

## Black Male Educator (BME) Retention

### *Raymond Pyle, Elementary School Teacher*

#### **Research Question**

Why do black male educators leave the education field or go into administration?

#### **Rationale**

The purpose of this research is to examine teacher retention through the lenses of black males. Black men have a significant impact on the education system, both in terms of what they bring to the classroom and what they can learn from their interactions with students. Black men are underrepresented in the teaching profession, making up only 3% of the nation's teachers, but they make up 12% of students. It is tough to get black males into the education field and the retention rate of black males is low. Many BME are leaving due to the lack of support, growth opportunities, and unrealistic expectations.

#### **Literature Review**

Christopher Emdin (2016) discusses Black male teachers are not just expected to teach and be role models; they are also tasked with the work of disciplinarians. The stereotype is that they are best at dispensing "tough love" to difficult students. Black male educators often described their primary job as keeping black students passive and quiet, and suspending them when they commit infractions. In this model, they are robbed of the opportunity to teach, while black male students are robbed of opportunities to learn.

Jaclyn Borowski and Madeline Will (2021) reinforce Emdin by repeating how schools can be unwelcoming places for Black men. They showcase multiple studies that show many Black male teachers are pigeonholed into disciplinarian roles instead of being recognized for their pedagogy and content expertise. Also, many teachers of color are concentrated in hard-to-staff schools serving high-poverty communities, where there can often be a lack of resources and support. The lack of support is detrimental because it causes the black men to eventually burn out from either stretching too far or not enough support.

Angela Callahan (2020) includes an amazing quote from Terrence Martin, president of the Detroit Federation of Teachers which also explains the need for black male teachers in the classroom. "It's important for children to see black males in their lives, especially on a daily basis, who are in respectable positions of authority," "I think that gives them something to strive for, even if they don't become teachers. They can see someone who 'looks like me,' and it tells them they can become a professional, a writer, an educator, someone who is respected." I have even found that low-income Black students who have a Black teacher—man or woman—for at least one year in elementary school are less likely to drop out of high school and more likely to consider college." With this information one can see how important a teacher of color is needed in low-income areas.

#### **Design/Tools/Process**

Factors that influence black males to leave were heavily researched. From different studies to actually surveying seven black males who were in the education field, three in the administration field and three teachers who left the education all together. Specific questions were asked in a panel of black male educators/black men in administration/ and ex black male teachers. I was able to get concise reasons as to why leaving the classroom was a more viable option. The process of choosing candidates was based on black men who had at least three years in the education field. I reached out to different black male who worked in the DCPS school system as they were the closest group of men available. In order to have unbiased results surveys were sent out ahead of the interview. Panelist members were required to fill out questionnaires. The discussion the panel had was more to showcase that for the majority of the questions most black males had the same answers. The panel lasted for an hour and notes were taken on questions that accurately depicted why black males felt like leaving or left education. Panelists provided data, statistics to help back up their points and made sure that conversation strayed away from only personal experiences. Our focus group discussion helped to shed light on the overall issues that black males face in society.

#### **Data Analysis**

After the panel discussion the following reasons were emphasized as the main pain point of being a black male educator. We're oftentimes the only Black male educator. Our experience, expertise or knowledge is misunderstood as some mythical black magic with no regard for the work that relationships and culture cultivation take. We often face the same microaggressions from our co-workers or superiors that our students face. We are frequently given de facto security/dean of student/behavior support roles (even if that's not our position). We are oftentimes pressed hard against the career glass ceiling. (Your students in place X need you but you'd also like to not become Super Security/Assistant Principal or become even lonelier in a systems-level role, as only 3% of all

principals are black) We are both a helpless victim and silent perpetrator of a system that we watch destroy younger versions of ourselves. Daily.

1. How can your schools recruit and retain more black teachers?
  - a. Increase targeted recruitment initiatives and incentives, such as loan-forgiveness programs and tuition reimbursement.
  - a. Partner with historically black colleges and universities to attract more black males to the teaching profession.
  - b. Enact legislation that embeds educator diversity at all levels as a core tenant of civil rights.
  - c. Prioritize district funding to ensure a targeted onboarding experience for black male teachers and other teachers of color.
  - d. Provide meaningful district and school level professional development and targeted support for alternatively certified teachers.
  - e. Prioritize the hiring of more Black male educators as assistant principals, principals, superintendents, and district officers.

### **Implications/Recommendations**

Teacher retention is key to ensuring that Black male educators are able to continue working in the education system. One way to keep effective Black male educators in the classroom is to create a culture that's welcoming to them, one that makes it clear that they're valued members of the teaching profession. This can include mentoring programs that offer ongoing support to Black male educators, as well as programs that provide professional development opportunities for them. It can also include changing the culture of the education system so that it's less hostile to people of color, as opposed to one that's hostile to women and people of color. We can create environments where Black male educators are celebrated for their differences and are encouraged to express themselves freely, instead of being shamed for breaking the mold.

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