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PRESS ADVISORY

ONE IN FIVE STATES EITHER DO NOT COLLECT OR DO NOT MAKE PUBLIC TEACHER DIVERSITY DATA, ACCORDING TO A NEW SHANKER INSTITUTE RESEARCH BRIEF

WASHINGTON—Among the nation’s 51 state education agencies (including the District of Columbia), six do not collect any data on teacher race and ethnicity, and another four collect the data but do not make it reasonably available to the public, according to an Albert Shanker Institute research brief, “The Collection and Availability of Teacher Diversity Data: A Survey of 51 State Education Agencies,” released today.

The study’s results are based on a survey of each of the 51 state education agencies (SEAs), conducted in late 2017, which asked: 1) whether the SEA collected data on teacher race and ethnicity; 2) whether those data are available on the SEA’s website; and 3) if not, whether the SEA would provide the data upon request.

These results are important because there is a growing body of research to suggest that all students, and especially students of color, benefit from a teaching force that reflects the diverse society in which they must learn to live, work and prosper. Needless to say, any effort to promote teacher diversity requires detailed data to identify schools and districts that require assistance or intervention, and to monitor the effects of these interventions. Although such data are collected and available in most states, there are still too many in which such efforts are either impossible or severely hindered.

In short, the survey results were generally encouraging; most states reported that they collect school-by-school teacher diversity data, the vast majority of which make these data freely available on their SEAs’ websites. There were, however, serious areas for concern. Most notably, six states—Alabama, Delaware, Maine, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia—do not collect any data at all on teacher race and ethnicity, even on a district-by-district basis. In other words, in these six states, there is no way for policymakers and the public to assess the diversity of the state’s teaching force.

In addition, two states—Nevada and North Carolina—report that they collect data only on a district-by-district basis, and thus cannot track diversity levels or trends within districts (i.e., school by school). This is a particularly important limitation in districts with more than a handful of schools.

Finally, while the majority of states report that they collect at least some data, not all of them make the data reasonably available to the public. Specifically, among the 45 SEAs that collect at least district-by-district data, four do not make these data available by request. This means that 10 states—one in five—either do not collect or do not make public any teacher diversity data.

(more)

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Moreover, as of late 2017, when we conducted our survey, only 21 of these 41 states had the datasets available on their websites. The remaining 20 SEAs required that we request the data, in a few cases charging a processing fee. States that do not make the data freely available online impose an additional and unnecessary burden on policymakers, researchers, and especially the public.

“States already collect considerable data on their teachers, so the addition of a single question on race and ethnicity could be done at no cost,” said Shanker Institute executive director Leo Casey. “The only reason why these data are not being collected and published, is that the states don’t want the public to see them.”

"It is a hide-the-data issue," said American Federation of Teachers and Shanker Institute president Randi Weingarten, "and it's a pipeline issue—but mostly, it's a working conditions issue." She described poorly resourced schools plagued by underfunding, overtesting and a lack of social services staff. "It's hard to recruit and retain any teacher into such schools, but especially African-American, Latino and Native American teachers, who are in short supply in many areas. We need to do much more to support them."

The report’s authors recommend, first, that all states must immediately begin collecting detailed school-by-school teacher race and ethnicity data, and that these data should be freely available on SEAs’ websites. Moreover, they recommend that the U.S. Department of Education begin centralized collection of states’ teacher diversity data as part of its Civil Rights Data Collection.

The full report, including links to all the data made available by states, is available at: <http://shankerinstitute.org/resource/teacherracedata>

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The Albert Shanker Institute, named in honor of the late president of the American Federation of Teachers, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization dedicated to three themes – children’s education, unions as advocates for quality, and both civic education and freedom of association in the public life of democracies. Its mission is to generate ideas, foster candid exchanges, and promote constructive policy proposals related to these issues. More information is available on the Albert Shanker Institute’s web site at www.shankerinstitute.org.