

Race and Ethnicity of Staff Relative to Students in Melrose Public Schools

Introduction to the Issue

Most children in the United States complete their education having had only white teachers.^{1,2} This is a loss for all students, regardless of their race and ethnicity. However, research shows that it is particularly harmful for Black students and other students of color. Students of color who have teachers of color are more likely to thrive academically, graduate from high school, and aspire to college.^{3,4,5} Students of color who have teachers of color are less likely to have chronic absenteeism, and are less likely to be suspended.^{3,4}

A 2020 study finds that anti-Black implicit bias among teachers is associated with race, with white teachers showing higher average anti-Black bias than teachers of color and Black teachers, respectively. Higher average anti-Black bias among teachers predicted greater racial inequities in student test scores and suspensions, with Black students receiving lower test scores and more suspensions than their white peers, after controlling for poverty and racial segregation.⁴ The PEW Research Center finds that Massachusetts is among the states in which the teaching staff is substantially more white than the student body.²

The Federal government and some states and school districts are implementing best practices to increase the number of teachers of color in U.S. schools.^{4,5} Best practices include creating more supportive pathways to teaching, overhauling hiring practices, and improving school teaching conditions through cultural competency training and school leadership.³

Methods

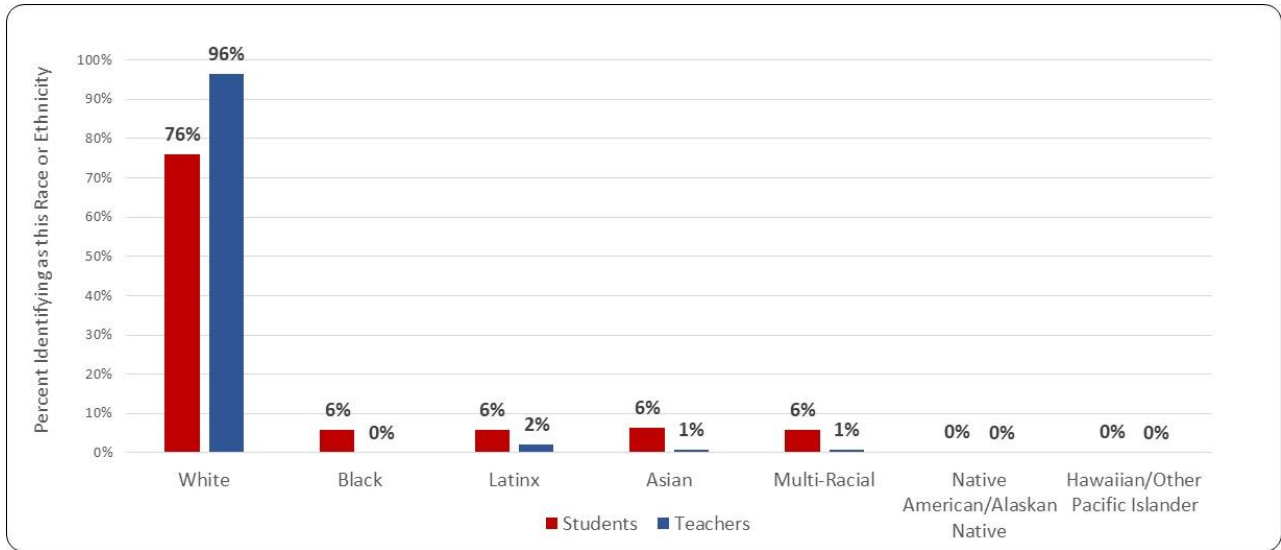
Data Used in these Analyses

Data used in this report are from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) School District Profiles and the Employed Educators Report, which are publicly available online.^{1,2} We report data for Melrose Public Schools for ten school years, from 2012-2013 through 2021-2022. While this report focuses on Melrose, we compare Melrose data with data from the 12 municipalities that form two concentric rings around Melrose. Specifically, these municipalities are: Everett, Lynn, Lynnfield, Malden, Medford, Reading, Revere, Saugus, Stoneham, Wakefield, Winchester, and Woburn.

Findings

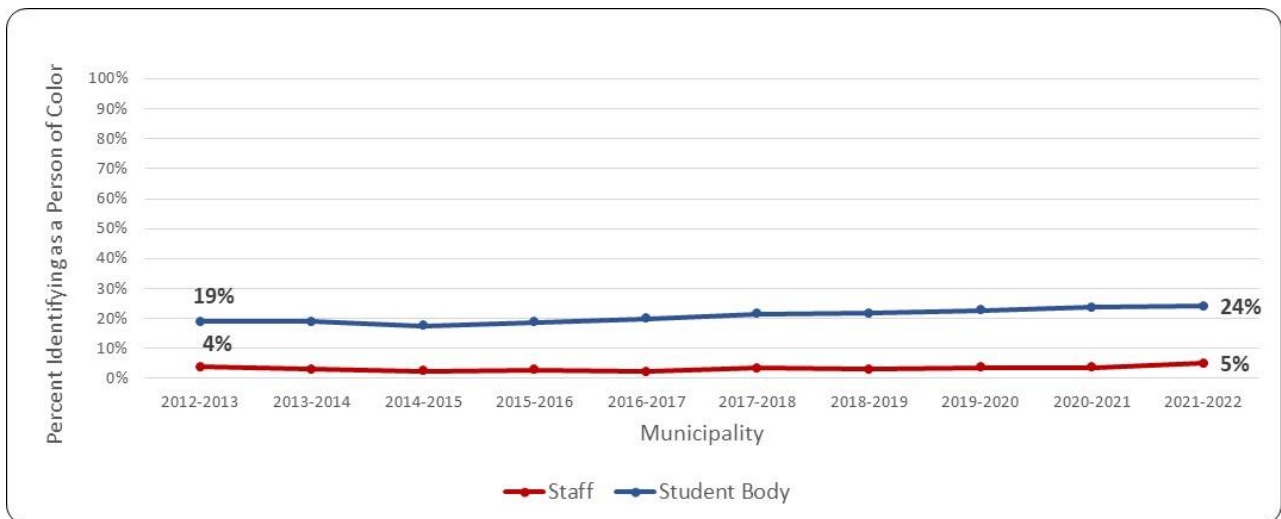
The MA DESE Employed Educators Report shows that in the 2021-2022 school year, Black students in Melrose did not have any teachers that looked like them, and other students of color had few teachers who looked like them (Figure 1). Specifically, no teachers identified as Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. Two teachers identified as Asian, and two as multi-racial. Six teachers identified as Latinx. Thus, in the 2021-2022 school year, only 4% of teachers in the Melrose Public Schools identified as a person of color compared to 24% of the student body.

Figure 1. Race and Ethnicity of Students and Teachers in Melrose Public Schools, 2021-2022



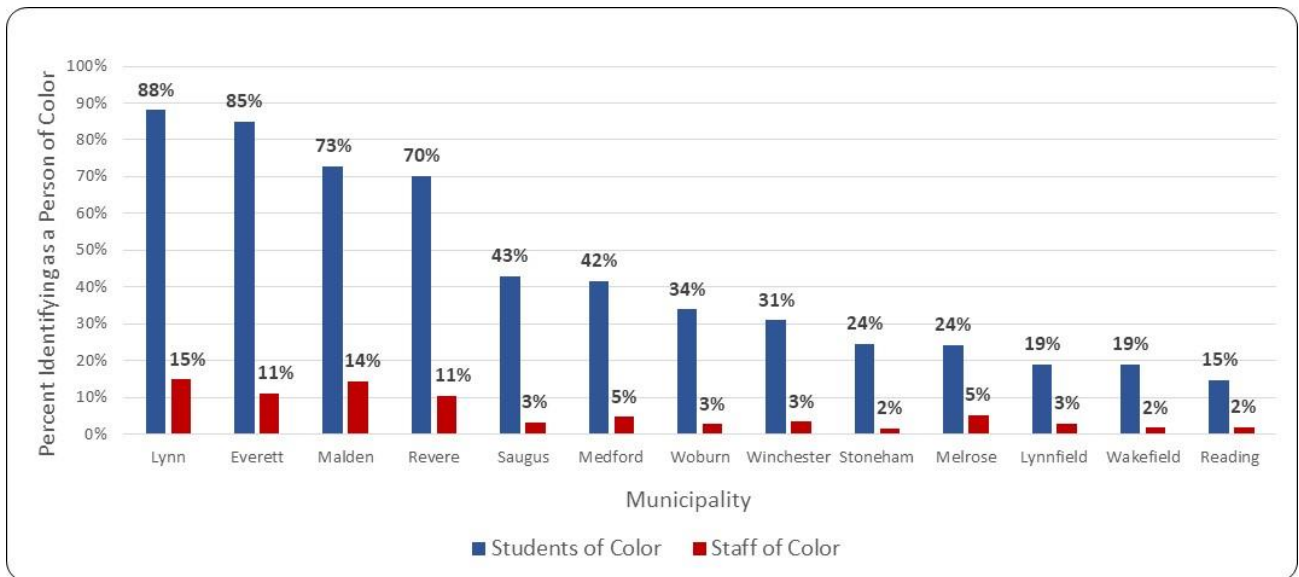
Teachers make up about half of the Melrose Public Schools staff. Also working in the schools are administrators, paraprofessionals, and other licensed and unlicensed staff. Data from the 2021-2022 school year show that 5% of the staff of Melrose Public Schools are people of color. In Melrose over the past decade, there have been approximately five times as many students of color as there are staff of color (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Students and Staff who are People of Color in Melrose Public Schools from 2012-2022



Melrose is not alone in having a school staff that does not reflect the student body in terms of race and ethnicity (Figure 3). In the four schools in which the student body consists predominantly of youth of color—Lynn, Everett, Malden, and Revere—11% to 15% of the staff identify as a person of color. In the other schools, including the four schools with the whitest student bodies—Melrose, Lynnfield, Wakefield, and Reading—2% to 5% of the staff identify as a person of color.

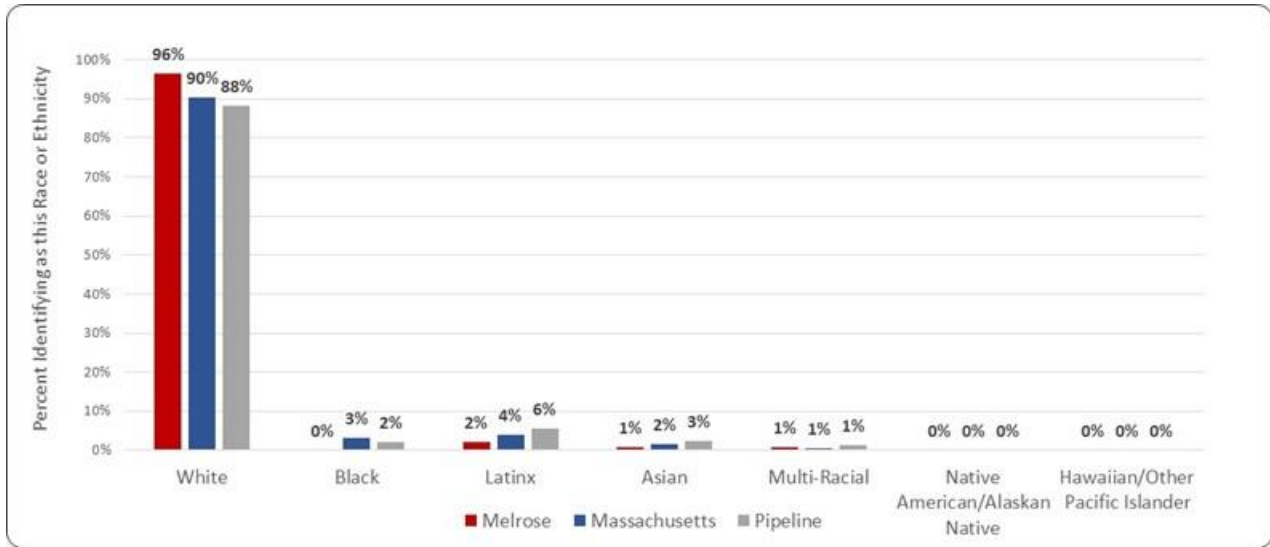
Figure 3. Race and Ethnicity of Students and Staff in Melrose Public Schools Relative to Surrounding Municipalities, 2021-2022



In Massachusetts as a whole, Black students and other students of color have few teachers who look like them. In the 2021-2022 school year, 45% of the student body and 10% of teachers statewide identified as Black, Latinx, Asian, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or multiracial.

People of color are also underrepresented in the Massachusetts Educator Pipeline, which documents the race and ethnicity of those who have recently completed their education to become a teacher (Figure 4). Pipeline data suggest a small possible future increase in the proportion of teachers who identify as Latinx, but the proportion of incoming teachers who identify as Black is smaller than the current proportion of Black Massachusetts educators.

Figure 4. Race and Ethnicity of Melrose Public Schools Staff Compared to Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Educator Pipeline, 2021-2022*



*Massachusetts Educator Pipeline data are from the most recent year available, which is 2020-2021.

Conclusions

Black students in Melrose have no teachers who look like them. Other students of color have few teachers who look like them. This is a known cause of harm to our Black students and students of color, because we know that when students of color have teachers of color they do better academically, in high school and beyond. We also know that lack of racial diversity among the teaching staff of Melrose public schools contributes to racial inequities in exclusionary school discipline, which has a disproportionate, negative, long-term effect on Black students and students of color. Having no Black teachers and few teachers of color also represents a tremendous loss to our white students.

Racially diversifying the Melrose Public Schools teaching staff will not be easy. As noted, there are too few teachers of color in Massachusetts as a whole as well as in the educator pipeline. Moreover, Melrose may not be a desirable place for Black teachers and teachers of color to work specifically because the teaching staff is almost exclusively white and because the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights in 2016 found that Melrose Public Schools created a racially hostile environment for a Black student.⁸ In addition to these race and racism-specific challenges, Melrose may have a hard time recruiting because we spend less per student than all of the surrounding municipalities covered in this report,⁹ and in the 2022-2023 school year, staff were without a contract for nearly a year.¹⁰

To surmount these challenges, we recommend that Melrose Public Schools develop an evidence-based, multi-year plan to recruit, hire, and retain Black teachers and other teachers of color. If such a plan already exists or is in the process of being developed, we request that the plan be made public for the sake of transparency and accountability.

Reporting Team

The reporting team for this report consisted of Jane Allen, Cory Allen, David Valade, Grace Berte, and Carolyn Cronin. Jane Allen was the primary author. Cory Allen provided guidance on the section as a whole, including reporting. David Valade, Grace Berte, and Carolyn Cronin reviewed and provided comments that enabled us to expand, correct, and clarify various aspects of the report. If you have comments or questions about this report, or would like to report any errors or inaccuracies, the team would appreciate you bringing them to our attention by contacting us at janeappleyardallen@gmail.com.

Citations

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