

## WHO WE ARE

By helping Black and Latinx paraeducators and teachers-on-waiver become licensed teachers, Paradigm Shift seeks to build a sustainable path for teacher diversity that increases opportunities for students of color to thrive.

## WHAT WE DO

### MOVEMENT-BUILDING

To create better opportunities for students of color, Paradigm Shift is leading a movement for a diversified teacher workforce in western Massachusetts through information and advocacy, cross-sector collaboration, and anti-racist culture change.

### CAREER PATHWAYS DEVELOPMENT

Having developed “proof of concept” for a paraeducator-to-teacher career pathway, we now actively recruit and support Black and Latinx program participants.

“This program is a necessity for students. To get teachers who have faced adversities parallel to their students’ into the schools—this makes it real.”

Ashley Leger, Paradigm Shift alumna

## Why teacher diversity matters

Educational success for students of color is significantly improved by working with educators who share their backgrounds. For example, research shows that if a Black boy has even one Black teacher in third, fourth, or fifth grade, he is 60% more likely to graduate high school.

In addition to serving as important role models, teachers of color increase students’ positive perceptions of the value of an education, have higher expectations for students of color, and are more likely to develop culturally relevant curricula.

But the vast majority of current teachers throughout the U.S. are white. In Massachusetts, **only 8% of teachers identify as people of color while 42% of students do**. In our four partner districts, the gap is equally or more significant, as the chart below shows.

HOLYOKE	SPRINGFIELD	AMHERST	NORTHAMPTON
Students <b>86%</b> Black & Latinx	Students <b>90%</b> Black & Latinx	Students <b>48%</b> Black & Latinx	Students <b>30%</b> Black & Latinx
Teachers <b>78%</b> White	Teachers <b>79%</b> White	Teachers <b>80%</b> White	Teachers <b>97%</b> White

## Paraeducators are a rich resource for teacher diversity

**Paraeducators are a valuable and invested source of new teachers of color.** Paraeducators, also known as instructional assistants, frequently reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of student populations. They are often multilingual, and connect easily with students and families. They tend to stay in the schools and districts where they are hired because they live in these communities. Paraeducators have indispensable classroom experience and have already acquired effective practices from teachers and their own experiences.

## Why we support career pathways from paraeducator to teacher

**Paraeducators work closely with students who struggle socially, emotionally, or academically.** These experiences strengthen their passion and skill for helping all children reach their full potential. Notably, two-thirds of Paradigm Shift participants pursue licenses in special education, a designated high-need licensure in Massachusetts.

**Paraeducators may have never considered a teaching career.** Many paraeducators have been ill-served by traditional one-size-fits-all K-12 systems that failed to represent their own cultural experiences and strengths.

**Paraeducators often experience financial and logistical impediments as they navigate the licensure process.** In addition to serving in underpaid positions, paraeducators are often juggling multiple professional and personal responsibilities.

## What we've achieved thus far

**Since 2018, Paradigm Shift has built momentum in diversifying the teacher workforce.**

- Provided financial, mentoring, and test preparation support for more than 50 Paradigm Shift participants.
- Helped 120 administrators across our four districts to create more equitable, inclusive, and actively anti-racist workplaces that can retain and nourish a diverse teaching staff.
- Influenced regional and statewide conversations about diversification.

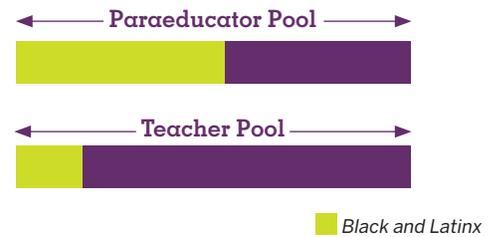
**In just two years, we have increased the number of teachers of color in our partner school districts.**

- Four Paradigm Shift participants have obtained licenses with a master's degree and are teaching as fully qualified educators.
- Thirty-three more participants are progressing toward completion; more than half of these have been promoted as teachers-on-waiver, while their graduate coursework and licensure completion are in progress.

## We're poised to expand our impact

Paradigm Shift is committed to fulfilling the need for talented, dedicated teachers who share their students' backgrounds. We have made significant progress, but we can and must go even further to enable both paraeducators and students of color to realize their dreams.

**Please join our efforts.**



“ Paradigm Shift gives us a way to support paraeducators. When I interview I ask, ‘Where do you see yourself five years from now?’ Today I say, ‘We have a program that can help you become a teacher.’ ”

Steven Moguel, Principal, Holyoke Public Schools

### THE PANDEMIC MAKES OUR WORK EVEN MORE CRITICAL

COVID-19 disproportionately affects Black and Latinx communities. If we do not tackle systemic racism in education, already marginalized students will fall even further behind their peers. Additionally, pandemic-related changes to education may result in a significant number of teacher vacancies, creating an opportunity to bring many new committed teachers from under-represented groups into the field.

To date, we have enjoyed financial support from the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts' Innovation Fund; the Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation; the Beveridge Family Foundation; Five Colleges, Inc.; and, through our partner districts, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.