# Fiscal Facts: As Wisconsin’s K-12 student diversity grows, teacher workforce fails to keep pace

# *By Wisconsin Policy Forum*

he gap between the increasing diversity of Wisconsin’s K-12 student population and the lack of diversity in its teacher workforce has widened in the last decade, with large gaps in urban school districts and the divide growing most quickly in the state’s least urbanized areas. These disparities have huge implications for racial equity, workforce needs across the state, and efforts to reduce educational achievement gaps.

Between 2009 and 2019, the number of public K-12 students of color in Wisconsin increased by 28.2% or about 58,000 students. As a share of all students, students of color grew from 23.6% to 30.7%. Although the number of teachers of color grew by 22.5%, they started as a small share of teachers overall and increased by only 1.1 percentage points to just 5.6%. This widened the gap between students and teachers of color from about 19 percentage points in 2009 to 25 points in 2019

Black and Hispanic/Latinx students and teachers are the largest populations of color in Wisconsin and exhibit the largest disparities in teacher-student representation. In raw numbers and as a share of their overall groups, Black students and teachers have fallen since 2009. Black students now make up just over 9% of K-12 students, while Black teachers comprise only 2.1% of all teachers.

Conversely, Hispanic/Latinx teachers and students have more than doubled their numbers in the past decade, and their shares of the student and teacher populations have grown. Yet the gap between them has widened every year since 2009. In 2019, Hispanic/Latinx students made up 12.3% of all students, while Hispanic/Latinx teachers comprised just shy of 2.0% of all teachers statewide.

Fostering diversity in the teacher pipeline will be challenging, because people of color who might pursue a teaching career falls significantly as they progress through the educational pathway. Although students of color made up 30% of all public K-12 students in 2018, their share drops to 23.8% of high school graduates, 19.5% of postsecondary enrollees, and 9.8% of those enrolling in teacher preparation programs in Wisconsin.

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