



# TRANSPARENCY AND TRENDS: TEACH PLUS TEACHER LEADERS ON CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS OF COLOR IN NEW MEXICO

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## INTRODUCTION

Studies consistently show that teachers of color matter for all students, and especially for students of color. Yet, the proportion of teachers of color in the workforce continues to lag far behind the share of students of color in our schools: Nationally, 51 percent of students in U.S. public schools are students of color, but just 20 percent of teachers are teachers of color. Teachers of color are also leaving the workforce at a higher rate than white teachers.<sup>1</sup> A new report from Teach Plus and The Education Trust, *If You Listen, We Will Stay: Why Teachers of Color Leave and How to Disrupt Teacher Turnover*, highlights how schools struggle to retain faculty of color but also points to practices and solutions that, if enacted, could help remedy the lack of diversity in our schools.<sup>2</sup>

In the report, Teach Plus and The Education Trust identify promising solutions for school, district, and state leaders to help recruit and perhaps more importantly, retain teachers of color: Changing schools' cultures in ways that align with the goals and values of the teachers; finding ways to affirm teachers' racial identity; supporting teachers so they have the space to take initiative and advocate on students' behalf; placing a premium on relationships, mentoring, and pathways to leadership; and prioritizing the hiring and placement of cohorts of teachers of color to reduce isolation. The report also calls on district and state leaders to collect and disaggregate data by race and ethnicity on teacher recruitment, hiring, and retention.

While the report examines national trends, in New Mexico information about the diversity of the profession is difficult to obtain. As current New Mexico teachers and Teach Plus New Mexico Teaching Policy Fellows, we believe that implementing the recommendations the report puts forth is important to our students' and schools' success. As part of our work in the Teach Plus Fellowship, we wanted to gain a deeper understanding of how students of color in our state can be better served in our education system by a more diverse educator workforce.



## IN THIS BRIEF WE:

- Examine the reasons why a diverse teaching workforce is important to New Mexico;
- Present high-level data on our current workforce;
- Share statewide examples of what schools and districts are doing to diversify their teaching faculty, and;
- Present recommendations on what the state can do to further support school districts in engaging faculty of color.

To learn what and how New Mexico can better recruit, support, and retain teachers of color, we conducted secondary research on what the literature says about improving district and state practices and performed primary research using data collected from New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) and through interviews of several of the state's district-level administrators. Drawing on the existing research and literature on recruiting, supporting, and retaining teachers of color coupled with our analysis of New Mexico's student and educator demographics, we learned the following:

<p><b>Finding 1.</b></p> <p>Data on teacher demographics, to say nothing about data highlighting teacher hiring or retention, is not easily accessible, organized, tracked, or transparent.</p>	<p><b>Finding 2.</b></p> <p>The diversity of New Mexico's teachers does not well-reflect the students they serve. However, while this gap at the state level has persisted over the past three years, there are some school districts that have made progress towards closing this gap.</p>	<p><b>Finding 3.</b></p> <p>There is a gap not only in representation between the teachers of color and White teachers in schools across the state but among New Mexico's highest tier of teachers, those with a level 3 licensure.</p>
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Our state's diverse culture calls for New Mexico to pay more attention to the diversity of our teaching force. Unfortunately, our state is not sufficiently focused on this important topic. We believe that in order to make this an area of focus, we must take a closer look at the data each year, tracking trends, celebrating improvements, and being transparent about our efforts. The recommendations below offer concrete steps which, if enacted, will help to propel forward New Mexico's efforts to recruit, support, and retain more teachers of color.

<p><b>Recommendation 1.</b></p> <p>Complete and disseminate an annual landscape analysis of the state's student, teacher, and administrator racial data.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 2.</b></p> <p>Spotlight successful districts in an annual report to acknowledge their work and share best practices.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 3.</b></p> <p>Increase transparency and understanding of data.</p>
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## WHY IS TEACHER DIVERSITY IMPORTANT?

On July 20, 2018, Judge Sarah Singleton ruled in *Martínez/Yazzie v. State of New Mexico* that New Mexico failed in its obligation to provide sufficient education for its students, especially at-risk students, including those coming from low-income households, who identify as Native American, and students who receive English language learner (ELL) or special education services.<sup>3</sup> What is particularly pertinent is that many students identified in this ruling are students of color. It's pertinent because there is substantial evidence that students of color do better on a variety of academic outcomes if they are taught by teachers of color.<sup>4</sup>

Teacher diversity is an area that can be controversial in nature if not completely understood. Since it requires modifying hiring practices, some may question if intervention is even necessary. The driving force behind systemic change should always be the positive impact on students, and existing research supports this outcome. A report from the Learning Policy Institute identified the benefits for students of having diverse teachers as “higher test scores, higher graduation rates, lower dropout rates, lower suspension rates, and more interest in post-secondary education.”<sup>5</sup>

Cultures come with specific beliefs related to motivation and education that often go unsaid and underlie processes and dynamics within the classroom. Teachers who share in these cultures will also share in these beliefs, and can tap into this compatibility in order to further learning. Ingersoll & May attested to this in their research when they stated that “teachers are likely to have ‘insider knowledge’ due to similar life experiences.”<sup>6</sup> These experiences can include oppression and systemic challenges that students must confront on a daily basis, otherwise these students can feel alone in their experiences. It is important that teachers are able to address these barriers and in 2018, Carver-Thomas stated that “teachers of color are also more likely to talk about bias and racism in their classrooms.”<sup>7</sup>

The benefits of a diverse teaching force are seen across teacher racial lines. Research shows that White teachers are “better able to engage in intentional culturally responsive teaching” than teachers who were in less diverse schools.<sup>8</sup> Diverse educational settings offer opportunities for both students and teachers to learn and engage beyond standard curriculum. Engaging in culturally responsive dialogue benefits White students as well, who will have an opportunity to gain a wider perspective of the world and “offer valuable insight to students from different backgrounds.”<sup>9</sup>

*“These are profound findings and critical to the work we do moving forward as a state agency. Importantly, our New Mexico School Spotlight Dashboard aims to bring much of this data to light. The ability to track educator demographics as well, and look at this data alongside other indicators of school health including growth and proficiency data, graduation rates, attendance rates, and disciplinary data will be incredibly meaningful.”*

— Dr. Gwen Warniment, Deputy Secretary, NMPED



# FINDINGS

**Finding 1.** Data on teacher demographics, to say nothing about data highlighting teacher hiring or retention, is not easily accessible, organized, tracked, or transparent.

Part of the teacher diversity issue is that the data regarding the racial and ethnic diversity gap is not easily accessible or readily available to school district administrators who develop recruiting and hiring practices. Demographic information about school districts is collected by NMPED and this information can be requested from the department. Unfortunately, even requesting the data from NMPED required a request to inspect public records (IPRA), which can make the process intimidating to complete. When received, the demographic data is provided in a spreadsheet where each district's student, teacher, and administrator diversity is difficult to translate and not presented in a user-friendly format. Moreover, the data is organized in a "snapshot" of student and teacher demographics at a moment in time and does not track the retention or how long a teacher stays in a school or district over time.

**Finding 2.** The diversity of New Mexico's teachers does not well-reflect the students they serve. However, while this gap at the state level has persisted over the past three years, there are some school districts that have made progress towards closing this gap.

To more fully understand the demographic makeup of our students, teachers, and leaders, we requested data from the NMPED. We organized the data to help us identify trends over time, populations of different groups, "spotlight" areas, and areas needing specific attention. For the purposes of this brief, we define 'students of color' or 'teachers of color' as those individuals who identify as American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian-American, Black or African American, Hispanic, Multiracial, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander.

During the 2018-2019 school year, 77 percent of the student population was made up of students of color and only 41 percent of teachers, and 45 percent of district and school administrators, match the student diversity of the state. New Mexico has made some gains related to the diversity of the teachers and administrators in districts across the state, but a large gap between the diversity of students and school officials remains.

**FIGURE 1: YEARLY AVERAGES FOR STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND ADMINISTRATORS OF COLOR.**

YEAR	STUDENTS OF COLOR PERCENT (#)	TEACHERS OF COLOR PERCENT (#)	SCHOOL & DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS OF COLOR PERCENT (#)
2016-17	77% (337,056)	40% (22,556)	44% (1,460)
2017-18	77% (336,955)	41% (22,001)	44% (1,438)
2018-19	77% (334,349)	41% (21,854)	45% (1,484)



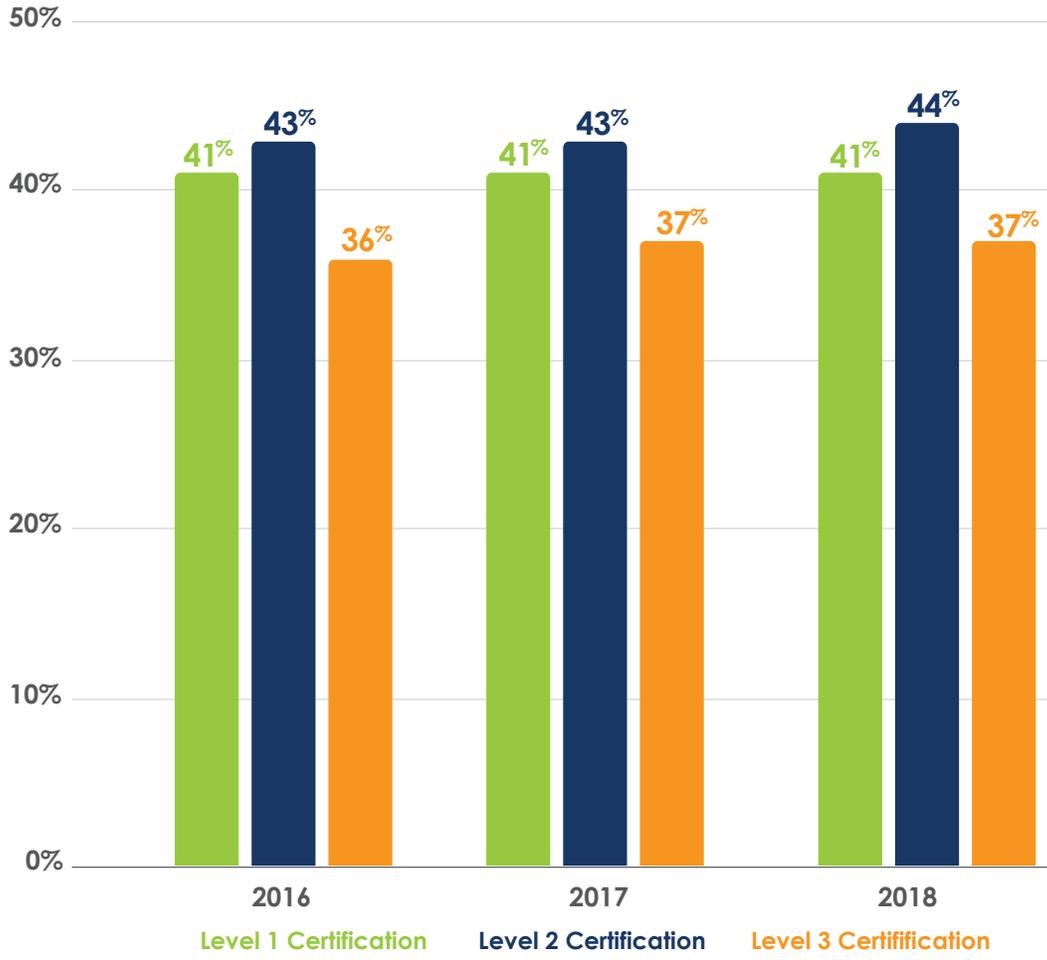
The relative composition of New Mexico's teaching force disaggregated by race and ethnicity has remained stagnant during the last three years, maintaining the gap between the amount of diverse teachers and the amount of diverse learners.

Although the state-level data has not changed drastically over the past three years, some small, mid-sized, and larger districts have made gains in increasing the diversity of their staff.<sup>10</sup> We identified several districts that had particularly promising data regarding the diversity of their faculty and sought to identify the practices and policies in place that they used towards diversifying their staff. These practices can be shared with other New Mexico districts.

**Finding 3.** There is a gap not only in representation between the teachers of color and White teachers in schools across the state but among New Mexico's highest tier of teachers, those with a level 3 licensure.

There are fewer teachers of color with a Level 3 teaching license compared to Level 1 and Level 2 Licensure. Level 3 certification requires either a Master's degree or a National Board Certification. Licensure level also ties directly to teacher salaries, meaning teachers of color are less likely to earn the highest salary level which aligns to a Level 3 Licensure.

**FIGURE 2: PERCENT OF TEACHERS AT EACH LICENSURE LEVEL WHO ARE TEACHERS OF COLOR**





# WHAT ARE NEW MEXICO'S DISTRICTS DOING TO BETTER RECRUIT, SUPPORT, AND RETAIN TEACHERS OF COLOR?

To better understand trends in New Mexico's labor market issues and to begin surfacing examples of what schools and districts are doing to recruit, support, and retain teachers of color, we conducted an analysis of existing student and educator demographic data from the past three school years. In this analysis, we looked at the relative proportion of students, teachers, and administrative staff who identified as being people of color relative to their overall respective populations. We found that two districts, Hobbs and Las Cruces, showed a significant increase in the percentage of teachers of color over the past three academic years.

We conducted brief interviews with leaders in these districts to learn about specific strategies they use to recruit, support, and retain teachers of color and point to further learning the NMPED can do as part of a systematic statewide effort to address the issue of a diverse teaching force.



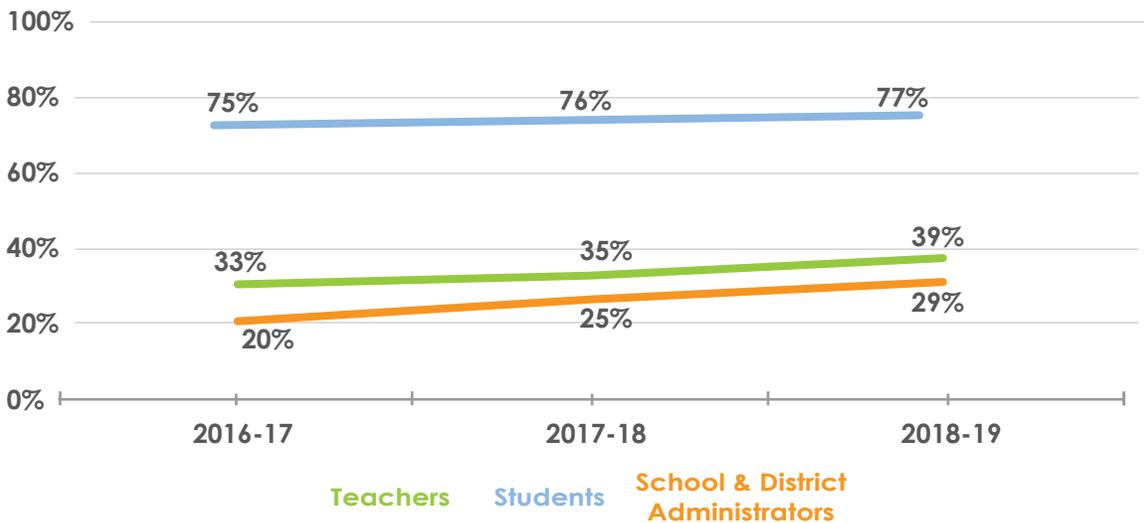


# HOBBS

From 2016 to 2019, the percentage of teachers of color in Hobbs Municipal School District increased by six points. In New Mexico, most large urban school districts are situated close to large universities which help in recruiting new teachers to district classrooms. Hobbs, however, is a large district without the advantage of a nearby university that can serve as a ready supplier of teaching candidates. Adding to the labor market issues for Hobbs is that many families, teachers included, are constantly rotating in and out of the town due to the unpredictable nature of jobs attached to the nearby oil field. This lack of a ready source of new teachers, coupled with the somewhat transient regional population has led Hobbs' leaders to recruit outside of the district and provide culturally relevant systems that support their diverse population.

According to Will Hawkins, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, Hobbs is also in **“...a struggle to find New Mexico natives to work in Hobbs. Because of this, we have had to look outside of New Mexico.”** He added, **“It seems that this may provide Hobbs the opportunity to recruit teachers of color from all over the country.”** To support the diversity of new families moving to Hobbs and the teachers being recruited, **“We provide culturally relevant professional development and encourage our teachers to develop and use curriculum that not only challenges their students but exposes all students to a wide diversity of cultural experiences.”** As the Teach Plus and Education Trust report points out, granting teachers autonomy over their curricula helps foster environments where they feel empowered to serve their students as they see fit, a factor which contributes to teachers persisting in the classroom, particularly teachers of color.

**FIGURE 3: EDUCATOR AND STUDENT DIVERSITY IN HOBBS INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**



*“In order for New Mexico to create solutions, we must first have clear and transparent data so that we can design programs and supports to recruit and retain educators of color that best meet their needs and reduce barriers into the profession.”*

— Amanda Aragon, Executive Director, NewMexicoKidsCan

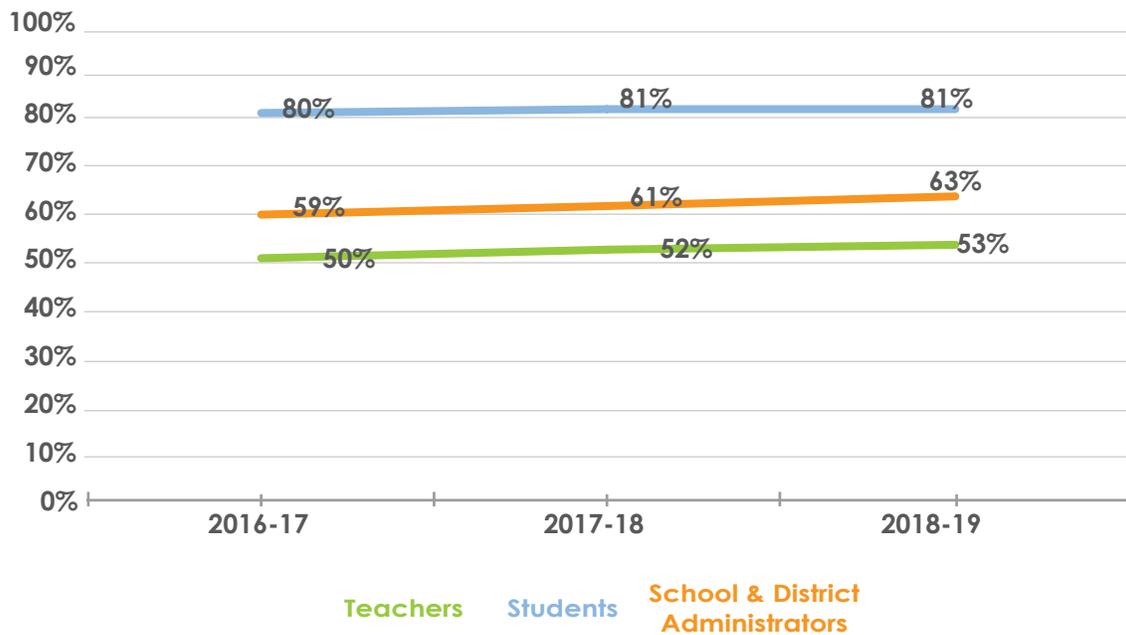


# LAS CRUCES

Las Cruces Public Schools (LCPS) has been actively working to hire teachers of color and has seen an increase in the percentage of teachers of color in the last few years. LCPS relies heavily on social media and hosts a number of job fairs to support recruitment. Specific Las Cruces programs encourage students to include their cultural perspectives to the classroom. One such program is Engaging Latino Communities in Education (ENLACE), which focuses on improving the rate of Latino and Latina students staying in middle and high school and then going to and graduating from institutions of higher learning. ENLACE aids in building partnerships with various stakeholders. The program's motto is "family and community engagement, student-to-student mentoring, establishment of sound policies, development of culturally relevant curricula, professional development for educators, encompass the essence of what ENLACE New Mexico fosters."<sup>11</sup> ENLACE could pave the way to creating open dialogue between teachers and students of color who are interested in becoming teachers.

According to Dr. Roberto Lozano, Associate Superintendent of Equity Innovation and Social Justice: ***"I think our commitment to equity and to offering our teachers the opportunity to work in programs, such as dual language settings, is not as common in other districts. We also work very well with our teachers' union and offer robust professional development opportunities throughout the year and the summer."***

**FIGURE 4: EDUCATOR AND STUDENT DIVERSITY IN LAS CRUCES INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**



*"I have always felt that diversity in any situation is beneficial to all involved. In the world of teachers, diversity is critical. In New Mexico, a broad and diverse pool of teachers can easily improve the delivery of material to our student population. It is encouraging to see efforts to increase diversity."*

— State Representative Alonzo Baldonado



## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1.** Complete and disseminate an annual landscape analysis of the state's student, teacher, and administrator racial data.

While NMPED collects demographic information about school districts, this information is not organized or released to the public in a user-friendly format. In order for the state to begin to close the racial and ethnic diversity gap, educators and other stakeholders must first be able to access and analyze the data. This information should be transparent and easy to read.

We recommend that NMPED release an annual report, a New Mexico Landscape Analysis, on its website. Such report, the first of its kind in New Mexico, would provide vital information about our schools' racial and ethnic representation and allow stakeholders to make recommendations to close this gap. Information in the report should include:

- Comparison of numbers of students of color to teachers and leaders of color across the state and districts;
- Recruitment, loss, and retention of teachers of color over a five-year period;
- Licensure advancement of teachers of color compared to their White counterparts;

**Recommendation 2.** Spotlight successful districts on an annual basis to acknowledge their work and share best practices.

Our analysis of Hobbs and Las Cruces only scratched the surface. Longitudinal data on state, district, and school-level student and educator diversity will point the state towards schools and districts that have demonstrated sustained and meaningful impact towards recruiting, supporting, and retaining teachers of color. We recommend that the state use this data to conduct mixed-methods research to learn from these districts. By acknowledging the districts in the New Mexico Landscape Analysis that have successfully addressed this gap, we can foster a larger culture of embracing and encouraging targeted diversity across all our schools.

**Recommendation 3.** Increase transparency and understanding of data.

An overarching goal for creating and utilizing the New Mexico Landscape Analysis is to increase data transparency. NMPED can best achieve this by making the information user-friendly and visually-appealing. Interactive graphics such as charts and maps would allow users to connect data to geographic locations without having to sift through raw numbers or technical vocabulary.

Placement of this information is important. We recommend that NMPED feature the New Mexico Landscape Analysis prominently on its website as well as on district websites. Individual schools' websites can include visual representations of the Analysis or, at a minimum, directional information and hyperlinks that direct users to the information on NMPED's website. States such as Wisconsin<sup>12</sup>, Kentucky<sup>13</sup>, and Tennessee<sup>14</sup> have started implementing these improvements as part of their data analysis processes as can be seen on their respective websites.



# CONCLUSION

Teachers of color boost the academic performance of students of color, including improved reading and math test scores, improved graduation rates, and increases in aspirations to attend college. Teachers of color have been found to hold higher expectations for students of color. Given the impact of implicit bias on student performance, this is an important benefit that could be maximized when there are more teachers of color in schools. Racially diverse schools boast a multitude of benefits including richer curricular offerings, high test scores, less bias, fewer disciplinary actions, and lower-special education referrals. Both students of color and White students report having positive perceptions of their teachers of color, including viewing schools as more welcoming places.<sup>15</sup>

We believe that current data practices in New Mexico are not sufficient to begin to close the ethno-diversity gap and that a more targeted approach is necessary. Making public New Mexico's statewide data on the diversity of its teaching force will help to raise awareness, hold districts accountable, and create an open dialogue between schools leaders, school districts, and higher education facilities. This transparency is the first critical step to diversify New Mexico's teaching cadre and create a lasting impact on our diverse student population.



*“Teach Plus New Mexico's report opens up a very important dialogue in New Mexico. We need to attract, grow, and retain more teachers. We need more bilingual teachers and teachers trained to teach English learners, and we need our higher education institutions to be standard bearers for a new multicultural approach to preparing the next generation of New Mexican educators and administrators.”*

— Dr. Patricia Jiménez-Latham, Co-chair NMPED Hispanic Education Advisory Council



## Endnotes

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