



Public schools are more culturally diverse, but the demographics of educators serving these students remains unchanged (Ford, 2012). The state of racial diversity in the education workforce for teachers of color remains dismal. Teachers of color make up 18% of the K-12 teacher workforce. Therefore, mostly white, female and monolingual educators must meet the needs of students from different racial/ethnic and language backgrounds, socioeconomic levels and work with families who differ from them demographically.

Our racially, ethnically and linguistically different (RELD) students experience more school failure on academic measures and higher retention rates than their white peers (Children's Defense Fund, 2020), thus creating a disparity in closing the opportunity gap. Of particular note are African American children in poor families (Children's Defense Fund, 2019) who often begin school behind their peers due to limited and early learning opportunities. They are segregated in high-poverty schools, taught by less effective and experienced teachers (Schott Foundation, 2019), given less access to rigorous coursework, punished more frequently and harshly for similar offenses by white students (Hines & Wilmot, 2018) and expected to underachieve by their teachers. Hostile school environments, exclusionary discipline policies, disproportionality in special education programs (Hines, King & Ford, 2018), school dropout and/or entering the 'preschool-to-prison' pipeline (Walker, 2012) are too familiar outcomes. Poor children, children of color and RELD students with disabilities fare worse in our educational system. Equitable educational disparities support a separate and still unequal system.

As an HBCU, we must prepare preservice teacher candidates to be advocates, teacher leaders and agents of change for social justice. Because of the racialized injustice received so frequently by our Black and Brown students of all socioeconomic levels, it is imperative that they be informed and acquire strategies to help Black and Brown children get home safely when altercations occur with law enforcement. Therefore, we have invited annually BJ Council, owner/founder of You & Five-0, LLC to conduct workshops with our preservice teacher candidates enrolled in the Urban Schools course at North Carolina A&T State University.

*Dr. Cathy Kea,*  
Professor of Special Education  
North Carolina A&T State University

