

I was a Portland area student and I was in high school when I had my first black teacher, Greg McKelvey, my jazz band instructor. He was incredibly influential on me and my life. I am white and I was given the opportunity to play french horn at his Black church exposing me to a community in Portland and culture I had no idea existed at the time. He also brought in other instructors who were Black from the music world and exposed us to incredible talent and players that were unknown to me. My neighbor and friend who was a Black female student thrived in his class as well. She was given leadership opportunities that inspired me to see a woman filling. She lead our band and was a soloist, something I was use to seeing the (white) boys in my class doing. Looking back I count him as one of my life"s greatest blessings and being a part of his band the most impactful and formative experiences of my time in high school . I wished I had more teachers of color growing up. My single mom struggled with poverty and our economic situation meant we lived in low income apartments and there was much more diversity there than in our SW school district. As a child it meant I associated being poor with communities of color. Having exposure to more BIPOC teachers would have challenged this assumption and would have helped me form a broader worldview. I could write pages about why having more educators of color would have enriched my life, it"s hard to pick any single thread. Humanity, dignity, context, awareness, new ways of seeing, creative thought, critical thinking, all of these are enriched when there is diversity in the room and in the leadership role.