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**NEW UCLA RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS NEED TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN  
MORE TEACHERS OF COLOR & INDIGENOUS TEACHERS IN CALIFORNIA**

*Schools Serving Majority Nonwhite Students Have Lower Proportions of Experienced Teachers*

Los Angeles –The UCLA Civil Rights Project (CRP) today is publishing two studies of teachers: the first, [\*Barriers to Racial Equity for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers in California’s Teaching Pipeline and Profession\*](#), details the systemic barriers to diversifying the teacher workforce in the state, and the second study, [\*Segregated by Teacher Experience in California\*](#), demonstrates how the maldistribution of experienced teachers tends to compound inequalities among schools attended by students of different racial groups, reinforcing the urgent need for policies that help retain experienced teachers of color.

The first study, [\*Barriers to Racial Equity for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers in California’s Teaching Pipeline and Profession\*](#), published with UCLA’s Center for the Transformation of Schools (CTS), explores obstacles to recruiting and retaining teachers of color and Indigenous teachers (TOCIT) in California’s schools. The researchers used a mix of qualitative and quantitative data collected over the course of one year from system leaders in teacher preparation, pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and former teachers to better understand current policies and practices that may be contributing to teacher burnout, turnover and early retirement.

The CTS study shows that we have far to go in achieving a more diverse educator workforce that mirrors our K-12 student population. Despite California’s recent, large investments toward improving educator diversity, persistently higher rates of burnout, turnover, and early retirement among teachers of color and Indigenous teachers may indicate other factors at play. At a time when a number of states are eliminating Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs designed to foster positive race relations and

genuine equity, the authors point to persistent discrimination in the training process and the enormous economic barriers that many students of color face in getting the educational and professional resources and support they need to become teachers.

Key findings include:

Financial Challenges: Growing tuition fees, unpaid student teaching, mounting student debt, meager salaries, and the relentless rise of inflation and living expenses are disproportionately magnified for TOCIT.

Structural Racism: Study participants report being underserved in overcrowded programs, undercompensated compared to other high-skilled professions, and their life experiences and perspectives devalued throughout the teacher pipeline and profession.

Culture & Climate: Hundreds of respondents express feeling “silenced,” “ignored,” and “dismissed” by their colleagues and administration when trying to discuss issues around race and racism. Conversations around DEI are seen as performative and not yielding tangible policy or action.

Curriculum & Pedagogy: Participants report restrictions on their pedagogical autonomy that limit their ability to provide culturally responsive teaching and engage students in critical thinking. TOCIT also voice concerns that their perspectives and experiences are excluded from the curriculum.

Testing: Teacher licensure exams are reported as formidable barriers for workforce entry, imposing stress, time constraints and financial burdens, particularly on pre-service teachers.

The paper concludes with recommendations for improving the recruitment and retention of TOCIT, including: a “G.I. Bill” for teachers and debt-free pathways; fair compensation for student teaching, translation, discipline duties, and mental health guidance for students; teacher education enrollment caps; ethnic studies offerings and culturally relevant curriculum audits; and alternative credentialing pathways for in-service teachers.

"Equity work in our schools requires that we actively interrogate and dismantle policies and practices that act as barriers for people of color entering and sustaining in the profession," said Kai Mathews, director of the California Educator Diversity Project at CTS and lead author of the study. "Essentially, our desire for equity must be driven by a greater—or at least equal—desire for justice. There is no uncoupling of the two."

The second study, [\*Segregated by Teacher Experience in California\*](#), a policy brief by CRP Senior Researcher Ryan Pflieger and Co-Director Gary Orfield, explores a related and important problem: the inequitable distribution of experienced teachers in schools of differing racial compositions.

The new policy brief analyzes the most recent teacher experience and student race data available from the California Department of Education and shows that teacher experience gaps between majority white schools and majority non-white schools increased during the 7-year period studied, raising serious civil rights concerns.

The fact that less-qualified and less-experienced teachers are concentrated in the schools where poor and nonwhite students are the majority has been criticized for generations. The brief cites research showing that diversity, preparation, and experience matter for teachers' effectiveness. Despite court challenges and changes in federal and state policy in recent years, the unequal distribution of teacher experience continues and has become worse by most measures.

Key Findings include:

- On average, schools with majority white student enrollment employed teachers with more years of teaching experience than schools with greater proportions of students of color.
- Intensely segregated schools with 90-100% students of color had approximately 33% more novice teachers than schools with a majority white and Asian enrollment.
- Schools with the highest concentrations of white students had teachers with 1.4 years more experience than the schools with the highest Black concentrations.
- Increases in the proportion of Black and Latinx students were both independently associated with a decrease in experienced teachers.

The authors note that even small differences in teacher experience can accumulate over the K-12 years and negatively impact student outcomes. The brief recommends a set of policy options to decrease inequalities in opportunities to learn, including strategic action that addresses teacher experience gaps and reduces racial segregation in schools.

“There is powerful data showing the importance for students of color to have teachers of color and a curriculum that is culturally relevant,” says coauthor Pflieger. “With mounting evidence that teachers lacking experience are less effective, it is disturbing to find that inexperienced teachers continue to be clustered in schools with the highest concentrations of Black and Latinx students.”

Teachers who are poorly trained, harbor stereotypes, or lack the necessary experience could seriously hinder students' success. In prior decades, desegregation court orders often included provisions for giving teachers special training and strategies to help them reduce unconscious racial bias and deal with racial stereotypes in their classrooms. Now this training is less common and even forbidden in some states.

“California needs more teachers of color who deserve better pay, more racially informed training, and an end to the policy of sending the least experienced to the schools that urgently need expert teachers,” Orfield commented. “The profound educational inequalities in the state, which is also one of the nation’s leaders in school segregation, adds urgency to addressing the teacher issues discussed in these reports.”

In California’s multiracial society, public schools are uniquely important part and teachers its most important resource. In spite of great wealth, the state has serious and persistent racial inequality, and any plan to fix this must include schools and teachers. For a half century educational leaders and parent groups have talked about the need in our changing society for more teachers of color and for achieving their equitable presence in our schools – but these reports show we are still far from realizing these goals.

Read the [executive summary](#) or [complete study](#), *Barriers to Racial Equity for Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers in California’s Teaching Pipeline and Profession* [here](#). The [second study](#), *Segregated by Teacher Experience in California*, can be found [here](#).

This work is part of a [new research series](#), “**A Civil Rights Agenda for California’s Next Quarter Century,**” commemorating the Civil Rights Project’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

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About the UCLA Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles: The Civil Rights Project is co-directed by UCLA Research Professors Gary Orfield and Patricia Gándara. Founded in 1996 at Harvard University, CRP’s mission is to create a new generation of research in social science and law on the critical issues of civil rights and equal opportunity for racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. CRP is a trusted source of segregation statistics, has commissioned more than [400 studies](#), published more than 25 books and issued numerous reports monitoring the success of American schools in equalizing opportunity. The U.S. Supreme Court, in its 2003 [Grutter v. Bollinger](#) decision upholding affirmative action, and in Justice Breyer’s dissent (joined by three other Justices) to its 2007 [Parents Involved](#) decision, cited the Civil Rights Project’s research. In June 2023 Justice Sotomayor cited CRP’s research in her dissent to the court’s decision banning affirmative action in *SFFA v Harvard College*.

About the UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools (CTS): Housed in the UCLA School of Education & Information Studies, the [UCLA Center for Transformation of Schools](#) is dedicated to partnering with the education ecosystem to bring about systems change through Humanizing Research, Validating Practices, and Transformative Policies with key stakeholders to support equitable educational outcomes for historically underserved students.