Implications

Since much of the PL currently offered to teachers is disconnected between “what decision-makers intend and the PL teachers actually experience” (Boston Consulting Group, 2014, p. 3), room exists for using PL to address the needs and experiences of veteran TOC (Parise & Spillane, 2010; Scherff, 2015). As such, the following policy recommendations are offered. At the school level, administrators should highlight the social justice work of their TOC (Mosely, 2018), as well as increase the leadership capacity of their veteran TOC by collectively involving them in school level changes that create culturally supportive, anti-racist environments (Mosely, 2018). At the district

level, human resources should create affinity groups for their teachers so that all educators learn deeply about their own identities and the identities of their colleagues (Kohli, 2019). Additionally, district level hiring managers should involve TOC in addressing district hiring policies that directly affect the realization of a diverse teacher workforce (Mosely, 2018). Finally, higher education institutions should offer for-credit affinity program coursework for all teachers, pre-service through veteran, so that every educator is provided the critical pedagogy needed to become an educational change agent (Michael & Conger, 2009; Pour-Khorshid, 2018).

## CONCLUSION

Very little PL focuses on addressing the issues TOC face in the profession (Kohli, 2019). In fact, most “effective” teacher PL espouses Eurocentric, White, middle-class values (Milner et al., 2013). However, “effective” PL should be expanded to include programs that center CPD that pushes against generic, White, Eurocentric learning experiences (Kohli, 2019). CA groups are poised to take PL in this new direction of equity in the teaching profession (Hill & Papay, 2022; Kohli, 2019). CA groups therefore serve as a model of PL that benefits TOC by providing curricula and learning experiences that empower, support, and transform them as educators and leaders (Pour-Khorshid, 2018). These benefits may keep veteran TOC in the profession.

**Funding:** The authors received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

**Ethics declaration:** This study was approved by the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Massachusetts Lowell (approval no. 22-128) on 8 August 2022. All participants provided written informed consent prior to participating.

**Declaration of interest:** The authors declare no competing interest.

**Data availability:** Data generated or analyzed during this study are available from the authors on request.

## REFERENCES

- Achinstein, B. & Aguirre, J. (2008). Cultural match or culturally suspect: How new teachers of color negotiate sociocultural challenges in the classroom. *Teachers College Record*, 110(8), 1505–1540. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146810811000802>
- Anderson, M. D. (2015). Why schools need more Teachers of Color—for White students. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/08/teachers-of-color-white-students/400553/>
- Bacher-Hicks, A., Chi, O. L., & Orellana, A. (2023). Two years later: How COVID-19 has shaped the teacher workforce. *Educational Researcher*, 52(4), 219–229. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X231153659>
- Bates, K. (2023). Racial affinity group field guide. *Interaction Institute for Social Change*. <https://interactioninstitute.org/racial-affinity-group-field-guide/>
- Boston Consulting Group. (2014). Teachers know best: Teachers’ views on professional development. *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*. <https://usprogram.gatesfoundation.org/news-and-insights/usp-resource-center/resources/teachers-know-best-teachers-views-on-professional-development>

- Brown v. Board of Education. (1954). *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483. *Supreme Justice*. <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/347/483/>
- Brown, K. M., & Wynn, S. R. (2009). Finding, supporting, and keeping: The role of the principal in teacher retention issues. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 8, 37–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700760701817371>
- Cabrera-Duran, E. (2016). More than numbers: Recruitment and retention of teachers of color in U.S. public schools. *#CritEdPol: Journal of Critical Education Policy Studies at Swarthmore College*, 1(1), 39–52. <https://doi.org/10.24968/2473-912X.1.1.6>
- Carrillo, C., & Flores, M. A. (2017). Veteran teachers' identity: What does the research literature tell us? *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 48, 639–656. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2017.1394982>
- Carter Andrews, D. J., Castro, E., Cho, C. L., Petchauer, E., Richmond, G., & Floden, R. (2019). Changing the narrative on diversifying the teaching workforce: A look at historical and contemporary factors that inform recruitment and retention of Teachers of Color. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 70(1), Article 6. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487118812418>
- Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). Diversifying the teaching profession through high-retention pathways. *Learning Policy Institute*. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/diversifying-teaching-profession-brief>
- Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Teacher turnover: Why it matters and what we can do about it*. Learning Policy Institute. <https://doi.org/10.54300/454.278>
- Casey, K. (1993). *I answer with my life: Life histories of women working for social change*. Routledge.
- Christensen, J., Burke, P., Fessler, R., and Hagstrom, D. (1983). Stages of teachers' careers: Implications for professional development. *ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED227054.pdf>
- Clewell, B. C., Puma, M. J., & McKay, S. A. (2005). *Does it matter if my teacher looks like me? The impact of teacher race and ethnicity on student academic achievement* [Paper presentation]. The Meeting of the American Educational Research Association.
- Cochran-Smith, M., Baker, M., Burton, S., Chang, W. C., Cummings Carney, M., Fernández, M. B., Keefe, E. S., Miller, A. F., & Sánchez, J. G. (2017). The accountability era in U.S. teacher education: Looking back, looking forward. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(5), 572–588. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2017.1385061>
- Cosenza, M. N. (2013). Teacher leadership development in PDSS: Perceptions of 22 veteran teachers. *School-University Partnerships*, 6(1), 47–58.
- Day, C. & Gu, Q. (2009). Veteran teachers: Commitment, resilience and quality retention. *Teachers Teaching Theory & Practice*, 15(4), 441–457. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540600903057211>
- Dee, T. (2004). Teachers, race, and student achievement in a randomized experiment. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 86(1), 195–210. <https://doi.org/10.1162/003465304323023750>
- Denevi, E. (2004). White on white. *National Association of Independent Schools*. [https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/summer-2004-\(1\)/white-on-white/](https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/summer-2004-(1)/white-on-white/)
- Dixon, A. D., & Dingus, J. E. (2008). In search of our mother's gardens: Black women teachers and professional socialization. *Teachers College Record*, 110(4), 805–837. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146810811000403>
- Dixon, D., Griffin, A., & Teoh, M. (2019). *If you listen, we will stay: Why Teachers of Color leave and how to disrupt teacher turnover*. Education Trust.
- Doan, S., Greer, L., Schwartz, H. L., Steiner, E. D., & Woo, A. (2022). State of the American teacher and state of the American principal surveys: 2022 technical documentation and survey results. *RAND Corporation*. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1108-3.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1108-3.html)
- Donaldson, M. L., Moore Johnson, S., Kirkpatrick, C. L., Marinell, W.H., Steele, J. L., & Szczesiul, S. A. (2008). Angling for access, bartering for change: How second-stage teachers experience differentiated roles in schools. *Teachers College Record*, 110(5), 1088–1114. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146810811000502>
- Drake, M., Cowen, J., & Auletta, A. (2019). Race and gender differences in teacher evaluation ratings and teacher employment outcomes. *Education Policy Innovation Collaborative*. [https://epicedpolicy.org/wpcontent/uploads/2019/05/race\\_and\\_gender\\_policy\\_brief4WB.pdf](https://epicedpolicy.org/wpcontent/uploads/2019/05/race_and_gender_policy_brief4WB.pdf)
- Farkas, G., Grobe, R. P., Sheehan, D., & Shuan, Y. (1990). Cultural resources and school success: Gender, ethnicity, and poverty groups within an urban school district. *American Sociological Review*, 55, 127–142. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095708>
- Fraga, L. R., Meier, K. J., & England, R. E. (1986). Hispanic Americans and educational policy: Limits to equal access. *The Journal of Politics*, 48(4), 850–876. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2131003>
- Furner, C., & McCulla, N. (2019). An exploration of the influence of school context, ethos and culture on teacher career-stage professional learning. *Professional Development in Education*, 45(3), 505–519. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2018.1427134>
- Gist, C. D., Bristol, T. J., & Kohli, R. (2021). *Effective supports for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers*. Kappan Online. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2xqngb9>
- Goldhaber, D., & Theobald, R. (2023). Teacher attrition and mobility in the pandemic. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 45(4), 682–687. <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737221139285>
- Great Schools Partnership. (2020). Racial affinity groups: Guide for school leaders. *Great Schools Partnership*. <https://www.greatschoolspartnership.org/resources/educational-equity/racial-affinity-groups-guide-for-school-leaders/>
- Grissom, J. A., & Keiser, L. R. (2011). A supervisor like me: Race, representation, and the satisfaction and turnover decisions of public sector employees. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 30, 557–580. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.20579>
- Hill, H. C., & Papay, J. P. (2022). Building better PL: How to strengthen teacher learning. *Brown University*. <https://annenberg.brown.edu/sites/default/files/rppl-building-better-pl.pdf>
- Irvine, J. J. (2002). *In search of wholeness: African American teachers and their culturally specific classroom practices*. Palgrave. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230107182\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230107182_8)

- Kohli, R. (2016). Behind school doors: The impact of hostile racial climate on urban Teachers of Color. *Urban Education, 53*(3), 307–333. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085916636653>
- Kohli, R. (2019). Lessons for teacher education: The role of critical professional development in teacher of color retention. *Journal of Teacher Education, 70*(1), 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487118767645>
- Kohli, R., & Pizarro, M. (2022). The layered toll of racism in teacher education on teacher Educators of Color. *AERA Open, 8*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584221078538>
- Kohli, R., Picower, B., Martinez, A. N., & Ortiz, N. (2015). Critical professional development: Centering the social justice needs of teachers. *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy, 6*(2), 7–24.
- Kohli, R., Pizarro, M., Garcia, L.-G., Kelly, L., Espinoza, M., & Cordova, J. (2021). Critical professional development and the racial justice leadership possibilities of teachers of colour in K-12 schools. *Professional Development in Education, 47*(1), 89–101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2020.1814387>
- Kulkarni, S. S., Bland, S., & Gaeta, J. M. (2022). From support to action: A critical affinity group of special education Teachers of Color. *Teacher Education & Special Education, 45*(1), 43–60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08884064211061189>
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record, 97*(1), 47–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146819509700104>
- Leonardo, Z., & Porter, R. K. (2010). Pedagogy of fear: Toward a Fanonian theory of 'safety' in race dialogue. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 13*(2), 139–157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2010.482898>
- Lynn, M. (2002). Critical race theory and the perspectives of Black men teachers in the Los Angeles public schools. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 35*(2), 119–130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713845287>
- MA DESE. (2020). School and district profiles 2019-2020 teacher data – All teachers. *Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education*. <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/teacherdata.aspx>
- Meier, K. J., Stewart, J., & England, R. E. (1989). *Race, class, and education: The politics of second generation discrimination*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Meire, K. J. (1993). Latinos and representative bureaucracy: Testing the Thompson and Henderson hypotheses. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 3*(4), 393–414.
- Michael, A., & Conger, M. C. (2009). Becoming an anti-racist White ally: How a White affinity group can help. *Perspectives on Urban Education, 6*(1), 56–60.
- Milner, H. R., IV, Pearman, F. A., III, & McGee, E. O. (2013). Critical race theory, interest convergence, and teacher education. In M. Lynn, & A. D. Dixon (Eds.), *Handbook of critical race theory in education* (pp. 339–354). Routledge.
- Morgan, H. (2019). The lack of minority students in gifted education: Hiring more exemplary Teachers of Color can alleviate the problem. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas, 92*(4–5), 156–162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2019.1645635>
- Mosely, M. (2018). The Black Teacher project: How racial affinity professional development sustains Black Teachers. *The Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education, 50*(2), 267–283. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-018-0450-4>
- NCES. (2020). Race and ethnicity of public school teachers and their students. *National Center for Education Statistics*. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020103/index.asp>
- Parise, L. M., & Spillane, J. P. (2010). Teacher learning and instructional change: How formal and on-the-job learning opportunities predict change in elementary school teachers' practice. *The Elementary School Journal, 110*(3), 323–346. <https://doi.org/10.1086/648981>
- Patterson, J. (2019). When educators of color are asked to be 'everything' for students of color. *NEA Today*. <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/when-educators-color-are-asked-be-everything-students-color>
- Pearson, F., & Fuglei, M. (2019). Keeping Teachers of Color: Recruitment is not the problem. *Journal of Curriculum, Teaching, Learning and Leadership in Education, 4*(1).
- Podolsky, A., Kini, T., Bishop, J., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2016). *Solving the teacher shortage: How to attract and retain excellent educators*. Learning Policy Institute. <https://doi.org/10.54300/262.960>
- Pour-Khorshid, F. (2018). Cultivating sacred spaces: A racial affinity group approach to support critical educators of color. *Teaching Education, 29*(4), 318–329. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2018.1512092>
- Racial Equity Tools. (2020). Caucus and affinity groups. *Racial Equity Tools*. <https://www.racialequitytools.org/resources/act/strategies/caucus-and-affinity-groups>
- Savin-Baden, M., & Major, C. (2013) *Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice*. Routledge.
- Scherff, L. (2015). Distinguishing professional learning from professional development. *Regional Education Laboratory Pacific*. [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/blogs/blog2\\_DistinguishingProfLearning.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/blogs/blog2_DistinguishingProfLearning.asp)
- Sleeter, C. E. (2017). Critical race theory and the whiteness of teacher education. *Urban Education, 52*(2), 155–169. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085916668957>
- Stovall, J. L., & Sullivan, T. R. (2022). 'Grant us the sun': What Black teachers need. *The Phi Delta Kappan, 104*(1), 18–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00317217221123644>
- Warren-Grice, A., & Parker, L. (2017). Educational cultural negotiators for students of color: A descriptive of racial advocacy leaders. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 1*(21), 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2017.1294565>
- Warren-Grice. (2021). A space to be whole: A landscape analysis of education-based racial affinity groups in the U.S. *Black Teacher Project*. <https://www.blackteacherproject.org/research/>
- White, M. J. (2022). *"I am not alone": Supporting Teachers of Color through affinity groups* [Doctoral dissertation, Sacred Heart University].
- Yee, S. (2021). *Retaining Teachers of Color: The role of equity professional development* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois].

## **APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR VETERAN K-12 TEACHERS OF COLOR IN DISTRICT PROGRAM**

### **Introduction of Interviewee**

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself i.e., How long have you been teaching? Within which content area(s) do you teach?
2. How did you first get involved in education as a profession? How is it going now?
3. How would you describe your social identities (i.e., race, class, sexual orientation, abilities-level, etc.)? How does your social identity (i.e., race, gender, class, and abilities-level) impact your teaching? Professional learning experiences? [If they don't mention race, probe: More specifically, how does your racial identity impact these things?]
4. What has been your experience like as a teacher of color in this district? Please provide me an example of a typical day for you.
5. What professional learning needs do you have as a K-12 teacher of color? Do you think they are different from other teachers' needs? (Probes, as needed: Can you tell me more about that? Can you expand on that? Can you clarify that?)

### **Mentorship Program Information**

6. And now talk to me about this affinity program. Why did you join the program? Did someone recruit you? How did you learn about the program? What professional learning goals do you have for the affinity program? (Probes, as needed: Can you tell me more about that? What part of that experience was significant to you?)
7. Please describe the elements of the district program you are participating in. What are the learning activities, protocols, expectations, and requirements? (Probes: Can you tell me more about that? Can you expand on that? Can you clarify that?)

### **Evaluation of Professional Learning Needs**

8. How is the district affinity program meeting your professional learning needs? What parts of the program are beneficial? What parts are unhelpful? (Probes, as needed: What part of that experience was significant to you? What did the program specifically do to help you? Can you tell me more about that?)

### **Recommendations**

9. What recommendations would you give to the administrators about this program? (Probes, as needed: Can you tell me more about that? Can you expand on that? Can you clarify that?)
10. If you were to design a professional learning program to support Teachers of Color like yourself, what would you include or leave out? (Probes, as needed: Can you tell me more about that? Can you expand on that? Can you clarify that?)