



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Education Experts and Community Leaders Rally Around Recommendations for Closing the Teacher Diversity Gap in Minnesota**

*E4E-Minnesota Teachers Release Policy Paper on Diversity, Spotlight Need  
for Preparation Programs to Actively Recruit More Teachers of Color*

**February 21, 2015 (St. Paul)** - Educators 4 Excellence-Minnesota (E4E-Minnesota) released [recommendations](#) on diversifying Minnesota's teacher workforce at its first annual summit, "*Voices for Equity and Teacher Diversity*," held today at the University of Minnesota's Continuing Education and Conference Center. The 150-plus-person event featured local educators and activists advocating for ways to encourage more people of color to lead Minnesota's classrooms.

"There are quantifiable academic and social benefits that point to racial diversity as a central tenet of a high-quality teaching force," said **Executive Director of Educators 4 Excellence-Minnesota Madaline Edison**. "Sadly, the chances of a Minnesota student having a teacher of color are slim. Many E4E members with a variety of experiences felt a shared desire to collaborate and take action on addressing the clear disadvantage a teacher diversity gap creates for students, particularly for our students of color."

Across Minnesota, students of color make up 29 percent of the student population, while only four percent of the educators workforce are teachers of color. Sixty-seven percent of Minneapolis students are people of color compared to 16 percent of teachers. In St. Paul, 77 percent of students are students of color, compared to a mere 17 percent teachers. These dramatic disparities created urgency for a team of 17 teachers and administrators among E4E-Minnesota's membership, leading them to spend several months researching and developing recommendations to close the teacher diversity gap. The team sought to share and understand their own experiences with racial inequity in education, reflect on the perspectives of students of color who experience a lack of diversity within their teacher community, and research a range of factors that contribute

to the gap, from teacher recruitment through school climate.

“I didn’t have a teacher who looked like me until fifth grade,” said **E4E-Minnesota member Grecia Zermeno-Castro, a second grade teacher at Bancroft Elementary IB World School**. “Having a Latino teacher drastically changed how I felt about learning, and how I felt about myself. For the first time, I felt smart. It influenced my decision to become a teacher and is a reason I continue to teach.”

During the all-day summit, E4E members pointed to recruitment efforts as a prime area of opportunity to help close the teacher diversity gap in light of several state legislative bills on teacher preparation programs raised by House and Senate leaders within the last month. E4E recruitment recommendations include:

- The creation of a formal effort on the part of traditional teacher preparation programs and districts to identify and pursue candidates of color as early as high school and to support them through college graduation;
- A state requirement that preparation programs publicly report information on teacher candidate enrollment and completion disaggregated by race; and,
- State funding targeted toward expanding high-quality alternative certification programs, which on average attract higher percentages of teachers of color.

The summit was framed by teacher-led panels that delved deeply into discussions on closing the diversity gap through various policy ideas, from recruitment and induction to retention. The scope of recommendations can be found in the full report, [\*Closing Gaps: Diversifying Minnesota’s Teacher Workforce\*](#). The event also featured a keynote address from DeRay Mckesson, a former educator, organizer with #BlackLivesMatter, and senior director of Human Capital for Minneapolis Public Schools. Additional remarks were given by 2006 Minnesota Teacher of the Year Lee-Ann Stephens and St. Louis Park High School senior Amira Warren-Yearby, and a spoken word performance was delivered by artist Alexei Casselle.

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For far too long, education policy has been created without a critical voice at the table – the voice of classroom teachers.

**Educators 4 Excellence (E4E)**, a teacher-led organization, is changing this dynamic by placing the voices of teachers at the forefront of the conversations that shape our classrooms and careers. E4E has a quickly growing national network of educators united by our Declaration of Teachers’ Principles and Beliefs. E4E members can learn about education policy and research, network with like-minded peers and policymakers and take action by advocating for teacher-created policies that lift student achievement and the teaching profession.

For more information, please visit [www.educators4excellence.org](http://www.educators4excellence.org).