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## Program Design and Exemplary Practices for Preparing Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers

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**Abstract:** Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers (TOCIT) has gained traction in recent years in educational scholarship. Yet very few studies have evaluated teacher education programs that prepare TOCIT within the U.S. context or have focused on the promising pedagogical practices used to prepare TOCIT. The challenge of doing program evaluation resides in the different institutional contexts and the limited time teacher education researchers have to look holistically and systematically at program design and evaluation. However, we can talk about

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exemplary practices that have been supportive in preparing TOCIT. This article describes various teacher education pedagogical and theoretical practices that have been used in the preparation of TOCIT within different types of teacher education programs. We discuss two common types of teacher education programs—traditional and alternative. We also discuss the policy landscape for these teacher education program types, focusing on practices used in TOCIT preparation.

Recommendations are suggested for policymakers to work intentionally toward creating a diverse teacher workforce and providing support—resources and financial—throughout teachers' careers. **Keywords:** Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers; alternative certification programs; Grow Your Own; residency programs

### **Diseño de programas y prácticas ejemplares para preparar Maestros de Color y Maestros Indígenas**

**Resumen:** La investigación sobre Maestros de Color y Maestros Indígenas (TOCIT) ha ganado fuerza en los últimos años en la academia educativa. Sin embargo, muy pocos estudios han evaluado programas de formación docente que preparen a TOCIT dentro del contexto estadounidense o se han centrado en las prácticas pedagógicas prometedoras utilizadas para preparar TOCIT. El desafío de realizar una evaluación de programas reside en los diferentes contextos institucionales y en el tiempo limitado que tienen los investigadores en formación docente para examinar de manera integral y sistemática el diseño y la evaluación de los programas. Sin embargo, podemos hablar de prácticas ejemplares que han sido de apoyo en la preparación del TOCIT. Este artículo describe varias prácticas pedagógicas y teóricas de formación docente que se han utilizado en la preparación de TOCIT dentro de diferentes tipos de programas de formación docente. Analizamos dos tipos comunes de programas de formación docente: tradicional y alternativo. También analizamos el panorama de políticas para estos tipos de programas de formación docente, centrándonos en las prácticas utilizadas en la preparación del TOCIT. Se sugieren recomendaciones para que los formuladores de políticas trabajen intencionalmente para crear una fuerza laboral docente diversa y brindar apoyo (recursos y financiero) a lo largo de las carreras de los docentes.

**Palabras-clave:** Maestros de Color y Maestros Indígenas; programas de certificación alternativos; *Grow Your Own*; programas de residencia

### **Desenho de programas e práticas exemplares para preparar Professores de Cor e Professores Indígenas**

**Resumo:** A pesquisa sobre Professores de Cor e Professores Indígenas (TOCIT) ganhou força nos últimos anos nos estudos educacionais. No entanto, muito poucos estudos avaliaram programas de formação de professores que preparam TOCIT no contexto dos EUA ou focados nas práticas pedagógicas promissoras usadas para preparar o TOCIT. O desafio de fazer avaliação de programas reside nos diferentes contextos institucionais e no tempo limitado que os investigadores em formação de professores têm para analisar de forma holística e sistemática a concepção e avaliação de programas. No entanto, podemos falar de práticas exemplares que têm apoiado a preparação do TOCIT. Este artigo descreve diversas práticas pedagógicas e teóricas de formação de professores que têm sido utilizadas na preparação do TOCIT em diferentes tipos de programas de formação de professores. Discutimos dois tipos comuns de programas de formação de professores – tradicionais e alternativos. Também discutimos o cenário político para esses tipos de programas de formação de professores, concentrando-nos nas práticas utilizadas na preparação do TOCIT. São sugeridas recomendações para que os decisores políticos trabalhem intencionalmente no

sentido de criar uma força de trabalho docente diversificada e fornecer apoio – recursos e financeiro – ao longo da carreira dos professores.

**Palavras-chave:** Professores de Cor e Professores Indígenas; programas de certificação alternativos; *Grow Your Own*; programas de residência

## ***Handbook Overview***

Various studies have highlighted the role adequate preparation plays in new and developing teachers' practice, both in traditional teacher education programs (e.g., Ball & Forzani, 2010) and alternative certification programs (e.g., Jang & Horn, 2017; Rogers-Ard et al., 2013). For many years, preparation for teacher candidates has largely focused its attention on the “overwhelmingly white” population of teacher candidates (Sleeter, 2001, 2008). In recent years, research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers (TOCIT) has gained traction in educational scholarship, including the *Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers* edited by Conra D. Gist and Travis J. Bristol (2022). Scholars have proven time and again that TOCIT positively impact classroom spaces, student achievement outcomes, and the academic success of Students of Color (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Easton-Brooks, 2019). Yet very few studies have focused on evaluating teacher education programs that prepare Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers within the U.S. context. Instead, evaluations of teacher education programs take on a generalized approach—by looking at individual program features—with very little insight into the program's role in preparing TOCIT, program effectiveness, and retention outcomes (Ball & Tyson, 2011; Ronfeldt, 2021; Sleeter, 2001).

Moreover, Phillip and Mensah (2022) commented on the challenges of inviting teacher education researchers to contribute research on program design and evaluation in their section introduction in the Gist and Bristol (2022) *Handbook*. Phillip and Mensah (2022) stated that the challenge of doing program design and evaluation resides in how different the contexts are—the geopolitical and teaching environment—and how the evaluation processes are carried out through national accrediting organizations, such as the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP) and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). The authors also discussed the limited time teacher education researchers have to look holistically and systematically at program design and evaluation. Another issue with program design and evaluation is describing succinctly what the program entails and how it prepares TOCIT. With these challenges, there is still an opportunity to gain insights into how TOCIT are prepared within different teacher education program types. Thus, the goal of this paper is to: (a) discuss two common types of teacher education programs; (b) share the policy landscape for these various program types and practices used in the preparation of TOCIT; (c) provide exemplars of effective pedagogical and theoretical practices used to prepare TOCIT; and (d) elaborate on funding needed for teacher education programs that prepare TOCIT.

## **Policy Research**

Due to recruitment and retention challenges, teacher shortages have impacted many students across the country. In particular, students in high-poverty schools suffer the most because they are faced with a “revolving door” of teachers, many of whom are underprepared to teach (Guha et al., 2016). With high teacher shortages caused by retirements, qualified teachers not entering the profession, and teachers leaving the classroom, students and school districts suffer from not having a diverse faculty—which is further amplified when TOCIT's presence is already limited in schools. Replacing teachers with long-term substitutes and unqualified or uncredentialed

persons is not a viable solution in the short term or long term. Replacing teachers who leave can cost up to \$18,000 (Carroll, 2007; Guha et al., 2016). Thus, investing in teacher education programs that prepare TOCIT is beneficial for student learning and addressing critical teacher shortages. Ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse programs, such as those that prepare TOCIT for schools and districts with increasing ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse student populations (Lightfoot & White, 2022) are needed. The benefit of teacher education programs that center preparation on diversity is that they aim to provide TOCIT with the necessary educational and professional support to teach in ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse schools where students need them the most (Navarro et al., 2019). Furthermore, a higher percentage of TOCIT within schools and classrooms also results in benefits for *all* students' learning and academic success (Gershenson et al., 2018).

### **Program Types and Policy Research**

Two common pathways to teacher certification are traditional and alternative (National Research Council, 2010). Traditional teacher preparation generally refers to a 4- or 5-year undergraduate program at a postsecondary institution. Typically, these programs are usually housed in institutions of higher education, namely colleges of education or schools of education. The traditional program prepares and certifies people through a professional educational teacher preparation program. Teacher candidates take courses in pedagogy, subject-matter content, and teaching diverse student populations, such as English language learners, multilingual learners, and special education students.

The second pathway is alternative teacher certification programs. Alternative teacher certification programs are one of the most promising means for recruiting people from diverse backgrounds into the teaching profession (Gist et al., 2019). Alternative teacher certification programs can be an umbrella term for many types of teacher education programs. For example, Bowling and Ball (2018) noted that there are “over 130 different kinds of alternative certification pathways across the nation, and establishing a normed description for alternatively certified teachers is nearly impossible” (p. 110). Alternative certification programs include emergency certification, temporary certification, work-based programs, and private providers (Bowling & Ball, 2018). Alternative certification programs often recruit established professionals looking for new career opportunities. While alternative certification programs were established to provide highly qualified teachers in schools, there are a few alternative programs that center TOCIT, such as Grow Your Own (GYO) and community-engaged programs (Gist, 2019; Lightfoot & White, 2022; Skinner et al., 2011) and teacher residencies (Guha et al., 2016). These programs serve as viable pathways for teacher certification, as they also fulfill the needs of minoritized communities. The challenge of alternative certification programs is their perceived reputation as an “academic shortcut” because they seem less academically rigorous than traditional certification programs (Bowling & Ball, 2018, p. 111). However, many alternative programs have been beneficial in educating high-quality teachers, fulfilling local teacher shortages, and diversifying the teaching profession (Ingersoll & Perda, 2010).

For example, in their literature review on GYO programs, Gist and colleagues (2019) noted that GYO programs typically last between 2 and 8 years; reflect a partnership between local schools, higher education institutions, and nonprofit organizations; and are funded by a variety of entities, including private foundations, federal grants, and state development grants. These programs not only commit to recruiting Teachers of Color but also recruit particularly from Communities of Color where teacher candidates currently live or work and will end up teaching. These programs aim to recruit teacher Candidates of Color with rich cultural, ethnic, epistemological, and linguistic perspectives. GYO programs have a more diverse teacher candidate

composition, compared to traditional teacher certification programs, where some programs are specifically created to recruit and prepare a certain population of teachers, such as Black male elementary teachers in urban schools (Jones et al., 2019) and bilingual paraeducators to work with English learners (Garcia et al., 2019). There are also models where bilingual high school students receive targeted coursework and earn credits for college (i.e., teacher academies and dual enrollment models) as they prepare for the teaching profession (Garcia et al., 2019).

For teacher residency programs, candidates apprentice with an expert teacher, complete accompanying coursework with a partnering university, and earn their teaching credentials and a master's degree (Guha et al., 2016). In addition, candidates can receive a stipend and tuition support in exchange for teaching in the partnering district for 3-5 years after completing their residency (Guha et al., 2016). Teacher residency programs are seen as successful models because they tend to attract more Candidates of Color—allowing the residency programs to generate and retain more gender and racial diversity in teaching; moreover, they have been able to staff more high-needs schools (Guha et al., 2016), where many Teachers of Color have a desire to teach (Achinstein et al., 2010; Griffin & Tackie, 2017). Although there are nuances, complications, differences, and similarities among the different types of teacher education programs for preparing TOCIT, the various program models that exist, such as GYO, residencies, and community-engaged programs, are likely to expand.

## Policy Landscape

In a policy brief from the U.S. Department of Education (2023), the Biden-Harris Administration has prioritized building an effective, diverse teacher pipeline, including expanding high-quality and affordable programs that prepare and support teachers, including teacher Registered Apprenticeships (i.e., residency models). These “earn and learn” programs allow prospective teachers to earn their credentials and receive a salary while combining coursework with structured, paid, on-the-job learning experiences with a mentor teacher. Consequently, the number of registered apprenticeship programs has increased across states, with funding given to teacher preparation programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges or Universities (TCUs), and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) to help accelerate the pace of preparing TOCIT for America's schools. Furthermore, “Raise the Bar: Lead the World” is the U.S. Department of Education's (2023) call to action to transform PreK-12 education and unite around what works to advance educational equity and excellence. The goal is to address educator shortages at every public education level through five key policy levers or strategies: (a) compensation and working conditions; (b) pathways into the profession; (c) induction and professional learning; (d) leadership and advancement; and (e) educator diversity. All of these strategies are significant for recruiting, preparing, and retaining TOCIT.

Key policy levers two and five—pathways and educator diversity—are appropriate to consider for supporting teacher education programs that recruit and prepare TOCIT in terms of teacher diversity and fulfilling the needs of under-resourced schools. For example, key policy lever two focuses on supporting high-quality and affordable pathways into the profession that incorporate significant clinical experience, including residencies, teacher apprenticeships, and GYO programs. Key policy lever five focuses on promoting educator diversity through the work of teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention, and ensuring teaching is a career that people from all backgrounds are eager to enter and can pursue successfully. These two policy levers speak directly to the opportunities to support TOCIT through the types of traditional and alternative programs discussed earlier. These two policy levers as goals for traditional and alternative teacher certification programs also need financial and structural support for immediate and long-term

success. Many institutions of higher education have been concerned with teacher-educator diversity and have taken advantage of the U.S. Department of Education Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) grants under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 to provide stipends, scholarships, and other financial aid to teacher candidates. Using these funds for underwriting the cost of teacher preparation makes teacher certification more affordable and attractive to TOCIT. This type of funding should be expanded for recruitment, preparation, and retention efforts.

### **Promising Practices That Support TOCIT in Teacher Preparation Programs**

We know that pedagogical practices, coursework, relationships, and experiences are pieces of a larger puzzle for preparing TOCIT in teacher education programs. Knowing what promising pedagogical practices are used within traditional and alternative teacher education programs to prepare TOCIT is important for addressing teacher diversity and teacher shortages. In a literature review conducted by Laura Chávez-Moreno, Ana María Villegas, and Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2022), aspects of good program design are noted to diversify the teacher workforce. The literature review contributes to how scholars have constructed and framed the preparation of teacher Candidates of Color. For example, one part of the literature review focuses on strategies that teacher educators have used in teacher education programs to prepare teacher Candidates of Color to teach responsibly. A few of these strategies are teaching an “all-minority seminar” for Candidates of Color at a Predominately White Institution (PWI) that expresses a commitment to social justice (Bennett et al., 2000); assigning educational autobiographies as a strategy to validate the experiences and counter-stories of Teachers of Color (Berry, 2005); and allowing Candidates of Color to co-teach a diversity course (Prado-Olmos et al., 2007). Other strategies for preparing TOCIT utilized arts-based approaches such as writing *memorias*, or stories that bilingual candidates wrote of their past experiences with oppression (Fránquiz et al., 2011); integrating Boalian Theatre of the Oppressed as dramatic activities and role-playing in a seminar course to rehearse actions to problems (Bhukhanwala & Allexsaht-Snyder, 2012); and focusing on culturally responsive Indigenous teaching practices, driven by self-determination, centered around Indigenous knowledge systems, and guided by tribal national principles and goals (Castagno et al., 2015). Archibald and Garcia (2015) also noted that Indigenous teacher education practices focusing on respect, reverence, responsibility, reciprocity, reclamation, rights, and reconciliation are necessary for preparing culturally responsive Native teachers.

Chávez-Moreno and colleagues (2022) also noted that engaging in “critical race dialogue” for candidates to unpack their past experiences with discrimination and racist school practices (Kohli, 2012) was effective, as was assigning teacher candidates to two different field placements to raise their awareness of social and material resources in different locations (Weisman & Hansen, 2008). Adding a service learning component as a field experience in a multicultural course (Carter Andrews, 2009) was also another way one teacher education program prepared their Candidates of Color to connect practice to community outreach.

Furthermore, teacher education programs also utilize other practices that incorporate the cultural backgrounds of Candidates of Color. Two studies highlighted in the *Handbook* involved teacher educators’ considerations of the future lives of Candidates of Color across different content areas within teacher education programs. First, Mensah (2022) conducted a study with a group of 12 Women of Color doctoral students interested in becoming future teacher educators and preparing them as racially literate, critically conscious teacher educators. Engaging in critical self-reflection, viewing movie clips and images to prompt discussion about race and racism, and

co-teaching with peers were primary activities for the doctoral Candidates of Color in a teacher education course. Second, Marcelle Haddix and Kimberly Williams Brown (2022) drew on Afrofuturist and critical hip-hop architecture frameworks as research methods with students as partners for programmatic change and pedagogical practices. All of these practices were done in both traditional and alternative teacher education programs. The diversity of approaches for preparing TOCIT highlights intentional pedagogical practices that have yielded favorable findings.

### **Theoretical Practices in TOCIT Teacher Education Programs**

Not only are there promising practices in teacher education programs that prepare TOCIT, but there are also pedagogical practices grounded in theory to support the work of preparing TOCIT. In one example, Darlene Lee and Josephine Pham (2022) shared practices in their UCLA Teacher Education Program Ethnic Studies Teaching Pathway. This was the first program in the United States to officially offer a teaching pathway with an emphasis on ethnic studies. The program prepares secondary social science and English/language arts teachers to teach ethnic studies classes in Los Angeles schools. The program used several pedagogical practices grounded in educational theories to promote racial learning among teacher Candidates of Color. Racial literacy roundtables (Sealey-Ruiz, 2017), critical racial affinity spaces (Strong et al., 2017), teacher-centered professional development, and third spaces (de los Rios & Souto-Manning, 2017) were used extensively throughout the ethnic studies program. The program, consisting of six unique courses, was also grounded in four tenets provided by teacher-scholars Reyes McGovern and Lachica Buenavista (2016), where teacher educators and teacher candidates: (a) question white supremacist notions of ideological objectivity and neutrality in processes of knowledge construction; (b) move toward antiessentialist representations of racialized communities; (c) develop and engage in community-grounded praxis in the teaching of content; and (d) foster opportunities for individual empowerment and collective self-determination and social transformation.

In another example, Indigenous teacher education programs (e.g., Brayboy & Maughan, 2009; Lees et al., 2016; Madden, 2015) center the lived experiences and knowledge of Indigenous people. As Brayboy and Maughan (2009) affirmed, Indigenous teacher education programs uphold Indigenous knowledge systems, where the “philosophies, beliefs, values, and educational processes of entire communities...[add] to a set of cumulative experiences that serve as guideposts for both individuals and communities over time” (p. 3). In essence, Indigenous communities are guided by their lived experiences, value knowledge in context (place and space), and appreciate relational experiences. Furthermore, Madden (2015) described four types of pedagogical pathways used in teacher education that support Indigenous teachers and students. The first type of pedagogical pathway Madden described is learning from Indigenous traditional models of teaching, which centers Indigenous knowledge, oral history, and Indigenous elders. The second type is a pedagogy for decolonizing, which “(re)introduces teachers to storywork...and revisionist histories of colonial productions that challenge stereotypical, appropriate, and/or censored (mis)representations” (p. 9). The third type is Indigenous and antiracist education, which focuses on addressing problematic perceptions of Indigenous people, including colonial narratives. Lastly, there is Indigenous and place-based education, which advocates for approaches that center place-based knowledge and histories. Similar to the pedagogical practices discussed in the previous section, traditional and alternative teacher education programs also focus on specific theoretical and philosophical practices in the preparation of TOCIT.



## Discussion

While more research on program design and evaluation is needed, some pedagogical practices and theoretical foundations are generating positive outcomes in preparing TOCIT. Still, there is a tremendous need for more collective case studies of teacher education programs, inclusive of recruitment, accreditation criteria, retention, professional development, and other aspects of program design and evaluation (see the *Handbook* for specific chapters on these topics). Research studies that allow us to see holistically how traditional teacher education and alternative teacher education programs are preparing TOCIT beyond a course, a couple of experiences, or a few projects or assignments warrant attention. Furthermore, critical frameworks and approaches to curriculum, pedagogy, and research to improve and diversify the teaching profession are needed, while systematically addressing the well-being of teacher Candidates of Color in a teacher education program and as they move into their teaching careers (Kohli et al., 2022).

Programmatic change requires disruption and shifts institutionally within traditional teacher education and alternative teacher education programs that center TOCIT. Programmatic change includes sharing, networking, listening to, and implementing the kinds of transformative practices, theories, and experiences that Candidates of Color recommend and need. Likewise, teacher educators of all backgrounds and contexts have to be critical of their practices and make the necessary changes to program design and evaluation that align with many of the practices and theories shared in this paper. Teacher education programs as well should be more self-critical and self-reflective to address issues of access, program design, and resources that support the needs of teacher Candidates of Color currently and for the next cohort of TOCIT that enter teacher education programs. Programmatic support is challenging, particularly because there are more than 130 different types of teacher certification models available (Bowling & Ball, 2018). However, some teacher education programs, such as GYO, residency models, and apprenticeships, have been effective in preparing and retaining a diverse teacher workforce (Lightfoot & White, 2022). How they do this within the holistic framing of an institution and teacher education program is an area for further research.

Teacher education institutions, teacher educators, and teacher education researchers must examine their programs (i.e., curriculum, pedagogies, practices, and theories) and research agendas to ensure that all teacher candidates are being prepared for the ever-increasing diversity found in educational settings of all types and that the education and support of TOCIT are given much-needed attention across all aspects of teacher education (see Gist & Bristol, 2022). While teacher education programs have promising practices and foundational theories that support TOCIT (Lee & Pham, 2022), more research is needed to capture full cases of programmatic features that other programs may learn from and implement. There is a very limited number of teacher education program design and evaluation studies in the recent literature; therefore, we invite nomination and recommendation of these programs for program and evaluation studies.

Within a larger context for program design and evaluation is the current sociopolitical climate of higher education policy. We have yet to realize the impact of the U.S. Supreme Court's restriction on race-based affirmative action and similar policies at the state level for traditional and alternative teacher education programs. Research has shown that students and Students of Color often benefit from having teachers of diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds (Gershenson et al., 2018). A diverse teaching staff can help better understand and communicate with students from different backgrounds. However, the Supreme Court decision could make it harder for teacher education programs not only to attract diverse candidates but also consider how race, ethnicity, and language factor into their overall programs, including curriculum, recruitment, retention, and policies, once again exacerbating teacher diversity and teacher shortages and



affecting our nation's long-term and wide-range standing (i.e., leadership, security, economy, education) and democracy.

## Impact and Recommendations

With exemplary pedagogical practices and theoretical foundations used in traditional and alternative teacher education programs that support the preparation of TOCIT, there is still much more needed within the policy arena to support the work that is happening and to encourage additional work to diversify teacher education and the teaching profession. As we think about policy implications, three recommendations come to mind that will support and sustain TOCIT and the teacher education programs charged with recruitment, preparation, and retention.

First, we urge policymakers to incentivize teacher education programs that have a clear and distinct focus on TOCIT. Increasing ethnoracial teacher diversity has positive educational outcomes, including greater academic achievement and social-emotional development for Children of Color, as TOCIT understand and apply culturally responsive, culturally relevant, and culturally sustaining pedagogies. These pedagogies benefit not only Students of Color but *all* students (Gershenson et al., 2018). TOCIT and their emphasis on *how* content is taught and connecting learning to students' everyday lives are valuable assets that TOCIT bring to classrooms. In addition, we suggest states and districts use a data system to track the types of programs that TOCIT enroll in and the programs that have a clear goal of supporting TOCIT at the institutional and program levels. As mentioned previously, there is little research on program design and evaluation, beyond one or a few courses. Assisting institutions and teacher education programs with support in documenting how their programs recruit and teach TOCIT will increase our collective knowledge of policies and practices that support TOCIT. Included should be methods of disseminating program design and evaluation research and insights for other institutions and teacher education faculty to learn about promising practices and theories of TOCIT preparation. Engaging in this type of evaluation and holistic research of various teacher education programs—both traditional and alternative—will require funding.

Second, we suggest that policymakers find ways to reduce the cost of entering the teaching profession for TOCIT. This means considering the out-of-pocket costs of teacher preparation programs from application to graduation to ongoing professional development, especially for TOCIT who often come from or live in communities that are financially under-resourced and most likely to incur higher debt during and post-matriculation (Carver-Thomas, 2017). Additional scholarships, stipends, and tuition and fee waivers, alongside loan forgiveness or low-interest loans or grants, are important incentives to attract people to the teaching profession. There should also be simpler processes for institutions of higher education to apply for grants, particularly HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs. Even smaller colleges and schools of education and private institutions interested in recruiting a more diverse teacher candidate pool would benefit from similar support. Traditional, university-based programs would benefit from this as well. If these institutions are interested in creating alternative certification programs focused on teacher diversification and partnering with local school districts to fulfill teacher shortages and diversify schools, processes for obtaining funding and supporting candidates could be simpler.

Finally, we advise policymakers to work intentionally toward creating a diverse teacher-educator workforce and providing support throughout teachers' careers (Mensah, 2022). Support for teachers should include mentorship after completing their teacher education program and continuing throughout their teaching career. For example, it is important to provide support in the induction and early career of teachers for the retention of TOCIT (see chapters in the *Handbook*), and ongoing support is also required to keep pace with research-based practices and critical

professional development opportunities open for TOCIT to sustain them professionally, mentally, and holistically (Kohli & Pizarro, 2022). This, too, requires backing in support of mentoring programs and professional development initiatives geared toward TOCIT retention. As Gist and colleagues (2019) stated:

Without institutionalized policies and practices valuing local community ways of knowing and being from culturally sustaining standpoints, the promise of Grow Your Own programs may fall short because they will be unable to successfully prepare, place, and retain nontraditional Teachers of Color in the profession. (p. 10)

Providing substantial funding for mentorship support in traditional and alternative programs is not ill-spent (Achinstein et al., 2010). We want to sustain and empower TOCIT and build professional pathways that will provide the much-needed, high-quality education they desire that will enable them to serve our ever-increasing diverse schools and communities.

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