



MAKE THE CASE

TEACHING QUALITY & DIVERSITY

Teacher quality and **diversity** are intertwined aims that both fundamentally contribute to a student's success in the classroom, especially for students of color, who often thrive in classrooms led by teachers who share their racial and cultural background.

Teacher quality is the largest in-school factor for student success.¹



Students learn more when teachers hold high expectations of them, deliver strong instruction, assign grade-appropriate work, and encourage active engagement.²



Highly effective teachers change students' life trajectories, making it more likely that students earn **higher salaries** and **save more money for retirement**.³

Teacher diversity is beneficial for all students, especially students of color.



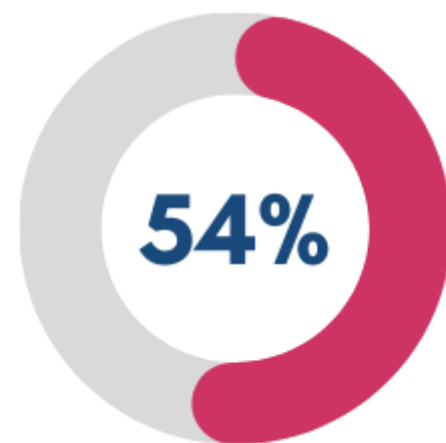
Students of color with access to same-race teachers are more likely to **graduate from high school**, attend school regularly, take advanced courses, and aspire to attend college.⁴



Teaching that recognizes and relates to students' backgrounds leads to **improved academic engagement and outcomes**.⁵

Inequitable patterns of teacher distribution and lack of racially inclusive teacher workforces mean that Black and Latino students are more likely to be taught by novice teachers and teachers who do not look like them.

The diversity of the national public school teacher workforce does not reflect the diversity of the student population.



Percentage of students of color in our nation's schools



Percentage of teachers of color in our nation's schools

While students of color make up more than 50% of the K-12 public school student population, teachers of color comprise less than 20% of the teacher workforce.⁶



Many Black and Latino students attend schools without a single teacher who matches their race or ethnicity.⁷



Percentage of schools without a single teacher of color⁸

Novice teachers, who have less experience in the classroom and may be less effective than more experienced teachers, are more likely to teach students of color and students from low-income backgrounds.⁹

In 1 in 4 states, schools with the most Black students have at least **twice as many** novice teachers as schools with the fewest Black students.¹⁰

In more than half of all states, Latino students have more novice teachers than their peers.¹¹

Making the case for improving **Teacher Quality & Diversity** hinges on effectively communicating their importance, urgency, and connection to your community.

3 Key Elements of Effective Messaging



Keep it simple.



Know your audience.



Make an emotional connection.

3 Key Elements of Effective Messaging

Know your audience.

Who is your audience?

- District leaders and policymakers?
- School board members?
- Other advocates?
- Parents, students, families?

What publications do they read? What media do they consume?

- Education Week?
- Boston Herald?
- Dallas Morning News?
- TikTok? Twitter/X?

What does your audience care about?

- Start with what they value.
- Connect their values with your advocacy message.

Make an emotional connection.

Don't rely on statistics to make your point.

"Show, don't tell" how this current issue (or your proposed policy solution) impacts students.

- Create an emotional response — make it clear why we all need to care!
- Use real stories about students to highlight the urgency of addressing inequities.

Tell your personal story.

- Why do you care about this issue? Did you have a similar experience in school?
- How does this impact you as a parent, advocate, or community member?
- Ultimately, who are the people on the ground being affected, and how can you lift up their voices and stories to move people to act?

Keep it simple.

Your messages need to be short.

- Describe your main advocacy point in 10 words or less.
- Make your messages quotable and easy to remember.
- Think of what you would say in a tweet.

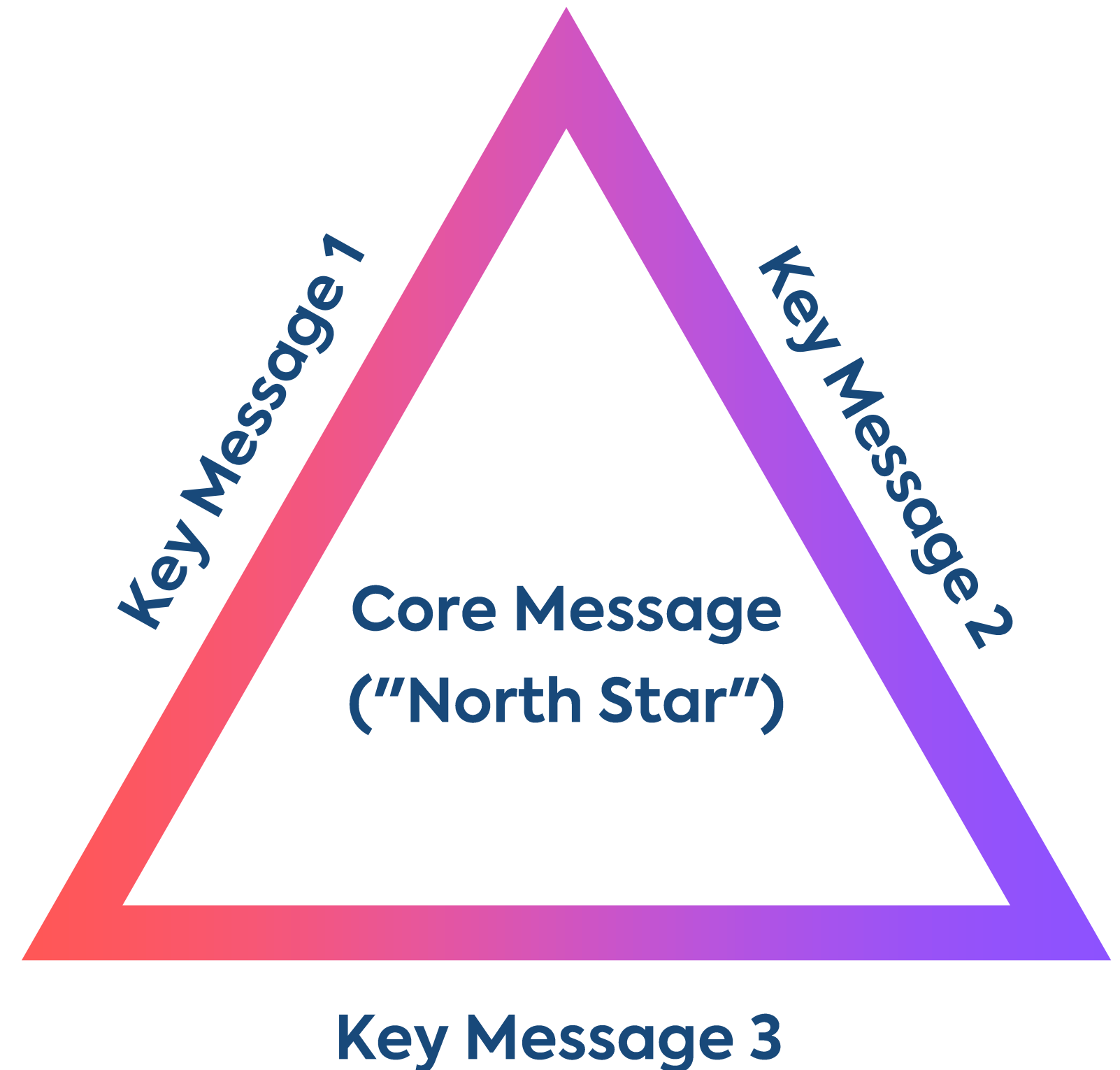
Avoid jargon and education speak.

Message Triangle Fast Facts

- Based on the principle that it is easier to visualize an image than it is to memorize a lot of words.
- Structured specifically **for social change and advocacy messages**: provides a structure to frame issues in a way that resonates with people's core values, makes the message personal, and can be tailored to a specific audience.
- Helps identify and home in on **1 core message and 3 supporting, key messages** that are compelling, credible, and concise.
- Offers structural focus but is not intended as a script.

Your core message is the North Star message you are trying to get across.

Your 3 key messages are what will move your audience toward your ultimate objective.



Creating a Message Triangle to Tell Your District's Story



Review Key Questions

Review the Alliance for Resource Equity's Key Questions on Teacher Quality & Diversity:

- **Key Question 2.1:** Does each student have access to strong teachers?
- **Key Question 2.2:** Does each student have access to teaching practices that are engaging, culturally relevant, and standards-aligned?
- **Key Question 2.3:** Does the teacher workforce reflect the diversity of the study body?

Identify your "North Star" or Core Message

Determine what you want to communicate. What is the underlying vision?

- Consider reiterating the Alliance for Resource Equity's vision:

Each student has access to strong teaching, which includes having strong, well-supported teachers, who are able to meet their students' distinct needs and provide engaging, culturally relevant, and standards-aligned instruction, so all students can reach high standards and thrive, and the teaching workforce reflects students' racial and linguistic diversity.

Support Messages With Data

Use available data to create 2 messages that outline the problem and its impact or relevance.

- See Appendix A for list of data metrics.
- Prepare a powerful data metric, soundbite, and narrative for your key messages.

Create a Call to Action

The last key message should prompt people to act.

- What action are you requesting from your district?
- What is the most immediate next step?
- What do you want your audience to do?

Forming Key Messages 101

1

Start by analyzing metrics (Appendix A) to help answer the key question in the dimension.

For instance, comparing the % of teachers of color and the % of students of color, by individual race/ethnicity subgroup could help determine the answer to **Key Question 2.3: “Does the teacher workforce reflect student diversity?”**

2

Consider the available data points.

What story do they tell? How directly do they speak to the issue?

Let’s suppose we learn that 28% of the district’s teachers are people of color, while 73% of students are students of color, and there is a pronounced disparity of Hispanic teachers. **We decide to use these data points to inform our key messages.**

3

Solidify the message.

- **Key Message 1 identifies the issue:** Our district’s teacher workforce does not reflect the racial diversity of our student body.
- **Key Message 2 explains why this matters:** A racially and linguistically diverse teacher workforce benefits all students, especially students of color.
- **Key Message 3 advances a call to action:** Our district must diversify our teacher workforce.

4

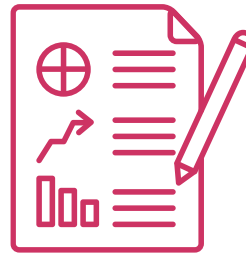
Use additional elements to support your key messages. For Key Message 1, this could look like:

- **An illustrative data metric:** Although students of color make up 73% of our student body, just 28% of our teachers are people of color. The disparity is especially pronounced for Hispanic students, who comprise 37% of the student body, while Hispanic teachers are only 9% of the teacher workforce.
- **A punchy soundbite to use for an interview:** The severe lack of racial teacher diversity should set off immediate alarm bells for our district leaders.
- **A powerful narrative element:** Describe how you personally benefited from having a teacher who shares your racial or ethnic background.

District X Example

Key Message 1

Our district's teacher workforce does not come close to reflecting the racial diversity of our student body.



DATA METRIC: While students of color make up 73% of our student body, only 28% of our teacher workforce is comprised of teachers of color. The disparity is largest for Hispanic students, who comprise 37% of our district, while only 9% of teachers are Hispanic.



SOUNDBITE: "The severe lack of racial diversity among teachers should set off immediate alarm bells for our district leaders."



NARRATIVE: Highlight how having a teacher of the same racial background personally impacted you.



DATA METRIC: Other districts with similar racial demographics successfully diversified their workforce by proactively recruiting and retaining more teachers of color.



SOUNDBITE: "To move the needle on educational equity, our district leaders must prioritize diversifying our teacher workforce to be racially and linguistically representative of our student body."



NARRATIVE: Suggest that the district form partnerships with diverse educator prep programs, including those at HBCU's and other minority-serving institutions.

Key Message 2

A racially and linguistically diverse teacher workforce benefits all students, especially students of color.



DATA METRIC: Research shows that students of color with access to same-race teachers are more likely to graduate from high school, attend school regularly, take advanced courses, and aspire to attend college.



SOUNDBITE: "Our actions must align with the research, which shows that having a teacher who looks like you at the front of the classroom matters."



NARRATIVE: Describe how having access to a teacher of the same race impacted a student of color's academic growth and self-perception.

Core Message ("North Star")

Each student has access to strong teaching, which includes having strong, well-supported teachers, who are able to meet their students' distinct needs and provide engaging, culturally relevant, and standards-aligned instruction, so all students can meet high standards and thrive, and the teaching workforce reflects students' racial and linguistic diversity.

Key Message 3

It is urgent that our district diversify our teacher workforce.

Message Triangle Checklist

Does your message triangle do ALL of the following?



Align with the shared values of your audience?

- Shared values allow the conversation to start from a place of agreement.
- This requires knowing your audience first!



Define the impact?

- Do your supporting facts (data metrics, narratives, soundbites) explain how those shared values are being undermined? Clearly outlining the consequences and inequities helps convey a sense of urgency without exaggerating the problem.



Asset-frame the issue?

- Define the scope of the issue in terms of systems and structures, not students, and avoid defining marginalized communities using deficit-based language.



Highlight the benefits?

- After establishing the issue/problem, explain how your solution SUPPORTS your shared values. Explicitly stating the value helps reaffirm tangible outputs your stakeholder cares about.



Include a call to action?

- A positive vision helps your audience realize what's possible and recognize the role they play in sparking the change.

Dismantling Opposition and Avoiding Traps

- **Bad information:** Don't repeat the negative, incorrect, or inflammatory language. Instead, find a positive spin in your response and/or calmly correct misinformation before moving to your positive response.
- **Speculation:** Instead of trying to predict the future, reiterate your key message and the information you do know.
- **Irrelevant Question:** Use a bridging statement to connect back to your key message.



- Question/concern that ...
- Distracts from key issue
 - Introduces dangerous line of opposition
 - Expresses different mission/goal

BRIDGING STATEMENT

Your response, which hits on your key messages in service of core "North Star" message

- "I find the more important issue to be..."
- "Let me emphasize again..."
- "What matters most in this situation is this: ..."
- "What I've said comes down to this..."
- "And that reminds me..."
- "Here's the real problem..."
- "I think it would be more accurate (or correct) to say..."
- "It all boils down to this..."
- "While ___ is important, it's also important to remember that..."
- "Before we leave this subject, I need to add..."



Question/concern that ...

- Distracts from key issue
- Introduces dangerous line of opposition
- Expresses different mission/goal

BRIDGING STATEMENT

Your response hits on your key messages in service of core "North Star" message

We shouldn't be focusing on the race of our district's teachers when we're experiencing such severe teacher shortages.

While the severity of the shortages in our district is important, it's also important to remember that...

Having a diverse teacher workforce has a huge impact on student opportunities and outcomes. In this way, our students of color and students from low-income backgrounds are currently being underserved by our school system, which may also be contributing to increased discipline referral rates, lower graduation rates, and less access to advanced coursework and college- and career-ready educational opportunities. Part of understanding the severity of teacher shortages is also examining the lack of teachers of color in the teaching pipeline and classroom.

We should be prioritizing the quality of a teacher, not just their race.

I think it would be more accurate to recognize that these two things are not differing or opposing aims.

Teaching quality and diversity are intertwined, inseparable aims. For all students, and especially for students of color, having a quality teacher means having a teacher that looks like them. Teachers of color often hold higher expectations of their students of color. In one study, students with Black teachers scored higher in math and reading and had lower rates of chronic absenteeism, on average, than those assigned to White teachers. Black students assigned black teachers self-reported higher levels of self-efficacy, happiness, and engagement in class compared to Black students assigned a White teacher.

We aren't hiring teachers of color because we can't find any teachers of color to hire.

This highlights why we should be taking a more targeted, proactive approach.

Districts can be taking multiple proactive actions to better recruit and engage with prospective teachers of color. Traditional approaches to teacher recruitment have been shown to be less effective at attracting individuals of color than their White peers, so targeted supports — such as partnerships with HBCU's and other minority-serving educator prep programs, as well as innovative teacher pipeline programs, such as Grow Your Own (GYO) models — are necessary.

FAQ's

Why does this sample message triangle work?

- All key messages connect to one another.
- Each key message includes a data metric, soundbite, and narrative element.
- Each element is concise and uses asset-framing.
- Each key message speaks directly to the core message in center of triangle.

What if we don't have access to the information we need for the data metrics?

- Ask your district to provide the data to you.
- Use this message triangle to push for better data transparency.
- In the meantime, rely on national data trends instead.

What makes for an effective narrative element?

- The best story to share is your own!
- But don't get bogged down by the details. Ask yourself what you are trying to communicate, what emotions you want to evoke, and why this specific issue matters to you.

What makes for a compelling sound bite?

- Define your objectives — what do you want others to remember?
- Be concise (aim for 10 seconds or less), clear (avoid jargon, acronyms, technical terms), and catchy (consider using a quick story, anecdote, metaphor, etc. to help illustrate your point.)
- Practice! The best sound bites are authentic but not off the cuff.

What do you mean by asset-framing? How do I do that?

- Data doesn't frame itself ... and is susceptible to misinterpretation.
- This misinterpretation is especially harmful to historically marginalized communities.
- Key messages should highlight the systems and structures within your district that act as barriers to equitable opportunities and outcomes. This "structure-not-student" approach is known as **asset-framing**.
- Asset-framing places the responsibility on leaders and systems, emphasizing system-level action and does not blame or fault students.

How do I use this message triangle?

- Make it the backbone of your messaging efforts.
- Use it to practice, practice, practice articulating the issue.
- Use it to stay focused on key points, especially when the opposition tries to throw you off course.
- Use it alongside the Alliance for Resource Equity [diagnostic tool](#) to more thoroughly assess the state of [teacher quality and diversity](#) in your district, as well as in combination with the [guidebooks](#) to dig deeper into root causes and potential actions.

What is the Alliance for Resource Equity? How do I learn more?

- The Alliance for Resource Equity is a partnership between EdTrust and Education Resource Strategies.
- We focus on 10 key dimensions of resource equity — providing tools and resources to help advocates and districts work together to consider how resources (people, time, and money) are spent and distributed.
- Learn more at www.educationresourceequity.org.

Endnotes

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8. Ibid.
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10. Mehrotra, S., Morgan, I., Socol, A. (2021). "Getting Black Students Better Access to Non-Novice Teachers." The Education Trust. <https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Getting-Black-Students-Better-Access-to-Non-Novice-Teachers-December-2021.pdf>
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Key Question	Data Metric	Data Notes	Data Source
<p>Key Question 2.1 Does each student have access to strong teachers?</p>	<p>% of novice teachers (1-2 years' experience) by school poverty level, by % students of color (or by individual race/ethnicity), and school type (elementary, middle, high).</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Institute/NCES
<p>Key Question 2.2 Does each student have access to teaching practices that are engaging, culturally relevant, and standards-aligned?</p>	<p>% of students with positive perceptions of teaching practices by school poverty level, by % students of color (or by individual race/ethnicity), or school type (elementary, middle, high).</p>	<p>No strong public national data sources. Look to district or state websites for any published student survey data on perceptions of instruction.</p>	<p>State DOE District Report Card</p>
<p>Key Question 2.3 Does the teacher workforce reflect student diversity?</p>	<p>Compare % of students of color by individual subgroup with % of teachers of color by individual subgroup, based on local demographics.</p>	<p>To look across many schools, consider creating a scatterplot. Consider bar charts for comparing district to state, or to compare a small handful of schools</p>	<p>State DOE District Report Card</p>

YOUR DISTRICT:

Key Message 1



DATA METRIC: _____



SOUNDBITE: _____



NARRATIVE: _____



DATA METRIC: _____



SOUNDBITE: _____



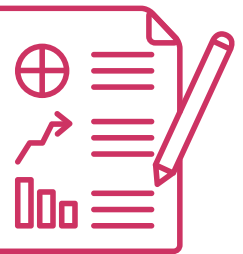
NARRATIVE: _____

Key Message 2

DATA METRIC: _____

SOUNDBITE: _____

NARRATIVE: _____



Core Message
("North Star")

Key Message 3

