



WHITE PAPER

***The BOND (Building Our Network of Diversity) Project:
Recruiting, Developing, and Retaining Male Educators of Color by Bolstering Teacher
Efficacy and Creating Culturally Engaging Networks.***

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It is often hypothesized that male teachers of color have a special way of connecting with students of color. With that being said, it would seem that having more men in the classroom may be a way to help reduce the achievement gap. Black and Hispanic boys are often at the bottom of the achievement gap and that could be in part due to the fact that “nationally, Black and Hispanic boys will spend the majority of their school experiences under cross-gender and cross-cultural supervision” (Chance & Toldson, 2013, p.18). Highlighting the concern more specifically, Chance and Toldson (2013) share the alarming statistic that, on a national level, Black male teachers only comprise 1.81% of the teaching population. If there’s a true belief that increasing the presence of Black and Hispanic male teachers can improve student achievement, then it’s obvious that districts must do more to diversify their workforce with more male educators of color.

Additionally, consider the following:

“Research indicates that minority students do better contemporaneously in school - and likely in the long run as well - when they are exposed to teachers of their same race or ethnicity” (Figlio, 2017, p.3).

Gersheson, Hart, Lindsay & Papageorge (2017) reveal to us that if a black male student has at least one black teacher in grades 3-5, he is not only significantly less likely to drop out of school but more likely to pursue higher education in the future.

“All students benefit from being educated by teachers from a variety of different backgrounds, races and ethnic groups, as this experience better prepares them to succeed in an increasingly diverse society” (Albert Shanker Institute, 2015, p.1).

These trends and data points tell us the facts of what is, and what could be. It also leads one to ask, what efforts are helpful in recruiting and retaining male educators of color?

With the goal of addressing such trends, The Building Our Network of Diversity (BOND) Project was developed in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) in Montgomery County, Maryland. MCPS prides itself on equity and excellence in education and this initiative developed organically on the heels of the district's Strategic Plan for Teacher Workforce Diversity that was released in 2014. A small group of MCPS staff, primarily men and women of color, organized the BOND Project as a grassroots initiative to help MCPS continue to diversify its workforce.

The mission of the BOND Project is to advance the efforts to recruit, develop, support, and retain male educators of color at all grade levels within MCPS. The BOND Project demonstrates this commitment through mentoring, professional enrichment, academic scholarship, and social fellowship in Montgomery County.

The three core goals of the initiative are:

I. Recruitment

To advocate for increased hiring of male educators of color in MCPS and the field of education on a national level.

II. Development

To increase educator capacity via professional development, workshops, and academic scholarship.

III. Retention

To serve as a mentoring network for male educators of color that provides support and understanding of professional advancement and retention processes in MCPS.

In 2016-2017, MCPS male educators of color were invited by BOND Leaders to complete an informal survey of questions related to the BOND Project and the profession of education. Approximately, ten percent of the school system's Black and Latino male teaching core engaged the survey. The three key questions and summarized responses below may begin to shine a light on how to best recruit, support, develop, and retain male educators of color.

Survey Questions	Summarized Responses of BOND Project Participants (2016-2017)
<i>Why did you become an educator?</i>	(1) Desire to inspire young people to think critically, independently, and be lifelong learners. (2) Being able to see young students recognize their potential. (3) Wanting to give something back to the community. (4) I was a student who was left behind by teachers and staff. (5) I want to directly influence students in becoming successful members of society. (6) My lifelong passion is to help others. (7) I wanted to be a voice for those who feel they have none in schools i.e. at-risk students. (8) I wanted close the gap. (9) It's my calling and something I wanted to do since grade school.
<i>What are some of the challenges faced by male educators of color?</i>	(1) A feeling of isolation. (2) Not enough role models in the profession. (3) The feeling of being a minority within the minority. (4) Lack of diversity among peers. (5) Black male educators are always steered toward being a disciplinarian, speaking for all men of color, always being watched or seen as too aggressive or intimidating. (6) The burden of being the face of challenging stereotypes. (7) Essentially, the same biases, stereotypes, and challenges that may exist in any profession as a black man.
<i>What do you get from The BOND?</i>	(1) Professional development specific to educators of color i.e. a particular cultural lens. (2) An opportunity to engage colleagues. (3) It is a platform for venting for those who normally have to be strong in their role as African American / Latino educators. (4) It provides a network of idea sharing for teachers who want to be more of a presence for students who look like them. (5) It's professional support from the male perspective. (6) It's a place to share best practices for classroom management as well as academic interventions to support students. (7) It provides access to a collegial regional network of African American and Latino male teachers and professional staff.

It is evident that enrichment from a cultural lens, a space to fellowship, opportunities to hone one's craft, as well as peer and mentor support is vital to this group of educators. From the survey feedback, one can hypothesize that an initiative like the BOND Project has the capacity to fulfill a need in supporting educators who feel isolated in the profession. One may also conclude that the earlier an individual can gain access to this type of support, the sooner the educator will feel prepared, highly competent, and satisfied in the profession.

One can align the BOND Project's work with Albert Bandura's efficacy framework. Self-efficacy is "the belief in one's capacity to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p.3). Bandura's four key efficacy expectations that have congruence with the BOND Project's mission are mastery experience, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and emotional and physiological states. If school districts want to

recruit and retain quality male educators of color, they must find ways to ensure that they feel confident, productive, and competent about their performance in the school house. Confidence is integral to teaching and leading and often “the perceptions of competence are more important than actual levels of competence” (Hoy and Spero, 2005, p.344). These efficacy expectations can increase teachers desire to stay in the profession because they feel they are impacting student achievement and creating social change.

Mastery experiences are when one masters a task in a given area. Part of the mission to retain educators of color has to be in having them find and actualize success in the profession. Pintrich and Schunk (2001) offer that “if the success is attributed to internal or controllable causes such as ability or effort then self-efficacy will be enhanced but if success is attributed to luck with an intervention from others then self-advocacy may not be strengthened.” When a teacher feels empowered that they are having an impact the belief in future success becomes part of how they see their work. For example, as evident in some of the BOND Project teacher responses, when one can “see young students recognize their potential” (BOND Project Survey, 2017) the teacher’s efficacy is increased and there is a firm belief that they are fulfilling their mission for going into the profession.

Vicarious experiences (or modeled behaviors) are significant when the observer identifies with the model moderating the efficacy effect on the observer. This expectation is a critical component of the BOND Project in the mentoring and pairing process. BOND Project organizers are “intentional in creating an ideal mentor match” (BOND Project Survey, 2017) as male educators of color may feel they are not quite understood by someone who has different racial and cultural experiences from them. For instance, observing a veteran Black male teacher perform his work, in addition to other veteran teachers, is vital to a new Black male teacher who is learning various teaching styles, approaches, and practices. There is cultural nuance and efficacy enhanced from “seeing people similar to oneself succeed by sustained effort raising observers’ beliefs that they too possess the capabilities to master comparable activities and to succeed” (Bandura, 1994).

Social or verbal persuasion is also a large part of what was revealed in the BOND Project survey. The feedback pushes back on societal notions that men don’t feel a need to voice their challenges and concerns. The BOND Project is “a platform for venting for those who normally have to be strong in their role as African American / Latino educators” (BOND Project Survey, 2017). The truth is that context matters and feeling as though one has a safe space for disclosure is key. Pep talks can represent a boost in efficacy and can readily come through the process of mentoring. BOND Project mentors want new teachers to feel encouraged to talk and ask for help. Because of the many responsibilities and situations that occur throughout the course of one school day, a request for help is not only normal, but desirable, to reflect on a given situation. The BOND Project recognizes the effects of this sense of collective efficacy gained through the mentoring process and group fellowship sessions. There is a feeling of support and communalism that comes from people working together to make a difference. Collective efficacy in the form of collaboration, leadership, and awareness is evident in the enrichment, mentoring, and support offered through programs like the BOND Project.

Lastly, the BOND Project explores the efficacy expectation of emotional, physiological, and psychological states. Humans want to belong to things that make them feel supported. Isolation and misconceived notions of male educators of color are only part of the reason for them not having an interest in the field or leaving prematurely. There is emotional and psychological stress that comes “from being a minority within a minority” (BOND Project Survey, 2017) and not feeling culturally connected or productive. The BOND Project seeks to serve as an agent of collective efficacy as well as cultural engagement and support. Initiatives like this keep educators connected just as schools seek to engage students through culturally responsive practices.

In closing, it’s important to elaborate on the increase in the broader efforts of school districts that aim towards a philosophy and practice of equity, inclusion, and culturally responsive education. There is a lot of work invested into training educators to be culturally competent in the classroom. In an increasingly diverse world, school districts are attempting to shine a light on the importance of educators getting to know the students and making them feel like they belong. The research on academic performance and how culturally responsive educators are improving the teaching and learning process is held in high regard. A diverse workforce makes the task of culturally responsive practice even easier to achieve.

The BOND Project recognizes that educators are not absent of cultural identity in the performance of their work. Just like their students, they are impacted by their experiences as racial and cultural beings. With that being said, the truest efforts for bolstering a diverse teacher pipeline - particularly with regards to men of color - will foster teacher efficacy as well as acknowledge the impact of culture in creating a space for growth, development, and support. The BOND Project is just one of many initiatives designed to do just that. Just as school districts’ can’t attack the achievement gap without addressing instructional voids, they also can’t address the recruitment, development, and retention of male educators of color without seeking to address the cultural gaps in these processes.

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