

This publication is provided as a companion document to Episode 1 of the Inspire and Impact video series, which is produced as part of the Arkansas Department of Education's Teach Arkansas campaign.

## EPISODE PROFILE: MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT

Google the phrase “recruiting African-American teachers,” and almost instantly, the screen will be filled with links to articles, studies, and commentaries on the topic. Developing successful strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers, regardless of race or gender, is a topic that many states including, Arkansas, have grappled with for a number of years.

A 2017 *Washington Post* article on the report [A Quarter Century of Changes in the Elementary and Secondary Teaching Force: From 1987 to 2012](#) noted that the number of minority teachers more than doubled in the United States over a 25-year period, but minority teachers still represent less than 20 percent of the country's elementary and secondary school teaching force. The data for the minority male teaching population shows even smaller numbers. About two percent of public school teachers in America are African-American males, and two percent are Hispanic males.

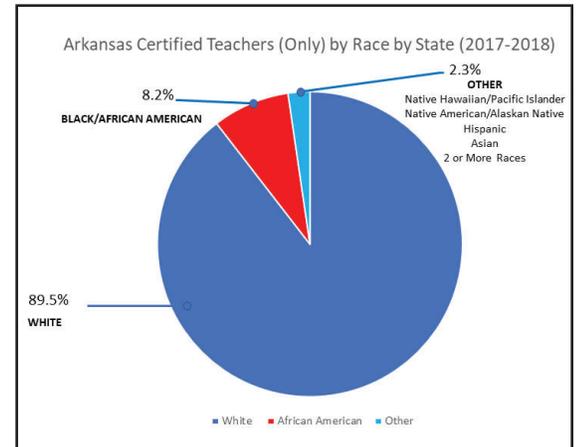
These trends are reflected in Arkansas' teacher workforce numbers. In the 2017-2018 school year, there were 2,716 African-American certified teachers, which comprised a little more than eight percent of the state's 33,228 certified teaching workforce. White certified teachers, on the other hand, comprised

nearly 90 percent, or 29,716, of the certified teaching workforce for the same year.

Why is it important to recruit minority teachers? Research has found that minority students benefit from having teachers who look like them, and a diverse teaching staff benefits the entire school community.

Arkansas education leaders have long recognized the need to attract and retain a diverse teacher workforce. This year, the [Arkansas Department of Education](#) (ADE) established the [Teach Arkansas campaign](#), an initiative to address teacher recruitment and retention. The campaign's longterm goals are to:

- Increase the number of candidates entering Arkansas educator preparation programs by 20 percent in 5 years
- Increase the number of novice teachers in Arkansas public schools by 10 percent in 5 years
- Decrease the Arkansas teacher attrition rate by 15 percent in 5 years
- Increase the number of teachers re-entering the teaching profession in Arkansas by 5 percent in 5 years



- Increase the number of minority teachers in public schools by 25 percent in 5 years

“Successfully recruiting highly motivated and committed people into the teaching profession is vital to the future of our public schools. Helping students learn, grow and achieve every day can be very challenging and demanding, but it can also be inspiring, fulfilling and a positive experience,” said Jeff Dyer, program advisor for ADE's Teacher Recruitment and Retention Office.

For more information, email Dyer at [jeff.dyer@arkansas.gov](mailto:jeff.dyer@arkansas.gov), or call him at 501-682-6349.

Follow **#TeachArkansas** and **#TeachersInspireAR** on social media.



## **EDUCATOR PROFILE: ANTHONY ALEXANDER**

An engaging smile and a firm, friendly handshake are the two things anyone would note the first time they meet Anthony Alexander. Start a conversation about teaching and what influenced him to become a teacher, and his passion and commitment to students are difficult to ignore.

Alexander, 32, is an instructor in the Alternative Learning Environment (ALE) program at J.A. Fair High School in the Little Rock School District. His forearms are covered with intricate and interesting tattoos, and his ponytail is pulled tightly to the back of his head. It is easy to understand why his appearance defies the labels usually associated with prospective teachers.

He attributes the influence of wanting to become a teacher to one of his elementary school teachers, who was a black male. He also counts Dr. Jeremy Owoh, superintendent at the Pine Bluff School District, as one of his mentors. A teacher can have a direct and lasting impact on students and communities, Alexander said.

"You have no idea the impact that you can have on your community alone, just by helping one student. You may change his life because without that teacher that helped me when I was younger and without Dr. Owoh, I wouldn't be here today," Alexander said.

He began his career in the district as a computer lab instructor but left the district to explore other job opportunities. The pursuit led him to a desk job, which he discovered was not as rewarding as working with students.

"I was miserable. I felt like I was doing nothing with my life. I was just punching the clock and not serving a purpose," Alexander said.

After a year and a half away from teaching, he returned to the district. "Being a teacher is everything to me," Alexander said. "I have a purpose here. I serve a purpose. And ultimately, I make a difference in my community." A senior at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Alexander is set to graduate in December of this year.

He plays international rugby for a USA South team and is a single father to a 10-year-old son, A.J. His son has a slight hearing disability, so twice a week Alexander takes him to regular



**Anthony Alexander, an Alternative Learning Environment (ALE) instructor at J.A. Fair High School in the Little Rock School District, discusses his commitment to becoming a licensed Arkansas teacher.**

appointments with a speech therapist. Even so, Alexander explains he uses the experience to stress the importance of learning to his own student. "I really don't believe in disabilities because anybody can learn. No matter what level you're on," he said. "I make sure that I tell my son that just because you have a disability doesn't make you disabled. You can learn."

Alexander encourages young people to consider becoming teachers. "We need teachers, just like we need doctors and just like we need officers. It all starts with us. Kids don't really know what they want to be without influences from teachers," he said.