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LETTERS | BOSTON'S NEED FOR TEACHER DIVERSITY

Diversity more than just a face

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RECRUITING INDIVIDUAL teachers who “look like” their students is an important step to achieving teacher diversity. But so is recruiting teachers who are culturally literate, as a majority of Boston Public Schools teachers will be white for the foreseeable future. Our recent studies of BPS schools found that the reluctance of some teachers to explicitly discuss race and gender, their lack of understanding the racial and ethnic backgrounds of students and the lack of cultural responsiveness in curriculum and instruction were major barriers to the success of black and Latino males.

Given these findings, we recommended that the district’s vision of diversity includes recruiting and retaining an effective cadre of teachers, principals and staff who reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the student population and who can fluidly integrate the racial and cultural backgrounds of students into their classroom practice. While recruitment is key, the real challenge is in creating school cultures and a system where all teachers affirm students of all backgrounds.

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