

## Ask Teaching Tolerance



### Q How do you attract more teachers of color to a school that has students of color but an all-white faculty?

With difficulty. The teaching force is projected to become less diverse, so you're wise to think about a plan to ensure your students of color have role models and all your students interact with a diverse faculty. Research shows that students of color see measurable gains in academic achievement when they have a teacher of color.

You can't hire people who don't know about the position. Be sure to send the job announcement to places where people of color are well represented. These might include HBCUs (historically black colleges and universities), a local chapter of the NAACP, the Black Student Union at your local teacher's college and community churches.

And don't forget the website of the National Alliance of Black School Educators, where you can post your job and browse resumes.

No one wants to work where he or she feels isolated, so do some homework to find out how to make your school a welcoming environment for new teachers. Involve racially diverse parents and community groups in making your school attractive to applicants.

Finally, invest in the future by providing experiences for your students that allow them to see teaching as a possible career. These might include peer-tutoring programs, future teacher clubs, "each one teach one" classroom strategies and cooperative learning.

### How do you get parents in a homogenous community to understand the importance of diversity for their children?

Give them the facts. Show them how their children can benefit from going to schools with diverse student populations. Research shows that attending a school that is integrated—both racially and economically—increases academic achievement, graduation rates and college attendance for all students, including those who are white and middle class.

More than that, diverse schools prepare students for college and careers where they will interact with people from different racial, ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds. If they learn alongside others who

are different, they will have a competitive edge as adults.

### Do you have any suggestions for responding to a black student who says she's performed poorly on tests or has been punished for back talking, swearing and lying because her white teachers are racist?

Think about being ready for a conversation instead of having a ready response. In your best "warm defender" mode, probe her thinking. Ask about her experiences and how they might lead her to these conclusions. Above all, take her seriously.

Next, consult with specialists in your school to come up with a program of positive academic and behavioral supports to increase her capacity for success. If she has special needs, make sure you work with the individualized education program (IEP) team to understand how you can support this child's growth.

Finally, take a deep breath and reflect on whether what she says might have a grain of truth in it. In many schools, children of color are disproportionately disciplined for attitudinal behavior such as back talking. Think of her sass and swearing as important clues to a puzzle that only you, the professional educator, can unlock.

### ASK TEACHING TOLERANCE!

Need the kind of advice and expertise that only Teaching Tolerance can provide?

Email us at [editor@tolerance.org](mailto:editor@tolerance.org) with "Ask TT" in the subject line.