



The Black Track

Office of African American Affairs

ESSENTIAL WORKERS: TEACHERS OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

Teachers are the backbone of our society

The word essential has been amplified throughout the past three years. We have mostly heard it in reference to essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. When something or someone is essential it is of the utmost importance (1). The New Mexico Office of African American Affairs believes educators of the African diaspora are essential for the educational development of our youth. In this article we will discuss some of those factors and resources for expanding teacher enrollment of African descent.

I like what I read on the U.S. Department of Education website, where it says teachers are the backbone of our democracy- fostering curiosity and creativity, building skillful individuals, and strengthening informed citizens. (2) This statement is the focal point of why teachers of African descent are important. Black teachers are essential because they disrupt the institutional inequalities that help with widening the social, economic, and academic gaps between people of color and our counterparts. (4) Plainly said, teachers of African descent bring awareness and support to the youth of African descent that many others cannot.



"Black educators have the ability to relate to Black students in a way that others may not be able to"

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Researchers have found that when low-income Black males of the elementary age range are paired with a teacher of African descent in the third, fourth or fifth grade, they are 30 percent less likely to drop out of high school. (3) Currently, on the national education statistics website, there is not even a conclusive number of New Mexico teachers of African descent, we might be low in numbers but our numbers count. In that exact study, researches found that when students of African descent were placed with a teacher of African descent, they were less likely to argue or act out than the students of African descent that were placed with Anglo-Saxon teachers. (3)

The U.S. Department of Education says their three focus areas for supporting and elevating the teaching profession are, recruiting diverse high-qualified teachers, supporting educator's professional development and strategizing to retain high-quality educators. We currently have the HB43, the Black Education Act (BEA) in New Mexico. It was passed in the 54th legislative session of New Mexico in 2021. According to the New Mexico Public Education Department, the act was created to improve education for Black students in New Mexico for public, charter, and post-secondary schools. (2)

We have state and federal initiatives that say they are in place to help our people. Let's test them out. As we continue to advocate for our children's educational development, let's also remember the importance of some of us becoming educators or support staff. Our children need us to show up in the schools because we know they can reach their goals when they are supported. The New Mexico Office of African American Affairs is committed to sharing resources and services to become a schoolteachers or support staff and will do so throughout the month of May for Teacher Appreciation Month via our social media platforms. So spread the word and get involved.

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