

our view

# Correcting lack of diversity

Carroll County Public Schools' diversity problem among staff is nothing new. Staff in the school system's Human Resources Department and members of the Board of Education have publicly stated a desire to increase minority hires in its workforce, particularly related to classroom teachers.

Yet, increased efforts have yet to yield any tangible results. Data presented to the Board of Education last month indicated that of the 137 teachers hired by CCPS from October 2016 to August 2017, just four were minorities — two Asian, one black, one Indian. That's the same number of minority educators that were hired the year before, and from a smaller pool of total teachers hired. Five minority candidates were also offered jobs in the past year, but declined.

When considering 31 people in total declined jobs with CCPS this past year, that means just 5.4 percent of total jobs offered were to minority candidates.

In 2016, minorities made up just a touch over 4 percent of all CCPS staff, according to data from the Maryland State Department of Education. Carroll's entire population is roughly 92 percent white, according to U.S. Census data, but the student population of the county's public schools is about 14 percent minority and growing.

To be clear, this isn't exclusively a Carroll County problem. Statistics show that about 82 percent of educators nationwide are white and some studies indicate the pool of new educators isn't as diverse as the nation as a whole, meaning getting teacher demographics to mirror those of the local community or the student population would be difficult anywhere.

Still, improving the ratios is a worthwhile endeavor. There is overwhelming evidence that all students benefit from having nonwhite teachers. The U.S. Department of Education's document "The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce," notes that minority teachers are positive role models in breaking down negative stereotypes and preparing students to live and work in a multiracial society. There is also evidence that "teachers of color contribute to improved academic outcomes while serving as strong role models" for minority students, and can help close the achievement gap.

All of these are good reasons that CCPS should continue to make hiring more minority educators a priority. However, the school system's approach to hiring must change if it wants to meet its goals.

While not a knock on the quality or diversity of students from colleges Carroll traditionally recruits from, hiring managers should look to expand the number of schools they work with to recruit teachers, including historically black colleges like

Coppin, Morgan and Bowie state universities. They should also continue to foster partnerships with the NAACP, and groups like the National Alliance of Black School Educators and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.

Knowing the current financial plight of the school system, it seems unlikely it will enter into any expensive partnerships, like the Teachers for Tomorrow alliance between Howard County Public Schools and McDaniel College in Westminster, however perhaps it can seek a partner with some organizations that can help fund scholarships for minority CCPS students to attend college with promises of future employment.

None of this will be easy, but if CCPS truly wants to improve the diversity of its workforce and teaching staff, it has to come up with more creative ways to recruit and offer some incentive to minority teachers to come here.