

# **Black Men Teach - Report to the Minnesota Department of Education**

## **Section 1. Overview / Mission and Purpose**

Educational attainment has a strong correlation to one's lifetime health, wealth, and well-being. Minnesota has one of the nation's highest-rated public school systems, yet some of the country's largest racial and socioeconomic gaps in academic outcomes persist, limiting equitable access to those long-term benefits.

The mission of Black Men Teach (BMT) is to recruit, prepare, place, and retain Black male educators in elementary schools across the Twin Cities and surrounding areas. BMT was established in response to persistent gaps in educational attainment in Minnesota and the role that classroom experiences play in shaping long-term outcomes for Black and brown students.

Educational attainment develops over time as the result of cumulative experiences across a student's academic journey. Students who remain engaged in learning, develop strong literacy and numeracy skills, and experience stable, supportive classroom environments are more likely to persist through secondary school and access postsecondary pathways. When students disengage early, educational attainment becomes increasingly difficult to reach.

Black Men Teach focuses on the elementary years because this is when foundational academic skills are developed and expectations about school are formed. By strengthening access to well-prepared educators during these formative years, BMT seeks to support sustained engagement in education and help ensure that more students remain on a path toward meaningful educational attainment over time.

## **Section 2. Evidence-Based and Program Model**

The relationship between educational attainment and long-term outcomes is well established. Research from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis demonstrates that educational attainment is closely linked to one's lifetime health, earnings, and overall well-being, and that persistent gaps in attainment contribute to long-term disparities in economic and life outcomes in Minnesota.

**(Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis: [Executive Brief - Statewide Crisis: Minnesota's Education Achievement Gaps | Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis](#)))**

Longitudinal research from Johns Hopkins University demonstrates that early classroom experiences with **Black male educators** are associated with meaningful differences in long-term educational attainment for Black students.

Specifically, a 2017 Johns Hopkins University longitudinal study following Black students from elementary school into adulthood found that:

- Black students who had **at least one Black male teacher in elementary school were 13 percent more likely to enroll in college** than similar peers who did not.
- Among **very low-income Black male students**, having **one Black male teacher in elementary school reduced the likelihood of dropping out of high school by 39 percent**.

These findings highlight the role of early classroom experiences with Black male educators in shaping educational persistence and access to postsecondary pathways later in life. (Johns Hopkins University, 2017 - <https://releases.jhu.edu/2017/04/05/with-just-one-black-teacher-black-students-more-likely-to-graduate/>). These findings underscore the importance of sustained access to effective educators who support learning, engagement, and long-term academic pathways.

Guided by this evidence, Black Men Teach examined where Black children are being served in Minnesota's public elementary schools and where classroom experiences are most likely to influence long-term trajectories. This analysis focused on 90+ elementary public elementary schools where at least 40% of students are Black. These schools collectively serve approximately 17,000 students across the state.

### **Section 3. Program Implementation, Scale, and Progress**

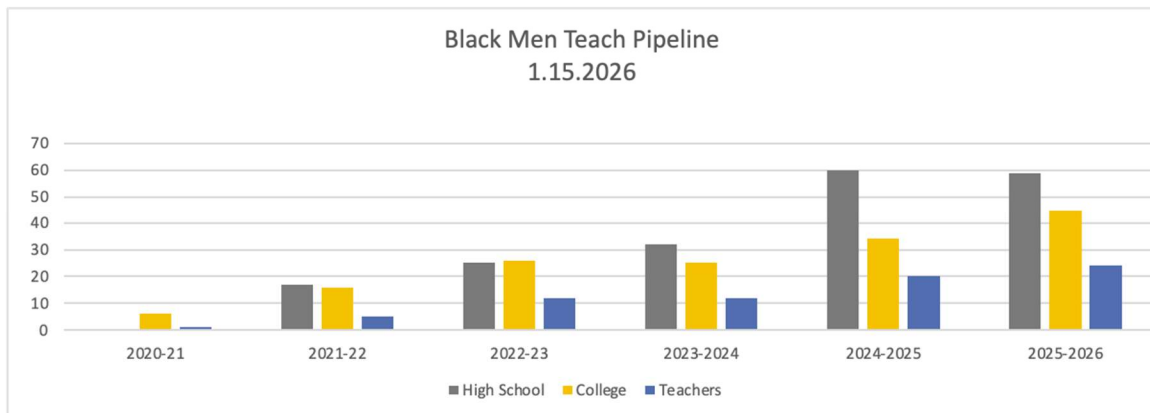
Black Men Teach employs a grow-your-own methodology focused on building a sustainable talent pipeline to strengthen educational attainment by increasing access to effective educators during students' elementary school experience. The pipeline includes multiple entry points, beginning with early exposure to teaching as a viable profession for high school students, followed by preparation and licensure support for college students and career changers, and ongoing professional development, retention supports, and incentives for licensed educators.

Black Men Teach has pulled together 27 partners in an impact coalition known as *Thrive by 2035*. These partners are aligned around a shared, long-term goal: increasing the representation of Black male educators to approximately 20% of

teaching staff across 90+ elementary schools where 40% of the student body identify as African American. Reaching this benchmark would require placing approximately 450 Black male educators in these schools and would support learning outcomes for an estimated 17,000 Black students statewide—a tenfold increase from the current baseline of 45 Black male educators teaching in these schools.

As of the current reporting period, participation and placement across the Black Men Teach pipeline—including fellows supported directly by Black Men Teach as well as those supported through *Thrive by 2035* partner institutions—include:

- 60 Black male high school fellows
- 45 Black male college fellows, including career changers
- 24 licensed Black male classroom fellows



Through *Thrive by 2035*, coalition partners align and coordinate complementary supports for men within the college and educator preparation stages of the pipeline. While the specific supports vary by partner, this coordinated approach strengthens persistence and progression across pathways and is central to achieving the collective goal of reaching 450 Black male educators by 2035.

During the grant period, Black Men Teach advanced this work through *Thrive by 2035*, a statewide impact coalition conceived and launched by Black Men Teach. The coalition brings together elementary schools, educator preparation programs, higher education institutions, and workforce partners across Minnesota around shared goals and common metrics to measure progress over time.

#### **Section 4. Outcomes, Learning, and Ongoing Challenges**

As implementation progressed, Black Men Teach and participating partners monitor progress across recruitment, preparation, licensure, placement, and early-career retention stages, tracking key milestones such as entry into the pipeline, completion of preparation requirements, progress toward licensure, placement in classrooms, and early-career retention.

Black Men Teach also continues to navigate challenges common to educator preparation and workforce development efforts, including the time required to move participants through licensure pathways, financial barriers faced by participants, and capacity constraints within preparation programs and hiring systems. Addressing these challenges requires sustained coordination and long-term investment by the state and philanthropic partners.

#### **Section 5. Core Activities Across the Pipeline**

Black Men Teach carries out a set of coordinated activities across the grow-your-own talent pipeline, aligned with the shared work of the Thrive by 2035 coalition.

##### **High School Fellows**

The High School Fellowship provides early, structured exposure to teaching as a viable and meaningful profession for Black male students through paid internships and classroom-based experiences. In previous years, High School Fellows designed and operated BMT Academy, a Saturday school program serving elementary students. Through this model, Fellows were trained and mentored by licensed Black Men Teach Teaching Fellows, receiving explicit instruction and coaching on foundational teaching skills, including setting classroom expectations, managing student behavior, lesson planning, and delivering engaging instruction. High School Fellows applied these skills by planning and teaching lessons in supervised classroom settings, allowing them to experience the responsibilities and rewards of teaching firsthand.

In this current program year, High School Fellows will visit Black Men Teach partner elementary schools to shadow Teaching Fellows and engage in a scaffolded instructional progression. Participants begin by observing classroom instruction and culture, then gradually move from one-on-one instruction, to small-group facilitation, and ultimately to leading a whole-class lesson as a culminating experience. Throughout this process, Fellows receive ongoing guidance, feedback, and modeling from licensed Teaching Fellows.

In addition to career exposure, Fellows receive academic support and leadership development designed to strengthen college readiness, professional skills, and self-efficacy. Programming emphasizes identity development, relationship-building, and civic leadership, helping participants see themselves as future educators and community leaders. Through cohort-based learning and mentorship, Fellows are supported in navigating key academic and postsecondary transitions, building a strong foundation for continued engagement in the educator pipeline.

## **College Fellows**

The College Fellowship supports undergraduate students and career-changers who are actively pursuing teaching credentials or related educator preparation pathways. Black Men Teach provides targeted preparation and licensure support that reduce barriers and increase persistence, including scholarships, mentoring, and cohort-based professional learning experiences.

A core component of the College Fellowship is leadership coaching. Fellows are paired with leadership coaches - current or former educators, school administrators, and community leaders - who provide consistent, relationship-based support. Coaches work with Fellows to navigate the academic demands of college, strengthen leadership identity and professional skills, and address challenges related to mental health, stress, and belonging.

Through cohort meetings, coaching conversations, and guided reflection, Fellows build the technical skills, resilience, and professional confidence necessary to progress through licensure requirements and transition successfully into the classroom. Together these supports are designed to reduce attrition during preparation, strengthen readiness for teaching roles, and support Fellows' long-term success as educators and leaders in their communities.

## **Teaching Fellows**

Teaching Fellows are licensed educators placed in K-5 classrooms who receive ongoing, retention-focused support during their early years and throughout their time in the profession.

Teaching Fellows receive bi-weekly instructional coaching focused on classroom practice, instructional effectiveness, and professional growth. Coaching is tailored to individual needs and provides consistent feedback, reflection, and skill development as Fellows navigate the demands of full-time teaching.

In addition to instructional support, the Teaching Fellowship included financial sustainability support aimed at reducing common retention barriers. These supports include student loan repayment assistance and homeownership guidance, including access to a \$25,000 down-payment support to help Fellows build long-term stability and roots in the communities they serve.

Fellows are placed within intentionally selected partner schools that demonstrate a commitment to developing a school culture and climate supportive of Black male teachers. Partner schools work collaboratively with Black Men Teach to ensure Fellows are seen, heard and supported in their professional and leadership development.

Across all pipeline stages, Black Men Teach coordinates with schools, educator preparation programs, higher education institutions, and workforce partners to align efforts, reduce duplication, and support participants' progression through the pipeline.

## **Section 6. Testimonial / Story**

My name is David Ayeni, and I've been a part of Black Men Teach for four years, having joined the fellowship in my sophomore year of college. I recently graduated from the University of St. Thomas in May and soon after accepted a position at Monroe Elementary as a 4th-grade teacher. As I transition into the teaching fellowship this year, I can't fully express how impactful the college fellowship has been in preparing me for the classroom.

There was never a time when I lacked support, from the mentors who stood by me in every season, to the much-needed financial support, and the retreats that

continually reminded me of the “WHY” behind how life-changing a Black male teacher can be in the lives of all students.

As I look forward to my first year, what excites me most is the opportunity to work with and be surrounded by the phenomenal community and staff at Monroe. During my student teaching there, I gained insight into how dedicated the entire school is to both excellence and caring for each student’s unique skill set and brilliance. The students are prepared to be challenged, and when engaged in the material, they ask deep and meaningful questions. The staff is committed to teamwork and to making a collective impact that serves each child’s individual needs.

Since the first day I began student teaching, I’ve been offered support through diverse coaching, fellowship with experienced teachers, and the patience of staff members who generously sacrificed their time to educate me on anything I was struggling with. From processing career paths to learning how to first do, then teach, standard algorithms, I’ve often received help and advice far before I even realized I needed it.

I could not be more thankful for that experience and for the opportunity to contribute to the beautiful culture that has had such a tremendous effect on me. This fall will be full of unpredictable moments, and I’m truly excited to continue learning and absorbing wisdom from the staff and coaches around me. I’m eager to grow this year and to be challenged by the adventure of working with growing 9- and 10-year-olds. Above all, I’m ready to build life-changing relationships with each of my students. Whether it happens on the first day of school or takes the entire year, I want every student to know and believe just how brilliant, valuable, and loved they are.