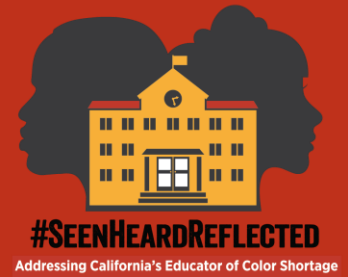


# BRIGHT SPOT FROM THE FIELD



## Compton Male Teacher of Color Network

Compton Unified School District (CUSD) serves nearly 23,000 students across 36 school sites. A majority of the student population is Latinx (79 percent), 18 percent are Black, and less than one percent are White, Asian American, or Pacific Islander.<sup>1</sup> Since Dr. Darin Brawley took the helm as Superintendent in 2012, the district has consistently demonstrated gains<sup>2</sup> for all student groups on state assessments, increased graduation rates, increased number of graduates meeting a-g requirements, and reduced chronic absenteeism. Dr. Brawley says Compton teachers are at the heart of that success. Staying true to its mission to foster “an environment that encourages leaders and teachers to be visionary, innovative, and accountable for the achievement of all students,” Compton Unified School District has made a targeted effort to retain male teachers of color through the Compton Male Teacher of Color Network (CMTCN).

The network was launched in 2018, with funding from the California Community Foundation. The effort is led by Dr. Travis Bristol, Assistant Professor at the University of California, Berkeley; Dr. John Reveles, Professor at Cal State Northridge (CSUN); Dr. Shari Tarver-Behring, Dean of CSUN's College of Education; and Dr. Blain Watson, former Principal at Dominguez High School at CUSD. The CMTCN was created to help educators and school leaders to respond to the unique needs of male teachers of color by affirming teachers' humanity and racial identity, reducing isolation between teachers, increasing collaboration, and empowering teachers to take on leadership roles within the district and their schools. Now in its third year, the CMTCN has grown from eight to 16 teachers and administrators across three schools in CUSD: Longfellow Elementary School, Whaley Middle School, and Dominguez High School. This community of practice breaks down silos as academics and practitioners come together to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Participation is completely voluntary, and teachers are compensated for their time. Founding members of the network receive stipends, while new recruits to the program are paid through their school site's professional development budget. CMTCN plans to expand its reach to other schools in the district and have teachers serve as co-creators and facilitators of session programming.

<sup>1</sup> Compton Unified Report (19-73437). Enrollment Multi-Year Summary by Ethnicity, 2018-2019. California Department of Education (CDE).

<https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensus/EnrEthYears.aspx?cds=1973437&aggllevel=district&year=2018-19>

<sup>2</sup> District Performance Review: Compton Unified School District. California School Dashboard, 2017-2019. CDE. <https://www.caschooldashboard.org/reports/1973437000000/2019>

“Working alongside school site leaders and seeing them take a learner's stance has greatly strengthened the trust between administration and teachers.”

- BRANDON CONTRERAS,  
TEACHER, DOMINGUEZ  
HIGH SCHOOL



“

Hearing the stories [from mentors equips me with effective teaching and classroom management strategies and] motivates me to continue being a role model for my students.”

**- ANGEL GONZALEZ, 2<sup>ND</sup>-  
YEAR SPANISH TEACHER,  
DOMINGUEZ HIGH SCHOOL**

Every other month, teachers and administrators meet on a Saturday for a full day of fellowship, social and emotional support, and professional learning. Participants engage in discussions of race, masculinity, life outside of work, and societal issues that impact their students’ education.

On the off months, participants conduct classroom visits to observe their colleagues and provide feedback. Joaquín Wong, a 20-year veteran teacher at Dominguez High School, appreciates this space because of the freedom to “say things as they are” and interact with colleagues in an informal setting. Before joining CMTCN, Joaquín recalls operating as an “island,” but now he has become more social with his colleagues, knowing he has a professional and personal support network.

A major component to this network’s success is the explicit attention to participants’ social-emotional wellbeing. These norms allow teachers and administrators to be vulnerable and build trust with one another. Another key element is the Dilemma of Practice, whereby a facilitator helps a participant work through a challenge they are experiencing using the [Issaquah Protocol](#): The presenter shares their dilemma while the facilitator guides participants to listen intently and ask clarifying and probing questions that encourage reflection. At the end, the group provides suggestions and the presenter shares reflections and concrete next steps. This model affirms and empowers teachers to trust the expertise in the room, gives them the confidence to identify solutions when a professional challenge is presented, and enables them to identify the systems that are missing to support students.

CMTCN has improved retention rates for both experienced and new male teachers of color. As CMTCN enters its third year, Dr. Bristol hopes the program will become a model for increasing the capacity for learning throughout the district and creating more spaces across the state for teachers of color to get targeted support. To do that, districts must first “identify and acknowledge that there is a challenge with retaining male teachers,” says Micah Ali, CUSD’s School Board President. Though he recognizes other districts may face economic and time constraints in creating networks like CMTCN, he believes that “once district leaders are committed to the cause, all else (resources) will follow.”

