

Male Educators of Color Fellowship Overview (MECF)

Strategic Focus: Workforce Development | Systems Change | Racial Equity in Education

The Male Educators of Color Fellowship (MECF) is a flagship, statewide initiative of the Sims-Fayola Policy and Advocacy Institute that advances educator equity and transforms the conditions that affect boys and young men of color in Colorado's schools. MECF exists to recruit, support, and retain male educators of color across the career continuum, including student teachers, early-career educators, and aspiring administrators, positioning them as culturally responsive classroom leaders and policy-influencing change agents.

The Fellowship is rooted in the belief that representation matters, and that teacher diversity is a powerful systems change lever that enhances identity affirmation, student engagement, and academic outcomes for boys of color. In partnership with higher education institutions, K through 12 districts, and state agencies like the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative, MECF is designed to change who teaches, how they teach, and how the system supports them.

Why This Fellowship Matters

Across the nation, research has consistently shown that teacher diversity, especially the presence of Black and Brown male educators, has a profound impact on student success, school climate, and educational equity. Yet despite the growing body of evidence, these educators remain significantly underrepresented in classrooms and especially in leadership roles or policy-shaping spaces.

Studies like *The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers* by Gershenson and colleagues show that students of color, especially Black boys, perform better academically and have higher long-term outcomes when taught by educators who reflect their racial identity. Reports by The Education Trust document both the transformative power and systemic challenges faced by educators of color, including racial isolation, lack of support, and institutional bias. Thought leaders like José Luis Vilson have called for bold, new narratives that center the experiences, strengths, and leadership of teachers of color as agents of change.

MECF is Colorado's response to that call. It is not simply a program to retain teachers. It is a statewide, equity-centered initiative designed to affirm identity, develop leadership, improve wellness, and catalyze systemic change through the lived expertise of male educators of color. The research is clear. Representation matters. Wellness matters. Empowering educators as policy partners is essential to building an education system that works for all.

Alignment to Vision 2030

MECF is a core driver of the Sims-Fayola Foundation's Vision 2030 strategy. The Fellowship advances all three pillars of the plan.

Building Power: MECF equips male educators of color with leadership skills grounded in the Sims Framework and elevates their voice in schools and statewide policy arenas.

Shaping Systems: Fellows co-author policy briefs, collaborate with youth through the Fayola Advisory Council, and engage directly with the Sims-Fayola Policy and Advocacy Institute to influence statewide education systems.

Elevating Narratives: The Fellowship amplifies the stories, assets, expertise, and journeys of male educators of color, shifting public narratives about educators, boys, and communities of color.

The Sims Framework Integration

MECF is fully aligned with the Sims Framework: Belief, Structure, Practice, Alignment, and Predictability. Every session includes prompts and learning tasks that connect to these stages so that fellows deepen their understanding of culturally grounded systems design and apply the Framework to their classrooms, leadership, and policy engagement.

Fellowship Structure

The Male Educators of Color Fellowship is a ten-month, statewide virtual learning experience serving ten to fifteen fellows annually. The fellowship combines personal and professional development with systems-level impact, offering a unique opportunity for male educators of color, whether in student teaching, classroom practice, or school leadership, to grow as culturally responsive practitioners and change agents.

Key program elements include monthly virtual development sessions aligned to Vision 2030, a Capstone Impact Project and Legislative Presentation, a co-authored policy brief in partnership with the Sims-Fayola Policy and Advocacy Institute, and peer mentorship and collaborative engagement.

The fellowship experience is organized around five core pillars.

1. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Racial Identity Development

Fellows examine the Sims Framework and learn to center identity, affirmation, and cultural relevance in instructional practices. This pillar strengthens classroom approaches that honor students' lived experiences and interrupt outcome disparities tied to race, gender, and culture.

2. Leadership Development and Mentorship

Fellows receive coaching, mentorship, and thought partnership from seasoned male educators of color, focusing on equity-centered leadership, school-based problem-solving, and professional resilience. Fellows cultivate a network that helps them navigate school systems while developing their own leadership voice.

3. Mental Health, Wellness, and Emotional Resilience

This pillar provides fellows with tools to strengthen their personal well-being and to support the emotional needs of students, particularly boys of color. Fellows explore trauma-informed practice, emotional literacy, racial battle fatigue, and self-care strategies. This pillar aligns with the Sims-Fayola Foundation's Mental Health Division to reinforce wellness as a leadership competency.

4. Policy Engagement and Systems Change

Through the Sims-Fayola Policy and Advocacy Institute, fellows participate in policy brief development, advocacy training, and legislative engagement. They apply their classroom experience to systems reform and contribute to education policy efforts that are community-rooted and equity-focused.

5. Youth, Family, and Community Collaboration

Fellows strengthen relationships with students, families, and community partners. They engage in roundtables, events, and co-creation opportunities that reinforce education as a shared endeavor. Through partnership with the Fayola Advisory Council, fellows participate in youth-adult co-leadership experiences grounded in lived experience and collective problem solving.

The fellowship culminates in a Capstone Showcase and Legislative Briefing where each fellow presents their leadership journey, classroom innovation, and policy contributions to school leaders, elected officials, and community advocates.

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

MECF is evaluated annually in partnership with Brigham and Associates using the Vision 2030 shared measurement framework. Data from fellows, mentors, and students inform continued improvement and track outcomes related to educator retention, student engagement, and policy impact.

Theory of Change

Problem:

Male educators of color, particularly Black, Latino, and Indigenous men, remain underrepresented in Colorado's educator workforce. This lack of representation contributes to diminished student engagement, limited identity affirmation for boys of color, and a lack of equity-informed leadership within schools and systems.

If we:

Recruit and retain male educators of color statewide,
Equip fellows with culturally responsive pedagogy grounded in the Sims Framework,
Provide sustained mentorship, wellness tools, and leadership development,
Integrate policy advocacy and systems-level training, and
Connect fellows to youth voice and community partnerships through the Fayola Advisory Council,

Then we will:

Build a statewide pipeline of equity-minded educators,
Improve academic engagement and identity development for boys and young men of color,
Influence state education policy with classroom insights,
Increase teacher retention especially in high-need communities, and
Position Colorado as a national model for equity-driven educator development.

What Sets MECF Apart

MECF distinguishes itself through its integration of policy engagement, educator wellness, youth partnership, and statewide accessibility.

Policy Engagement as Core Practice:

Fellows are not only developing as educators. They are developing as policy influencers.

Statewide Accessibility:

The virtual structure brings together educators from urban, suburban, and rural communities across Colorado.

Youth-Adult Co-Leadership:

Fellows work directly with youth leaders from the Fayola Advisory Council to co-create solutions.

Embedded Wellness and Identity Development:

Wellness and racial identity development are foundational leadership capacities within the Fellowship.

A Proof Point for Systems Change:

MECF serves as a learning lab and proof point for the Sims-Fayola Policy and Advocacy Institute’s statewide education equity strategy.

Scope and Sequence (10 Months)

Each session is aligned with Vision 2030 and the Sims Framework and includes targeted learning outcomes.

Month	Session Title	Focus Areas
1	Summer Intensive: Scrooge Moments and The Why	Identity exploration, purpose anchoring, introduction to the Sims Framework
2	Teaching While Male	Race and gender identity, microaggressions, bias, racial battle fatigue, navigating identity in schools
3	Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and the Sims Framework	Pedagogy for boys of color, lesson design rooted in affirmation and agency, culturally grounded instructional practice
4	Building Relationships and Wise Feedback	Trust building, relational teaching, identity-safe classrooms, culturally responsive feedback practices
5	Mental Health, Emotional Literacy, and the Educator Role	Emotional resilience, trauma awareness, racial battle fatigue, wellness strategies for educators and boys of color
6	Data, Bias, and Equity Accountability	Data disaggregation, personal bias audit, using equity indicators for instructional decision-making
7	Career Longevity and Wellness	Preventing burnout, building sustainable educator careers, restorative practices for educator wellness
8	Policy, Advocacy, and Educator Voice	Public speaking, testimony preparation, understanding policy processes, using classroom experience for systems impact
9	Peer Leadership and School Culture Change	Coaching peers, shifting school culture, relationship-centered leadership and practice
10	Capstone and Legacy Mapping	Presentation of impact projects, leadership journey mapping, policy recommendations and future planning

Relationship to the Sims-Fayola Policy and Advocacy Institute

MECF is a core strategy of the Institute and contributes directly to Vision 2030.

- It generates policy insights for briefs and statewide campaigns.
- It connects practice to systems change with lived experience as the catalyst.
- It advances the Vision 2030 pillars of Building Power, Shaping Systems, and Elevating Narratives.

Organizational Placement

- The MECF Director reports to the Managing Director of the Policy and Advocacy Institute.
- The Director collaborates with the Managing Director and with the MBK Manager on strategy and evaluation.
- Fellows collaborate with the Fayola Advisory Council to reinforce intergenerational learning and shared leadership.

Strategic Goals by 2030

- Ninety percent year-over-year retention of male educators of color in the Fellowship.
- More than five hundred students reached annually.
- Policy impact on teacher preparation, licensure, and retention statewide.
- Creation of Colorado's first replicable, equity-centered educator fellowship model.

Supporting National Research

1. Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, and Papageorge. The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers.
2. Griffin. Our Stories, Our Struggles, Our Strengths.
3. Ingersoll, May, and Collins. The Demographic Landscape of Teacher Diversity in the U.S.
4. Vilson. This Is Not a Test: A New Narrative on Race, Class, and Education.