Within Reach:
Racially Diverse School Leadership and the K–12 Educator Pipeline in Los Angeles County

DIVERSITY
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INSTITUTE

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ABOUT THE DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

The Diversity in Leadership Institute (DLI) is a non-profit organization dedicated to increasing the racial diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural competence among charter school and district administrators as a means to increase academic and social outcomes for Black and Latinx students in California. This report comes out of the work from DLI's Charting the Course to Equity Coalition Research working group. The coalition is a powerful network of organizations working towards policy and practice shifts that create more supportive environments for administrators and teachers of color in California's K–12 public schools.

Assocation of California School Administrators

The Education Trust - West

California Charter Schools Association

Families in Action for Quality Schools

Center for Powerful Public Schools

Innovate Public Schools

National Charter Collaborative

Loyola Marmount University, School of Education

Diversity in Leadership Institute

Teach for America Los Angeles

Education Board Partners

United Negro College Fund

Education Leaders of Color

"I am grateful for partners like Diversity in Leadership Institute for analyzing the importance of recruiting and retaining administrators and teachers who represent the students we serve. In collaboration with partners, I authored and the Los Angeles Unified School Board unanimously passed the resolution, "Black Student Excellence through Educator Diversity, Preparation, and Retention," in February 2022 because the data was clear on the difference a Black educator makes in the lives of each of our students. As a result of the resolution, we found that, while LA Unified has an overall proportional representation of Black educators to Black students, there are over 2,000 Black students who attend school without a Black educator and we have lost nearly 100 Black educators each year since 2016. School systems leaders must understand and respond to data such as these so that every child—and especially every Black child, who has historically been the most underserved by all institutions of power —has the highest-quality holistic support required for true preparation in college, career, and life.

– **Tanya Ortiz Franklin**
Los Angeles Unified School District, Board Member

"Race matters, and we know this. Evidence continues to point to the strong relationship between student performance, teacher effectiveness and retention, community engagement, and the diversity of the educator workforce. While the nation continues to experience a gap between the diversity of its student body and its leadership corps, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) changed the playbook in 2022 and worked to intentionally build a culturally responsible Black educator pipeline. The results, which are captured in the new report, "Within Reach: Racially Diverse School Leadership and the K–12 Educator Pipeline in Los Angeles County," are powerful. As a field, we must intentionally and swiftly build and support a more diverse and culturally responsive K–12 leadership corp. We know this is possible because it is already happening here in LA, through the intentional efforts of the LAUSD school board and through partnerships like DLI's with LMU's School of Education. "Within Reach" breaks down how that happened and how this important work can be scaled for greater impact.

– **Michelle D. Young**
Ph.D., Dean and Professor, Loyola Marymount University

We know that to help ensure students of color succeed they need to see educators in their classrooms and campuses that look like them. More importantly, we know all students succeed when they have opportunities to learn and engage with leaders and educators of color. This report provides a pathway for all students to have that access and opportunity.

– **Ana Ponce**
EdD Executive Director, GPSN

LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER AND CEO

Dear Reader:

My PK–12 school experiences always included Black and Brown teachers, counselors, and school leaders. As a Black girl, I never thought there was a limit to what I could accomplish, because everywhere I turned I saw examples of people who looked like me and told me I could be or do anything. Looking back, I realize how profoundly those early experiences impacted the trajectory of my life.

In California, this is not the reality of many of our public school students of color. However, in Los Angeles County and in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), this reality is in reach. Los Angeles County is leading the state when it comes to ethnoracial diversity among educators, driven by the work happening in LAUSD.

In February 2022, the LAUSD Board unanimously passed a resolution affirming its commitment to improving recruitment, preparation, and retention of Black educators, with recommendations for how to address the Black educator pipeline. The district has also set specific goals around diversifying its ranks in the newly released **2022-26 strategic plan**. These commitments are a step in the right direction and have the potential to serve as a model for districts across the state and the country.

Billions of dollars have been invested in public education to address inequities that have only been exacerbated since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and conversations around the importance of developing an ethnoracially diverse educator workforce have intensified across the state. However, more should be done to include an increased and sustained investment in the school leadership pipeline—particularly for educators of color. One of the most important ways to increase and retain a pipeline of educators of color is to ensure that our schools have strong leaders who are culturally responsive and reflect the communities they serve.

This study allows us to take a deeper look at culturally responsive practices of Black and Latinx leaders on five campuses across Los Angeles County. These are leaders who develop equitable school culture with strong instructional leadership and demonstrate higher retention of teachers of color—all while fostering an environment that both centers around student achievement and prioritizes and encourages parent engagement, student voice, and teacher agency.

As you read, please consider what conditions are required to create the type of systems that cultivate, inspire and empower leaders to embody culturally responsive school leadership practices.

I encourage you to think about the role you play or how you might deepen your commitment to increasing ethnoracial diversity and culturally responsive school leadership in your community. California is among the most ethnoracially and linguistically diverse states in the United States. Our population of public school students mirrors that rich diversity, but our educator workforce does not. We have the collective power to change that reality.

Onward,

Laura J. McGowan-Robinson, EdD
Founder & CEO
Diversity in Leadership Institute
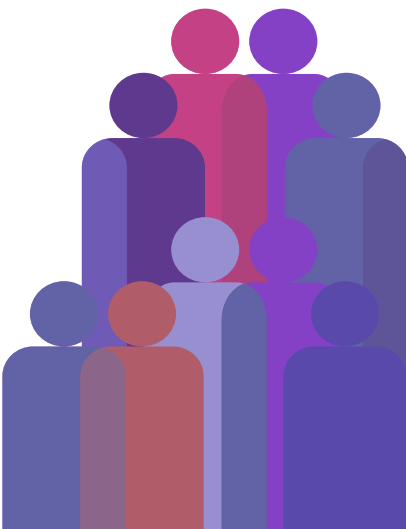
In 2019, 73% of LA County students were Black or Latinx, but

only 50% of teachers

and

48% of administrators

were Black or Latinx.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Los Angeles (LA) County is the largest county in the United States. It is home to 1.5 million school-aged children and 80,800 teachers and administrators across 80 school districts.[1] Although students in LA County bring incredible racial and ethnic diversity to the region, that diversity is not yet fully reflected in the district's teacher and administrator workforce. In 2019, 73% of LA County students were Black or Latinx, but only 50% of teachers and 48% of administrators were Black or Latinx.[2]

Research has shown that administrators play a key role in recruiting and retaining effective teachers, which, in turn, creates more positive learning environments and improves outcomes for students.[3] The impact is especially apparent for administrators of color; teachers of color are more likely to stay at a school site where they share the same race/ethnicity as their principal.[4]

The goal of this research was to better understand the role that administrators of color play in cultivating supportive school climates for teachers of color. To that end, we conducted a mixed-methods study to examine the impact that administrators of color have on teachers and students in schools across the LA region. We found that (1) leaders of color do have an impact on the job satisfaction of teachers of color; (2) teachers of color are more likely to teach in a school with an administrator of color; and (3) teachers of color are more likely to remain in their district if they share an administrator of the same race.

We also identified a set of core practices that leaders of color across LA use to support teachers and students of color at their school sites. The administrators we spoke with:

- Built an **INTENTIONAL SCHOOL CULTURE** and fostered a school environment in which teachers of color were valued and felt a strong sense of purpose.

- Demonstrated a **CLEAR COMMITMENT TO EQUITY** and implemented clear, deliberate, equity-centered practices on campus.

- Set a **CLEAR MISSION AND VISION** and fostered an affirming, school-wide culture.

- Elevated **TEACHER VOICE AND AUTONOMY IN SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING**, honored the opinions of their teachers, and brought staff into conversations as trusted thought partners and leaders.

We hope local leaders will use this report to inform decisions and take steps to push forward policies that create supportive and welcoming environments for teachers of color. We also hope it serves as a local and statewide call to action to increase the diversity of the administrator workforce with the goals of increasing representation in schools, improving school quality for students of color, and improving workplaces and retention for education staff of color.

INTRODUCTION

Los Angeles (LA) County is the largest county in the United States. It is home to 1.5 million school-aged children and 80,800 teachers and administrators across 80 school districts.[5] Students in LA County bring incredible racial and ethnic diversity to the region and the county attracts a racially and ethnically diverse teacher and administrator workforce. In 2019, 73% of LA County students, 50% of teachers, and 48% of administrators were Black or Latinx.[6] Comparatively, 56% of students statewide, outside of LA County, are Black or Latinx and only 20% of teachers and 25% of administrators are Black or Latinx.[7]

The distribution of Black and Latinx teachers and administrators varies widely in districts across LA County.[8] One of the largest drivers of workforce trends is Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Nearly half (45%) of teachers and administrators in LA County are based in LAUSD. In 2022, 82% of LAUSD's students, 55% of teachers, and 67% of administrators were Black or Latinx.[9] [10]

Figure 1: Percent of Black Administrators and Teachers in LAUSD Over Time (2016-17 to 2021-22)
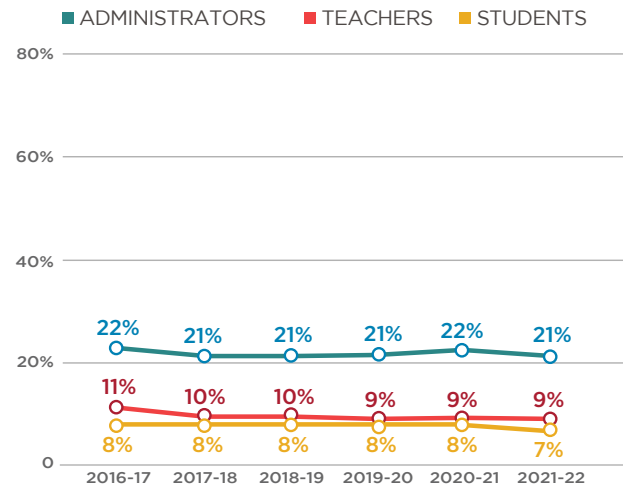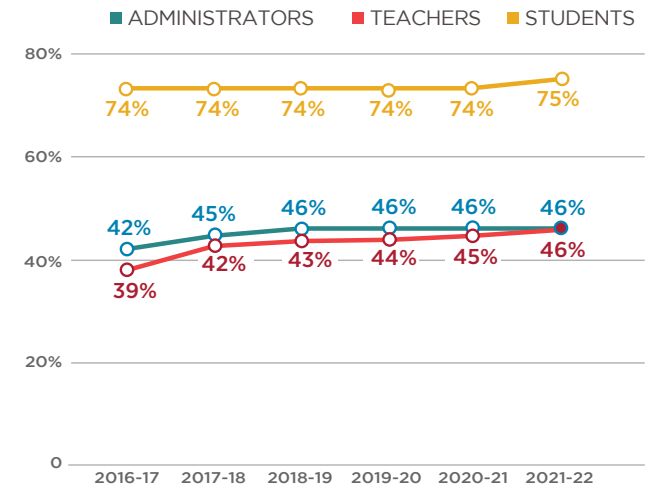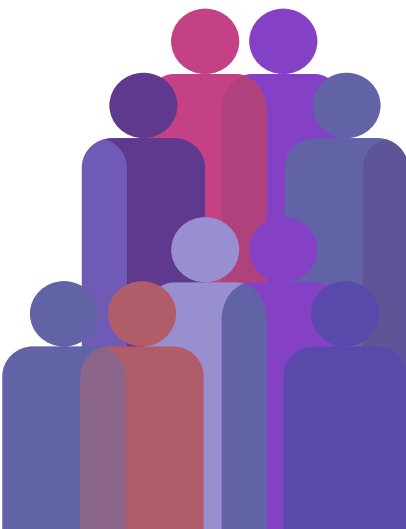

Figure 2: Percent of Latinx Administrators and Teachers in LAUSD Over Time (2016-17 to 2021-22)

Source: Los Angeles Unified School District, Certificated Demographics Tables, Los Angeles Unified Personnel Research & Analysis. https://ca01000043.schoolwires.net/Page/1453

> ### Spotlight on LAUSD and the "Black Student Excellence through Educator Diversity, Preparation, and Retention Resolution"
>
> In January 2022, LAUSD passed the "Black Student Excellence through Educator Diversity, Preparation, and Retention" resolution that required the district to analyze gaps in representation of Black educators and administrators and develop a plan to recruit, prepare, and retain more Black educators across the district. The LAUSD Independent Analysis Unit released the findings from that analysis in May 2022. The report shows some promising trends for Black administrators in LAUSD but highlights the need for continued investment.
>
> In LAUSD, one in five administrators and one in ten teachers are Black. These ratios are higher than the rest of the county and state. Black educators also tend to become administrators at higher rates than their peers. Given the reach of an administrator, districtwide there are more students with a Black administrator than a Black educator; over 90% of Black students attend a school with a Black teacher, Black principal, or both.
>
> Countywide continued investments in teacher diversity like the "Black Student Excellence through Educator Diversity, Preparation, and Retention Resolution" are crucial levers of sustainability to ensure that LAUSD's teacher and administrator workforce continues on this trajectory.

We highlighted diversity trends within LAUSD because of the district's prominent role in driving workforce trends in the county and the fact that the district provided more detailed, up-to-date data. LAUSD has made teacher workforce issues a priority. While there is more work to be done, the district has made notable progress at diversifying its teacher workforce. Between 2016 and 2022, the number of Black and Latinx teachers in the district increased by five percentage points (from 50% to 55%), driven by an increase in the Latinx teacher population. The district's progress in diversifying the administrator workforce has been slightly slower; the number of Black and Latinx principals grew four percentage points (from 64% to 68%) over the same time period.

Research shows that administrators play a key role in recruiting and retaining effective teachers, which, in turn, creates more positive learning environments and improves outcomes for students.[11] The impact is especially apparent for administrators of color. Teachers of color are more likely to stay at a school site where they share the same race/ethnicity as their principal.[12] This is important in the LA context because a recent analysis found that local board districts with the highest concentrations of Black and Latinx students also have the highest concentrations of Black and Latinx teachers and administrators.[13]

The goal of this report is to better understand the role administrators of color have in cultivating supportive school climates for teachers of color. We conducted a mixed-methods study to examine the impact that administrators of color have on teachers and students in schools across Los Angeles County. Our findings identified a set of core practices that leaders of color across LA use to strengthen staffing at their school sites and support teachers and students of color. We hope local leaders will use this report to inform decisions and take steps to push forward policy shifts that create supportive and welcoming environments for teachers of color.
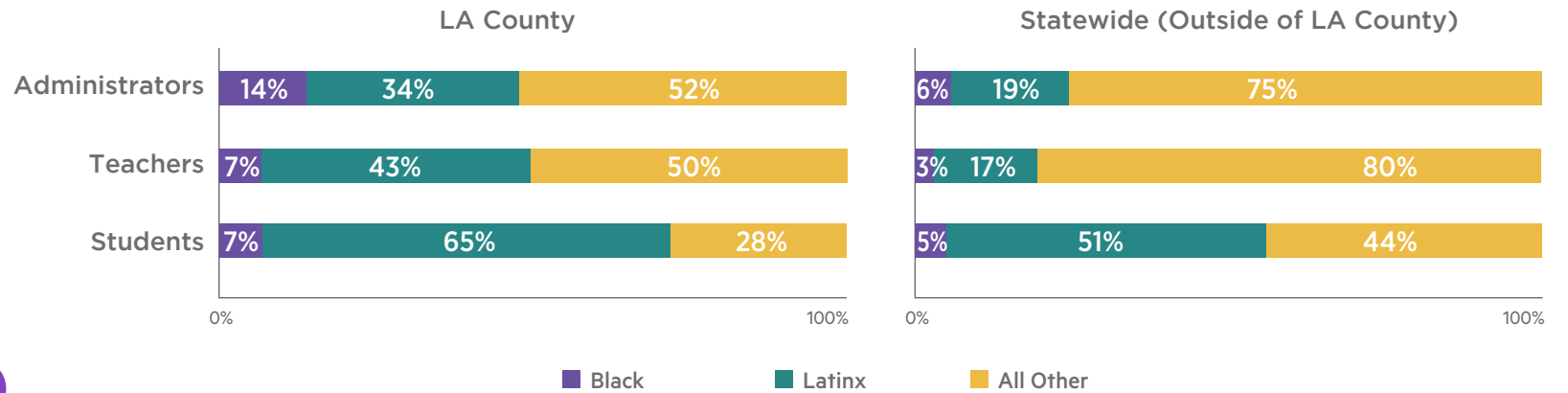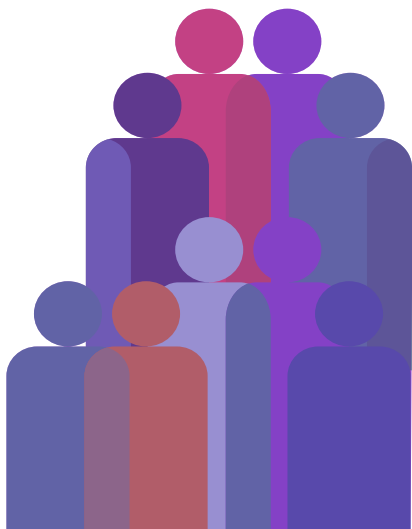
CURRENT STATE OF ADMINISTRATOR DIVERSITY IN LA COUNTY

There are 6,800 administrators in schools across LA County. Together, they make up around one quarter of all administrators in the state of California. Around half (48%) of administrators in LA County are Black or Latinx but nearly three quarters (73%) of students in LA County are Black or Latinx. Of the 80 districts in LA County, 60% have seen an increase in representation of Black and Latinx administrators over the last five years; 40% have seen a decrease in representation of Black and Latinx administrators in the same time period.

Figure 3: Percentage of Black and Latinx Administrators, Teachers, and Students in LA County versus Statewide (2018–19)

LA County

	Black	Latinx	All Other
Administrators	14%	34%	52%
Teachers	7%	43%	50%
Students	7%	65%	28%

Statewide (Outside of LA County)

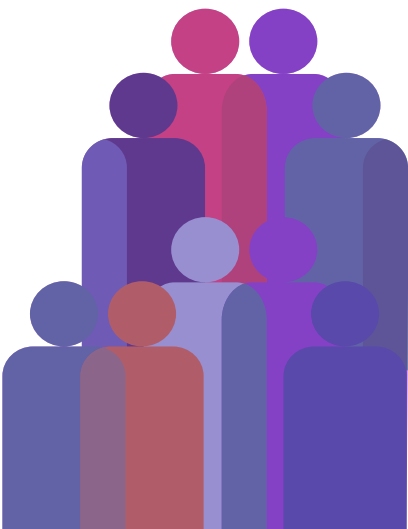|	Black	Latinx	All Other
Administrators	6%	19%	75%
Teachers	3%	17%	80%
Students	5%	51%	44%

■ Black ■ Latinx ■ All Other

Source: California Department of Education, Staffing Files (2018-2019)

In order to understand the impact these shifts have had on outcomes for students and teachers of color, we conducted a series of linear regressions at the state and county levels to analyze the association between leaders of color[14] and school-level outcomes. We controlled for school-level characteristics that influence performance: charter status, parent education, demographics, student mobility, number of years the school has been open, grades served, and urbanicity. We also controlled for teacher effects by including the average age of teachers at a school, the percentage of teachers with a master's degree, and average years of teaching experience. It is important to note that this analysis cannot tell us whether there is a causal relationship between administrators of color and teachers of color retention on school campuses. We cannot say definitively whether having an administrator of color led to more diversity among teachers or if more diverse schools are likely to advance people of color into leadership roles like principalship.

However, the results do show there is a positive relationship between teachers and leaders of color on school sites. When we ran our analysis statewide, we found that schools with a leader of color had, on average, 13 percentage points more teachers of color than those without a leader of color. In other words, schools *led* by an administrator of color were *more* likely to have more diverse teaching staff.
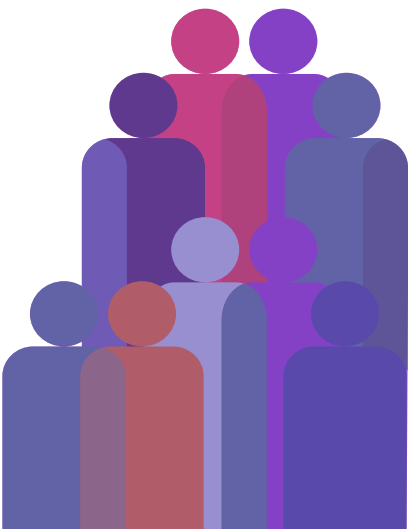
A key question for those seeking to diversify staff is how to not only recruit but also retain teachers of color, who tend to move schools or leave the profession at a higher rate than white teachers (19 percent versus 15 percent).[15] The results around retention in our analysis are more challenging to interpret. Given the lack of available data on school-level retention rates, we used "years in the district" as a proxy for teacher retention. This meant we were unable to account for any school site movement a teacher made within their district. Despite this limitation in how the data are publicly reported, we did find evidence that teachers of color tend to stay slightly longer in their school or district when they have an administrator of the same race. Statewide, Black teachers who taught on a campus led by a Black administrator spent 1.45 more years, on average, in their district or charter school than those who taught at a school with a leader of a different race/ethnicity. Given that teachers of color tend to move schools or leave the profession at a higher rate, an additional year and half of teaching is important progress to note.

We ran our analysis at the LA County level and found similar trends:

- **Teachers of color are more likely to teach at a school with an administrator of color.** On average, schools with a leader of color in LA County had 13 percentage points more teachers of color than those without a leader of color. This held true for both Black and Latinx teachers. Schools with Latinx administrators of color had 11 percentage points more Latinx teachers on campus, and schools with Black administrators had five percentage points more Black teachers.

- **Teachers of color tend to stay in their district slightly longer when they have an administrator of color; especially Black educators in a school with a Black administrator.** Although the results for teachers of color as a whole were not statistically significant[16], there was some evidence to suggest that educators of color were more inclined to stay in their district when they worked at a site with an administrator of the same race. On average, Black educators at schools with a Black administrator in LA County stayed in the district for one additional school year.
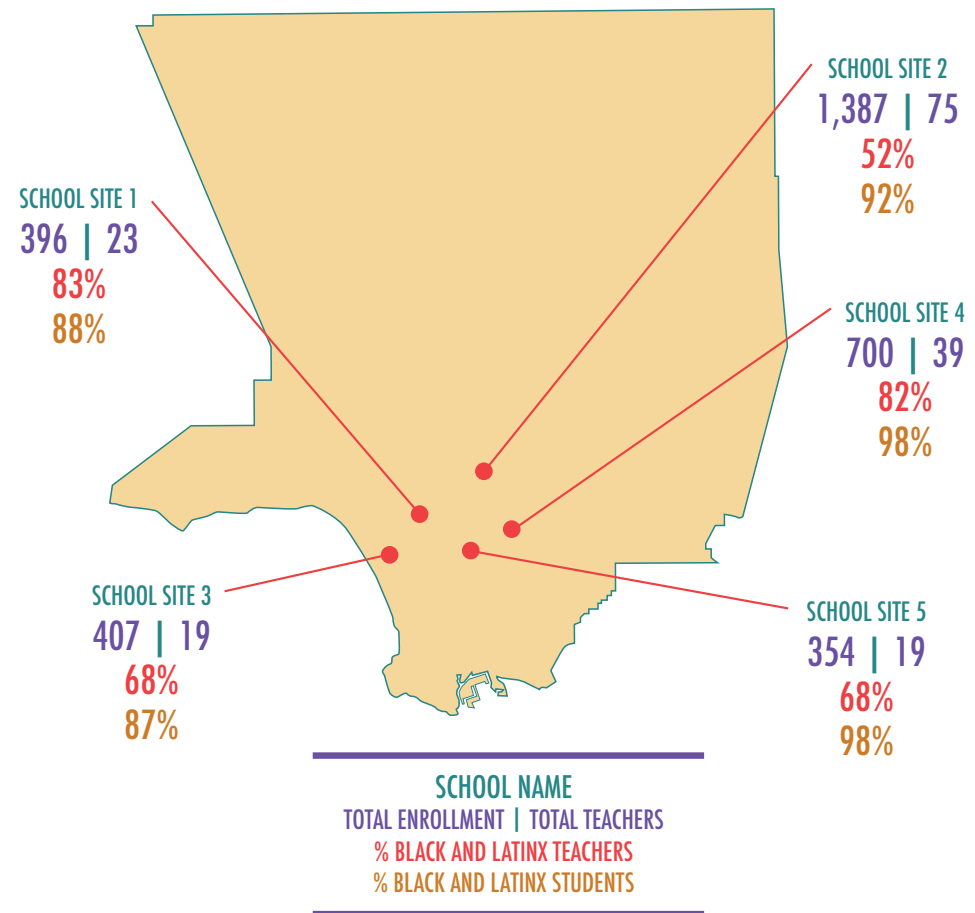
▶ INSIGHTS FROM ADMINISTRATORS OF COLOR

In order to better understand the systems and practices that contributed to increased teacher diversity in schools led by administrators of color, we conducted interviews with the leaders of five LA County school sites led by administrators of color that had high retention rates for teachers of color and a proven track record of student academic success (see Methodology for more details on our approach). We selected schools that met the following criteria: 1) had at least one administrator of color on site; 2) had strong school-level student outcomes; and 3) had high staff retention rates.[17]

Figure 4: Map of School Sites Interviewed with School Demographics in LA County

SCHOOL SITE 2
1,387 | 75
52%
92%

SCHOOL SITE 1
396 | 23
83%
88%

SCHOOL SITE 4
700 | 39
82%
98%

SCHOOL SITE 3
407 | 19
68%
87%

SCHOOL SITE 5
354 | 19
68%
98%

SCHOOL NAME
TOTAL ENROLLMENT | TOTAL TEACHERS
% BLACK AND LATINX TEACHERS
% BLACK AND LATINX STUDENTS

Source: California Department of Education, Staffing and Enrollment Files (2018-2019)

We began with a list of all K–12 public schools in LA County, filtered the list for schools that met a certain set of criteria (see Methodology section for more details on school site selection), and then conducted one-on-one interviews with administrators at five school sites to better understand what systems and structures school leaders had in place that contributed to fostering supportive environments for students and teachers of color.

Those conversations revealed four fundamental practices employed by administrators of color across the LA region that foster environments where teachers of color can thrive.

- Built an **INTENTIONAL SCHOOL CULTURE** and fostered a school environment in which teachers of color felt valued and felt a strong sense of purpose.

- Demonstrated **A CLEAR COMMITMENT TO EQUITY** and implemented clear, deliberate equity-centered practices on campus.

- Set a **CLEAR MISSION AND VISION** and fostered an affirming school-wide culture.

- Elevated **TEACHER VOICE AND AUTONOMY IN SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING**, honored the opinions of their teachers, and brought staff into conversations as trusted thought partners and leaders.

In the next section of the report, we provide a snapshot of each of those practices and the key sub-themes that emerged from our conversations with school leaders.

What is culturally responsive school leadership?

We use the term culturally responsive school leadership throughout this report. This term comes out of the work from Muhammad Khalifa's definition of **culturally responsive school leadership.** The framework sets out four key strands of effective, culturally responsive school leadership: critical self-reflection; development of culturally responsive teachers; culturally responsive and inclusive school environments; and authentic parent and family engagement. The Diversity in Leadership Institute applies this framework throughout its work with school leaders.

INTENTIONAL SCHOOL CULTURE

The first key finding was that administrators of color who take time to foster an **INTENTIONAL SCHOOL CULTURE** have a positive impact on teacher perspectives and overall job satisfaction. The administrators we spoke to fostered a school environment in which teachers of color felt valued and felt a strong sense of purpose.

Many retention challenges can be traced back to working conditions and school environments.[18] Teachers of color often report feeling undervalued and underappreciated in their jobs as top reasons for leaving the profession.[19] Research has shown that school culture and systemic processes put in place by school leaders are crucial in developing the trust, support, and positive school culture that are needed to retain teachers of color.[20] This aligns with our findings that administrators of color who took time to create a school culture in which the staff felt valued, connected to each other and to students, and grounded in a greater purpose were more likely to retain staff.

This looks like:

- **Ensuring staff feel valued and have a strong sense of purpose.** One of the most prevalent themes that administrators brought up related to intentional school culture was the need to ensure staff felt valued and had a strong sense of purpose. Administrators stressed that small acts of appreciation went a long way: "valuing teachers and supporting them in ways that may not seem like a big, big deal to you as a school leader, but for them, it's a [big deal]. Give them what they're asking for so that they, in turn, can give the babies what [they need]." The administrators we spoke with all had a keen awareness of the importance of treating teachers with a high level of respect and honoring their contributions to the school.

- **Fostering high levels of staff and student connectedness.** Another key theme that emerged under intentional school culture was the importance of connectedness between staff and students. Administrators took the time to bring staff together for collaboration and to build a strong team. They set up clear channels of communication between teachers and students and made sure students were directly involved in setting the tone and culture on campus. According to one administrator, "taking time to help teachers understand who's in their room, build relationships, build expectations and create an environment [is] necessary for both the teacher and the students to experience success." Administrators stressed this connectedness went hand in hand with building a diverse and representative workforce on their campus, "knowing that they have a role model or a mentor that they can identify with. Someone that looks like them, someone who speaks their language or someone who shares their cultural background [...] is very important."

- **Implementing thoughtful, equity-centered hiring practices.** Another prevalent theme around intentional school culture was the importance of embedding thoughtful, equity-centered values into hiring practices to ensure the administrators were hiring staff that honored the school's culture and values. They stressed the importance of hiring and retaining teachers who "are talented and who adhere to the notion that every child is capable of learning." Administrators made sure to set the tone early in hiring practices and ask intentional, equity-focused questions of candidates. As one administrator said, "Obviously, that's not written anywhere, but you've got to be there for the right reasons. You could have all the credentials and all the years [but] if you're not committed and connected to who we are, who we serve [in] this community in our way, no, thank you."

COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

The second key finding was that administrators of color who demonstrate **A CLEAR COMMITMENT TO EQUITY** cultivate sustaining environments for teachers of color. The administrators that we spoke with cited equity practices like authentic parent engagement in student learning; a clear commitment to serving students of color; restorative, humanizing practices; culturally reponsive practices to support teachers; and culturally responsive pedagogy as core components of their commitment to equity.

Research shows schools that create a culture grounded in equity are able to engage staff more authentically in uncomfortable conversations about race, social justice, and biases. Administrators who foster space for healthy dialogue create school environments that are more likely to retain teachers of color.[21]

This looks like:

- **Creating authentic partnerships with parents and families.** One key theme that emerged was the importance of direct parent engagement in fostering a clear commitment to equity. This ranged from parent outreach events to setting up parent committees that oversee school decision-making, all with the intention of creating meaningful, lasting partnerships with parents. One administrator said, "Families play a big role. I see them as partners in this work, in terms of making sure that our students are educated […] I may be an expert in education because I've been a teacher and have a doctorate in it, but our parents, our families are experts in their children."

- **Demonstrating a clear commitment to serving students of color.** Another key theme that emerged was the importance of setting a school-wide culture that prioritized the needs of students of color. Administrators highlighted the need for everyone on campus to be fully aligned with the goal of serving students of color. They stressed this went beyond simply knowing about culturally relevant strategies and culturally relevant pedagogy. Rather, it was about "creating a space where people are really comfortable bringing all of who they are" to school.

- **Implementing restorative, humanizing, and culturally responsive practices to support teachers.** Another key theme was a commitment to culturally responsive, restorative, humanizing practices that centered teachers of color. This meant setting an inclusive, supportive culture for teachers that honored their unique identities. One administrator shared that when they established that norm, teachers started "sharing personal stories with you, and it makes me feel like that's the culture I want [to set]. They need to have a place where they can express those fears, express their desires, and trust you." They felt that teachers who were supported were better equipped to "see [themselves] in the child, […] show compassion, […] go the extra mile. […] have patience, and […] do what's necessary." The administrators we spoke with had a unique appreciation for the need to create space for those practices as they were former teachers who had directly experienced the isolation teachers of color often face on campus.

CLEAR MISSION AND VISION FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF

The third key finding was that administrators with a **STRONG SENSE OF SCHOOL MISSION/VISION** foster an affirming, school-wide culture, which in turn, has a positive impact on teacher retention.

Research shows that when a school's vision aligns with teachers' personal values and beliefs (especially when these beliefs are student-centered), teachers of color feel more motivated and are more likely to stay in the profession.[22] That level of administrative support and transparency has positive impacts on teacher of color retention.[23]

This looks like:

• **Setting a clear mission and common set of goals.** Administrators articulated the importance of setting the tone and vision for culture they wanted to see on campus. The key to creating an "environment where any teacher wants to stay includes having a clear mission, or having a goal that's larger than simply the delivery of instruction, or the management of students, or the running of the school." Once you "have that blueprint, everything falls into place. The teachers begin to speak the same language." All of the administrators we spoke with had a clear vision for staff and students and the type of school environment they were working to cultivate.

• **Cultivating authentic partnerships between administrators and teachers.** The administrators we spoke with all held their staff in high regard and cited the importance of authentic partnership and shared responsibility for student success. This meant that administrators created an "atmosphere and that environment where people feel they are an integral part of the school, where they know that they are contributing and supporting the program and that they are listened to." They engaged directly with teachers in and outside the classroom to ensure all students were supported.

• **Grounding in a clear personal "why" and purpose.** It was clear from our conversations that each of the administrators we spoke with had a very clear "why" for their work as leaders and a strong personal commitment to the field of education. They had a deep appreciation for their role as leaders of color on campus: "I remember vividly going home as a first grader and asking my mom, 'Why is it that I only see a face that looks like me when it's Martin Luther King's birthday?' I just thought that that was odd [...] I questioned that even again as a youngster at the age of six. I went into education right after undergrad [...] with the objective of [creating a space] where students saw reflections of themselves anywhere they looked." These administrators were grounded in a clear personal sense of self. They were also able to articulate their vision to staff and use it to build a shared culture.

TEACHER VOICE AND AUTONOMY IN SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING

The fourth key finding was the importance of **TEACHER VOICE AND AUTONOMY IN SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING**. In particular, the administrators of color we spoke with noted the importance of shared decision-making. They honored the opinions of their teachers and brought staff into conversations as trusted thought partners and leaders.

Research shows that hierarchical, top-down relationships have a negative impact on teacher sentiments about decision-making.[24] On the other hand, amplifying teachers' voices and creating a shared sense of autonomy in a school setting has a positive impact on retention rates for teachers of color.[25] Schools that provide more autonomy to teachers and invite teacher voice in the decision-making processes have higher levels of staff retention.[26]

This looks like:

- **Allowing teacher autonomy over decision-making.** One key theme that emerged under teacher voice was the importance of allowing teacher autonomy over decision-making. The administrators we spoke with gave their teachers space to experiment and lead: "Autonomy is a big part of it and trust. It doesn't mean free-for-all. There are definitely things that our teachers do need to do [...] There are definitely expectations, but to be trusted to do the work and to be empowered to do the work, I think, really helps." They were intentional about empowering teachers to make decisions that had a direct impact on students and school culture: "Teachers are the ones that are helping to build and foster this culture. They have to be part of creating it."

- **Establishing two-way feedback loops between administrators and teachers.** This went hand in hand with allowing teachers autonomy in decision-making. Administrators were clear that they had a lot to learn from their staff and that feedback was reciprocal. They talked about the importance of transparency: "You have to give everybody the 'why.' Why are we doing this? There's no surprises. I'm not the type of administrator who's like, 'It's my way or the highway.'"

- **Opportunities for teacher leadership and professional growth.** Another theme that emerged was the need to create opportunities for leadership and staff development. In our conversations, administrators uplifted the need to build leadership channels for teachers that honored their talents and perspectives. They named the importance of "creating that atmosphere and that environment where people feel they are an integral part of the school, where they know they are contributing and supporting the program, and are listened to."

➤ CONCLUSION

The findings in this report highlight the important role administrators of color play on school campuses. They uplift teachers of color and cultivate school environments where teachers and students feel empowered to bring their full, authentic selves into the classroom. This, in turn, creates supportive, culturally-sustaining, and nurturing environments for all students, especially students of color. As the state continues to grapple with a consistent teacher shortage and pandemic recovery, it is imperative that LA County prioritize its administrators and teachers of color.

While administrators play a key role in the retention of their staff, there are many limitations administrators face in solving the problem of retaining teachers given the complexity and demands of the profession. Sustainability, cost of living, pay, credentialing, and barriers to entry are all constraints administrators face in teacher retention, let alone teachers of color who tend to face more barriers to remaining in the profession than their white counterparts. That said, systematic change and improvement of the teaching profession is essential to ensuring students have happy, high-quality, and supported teachers.

With that in mind, we offer the following recommendations to local policymakers and school site leaders.

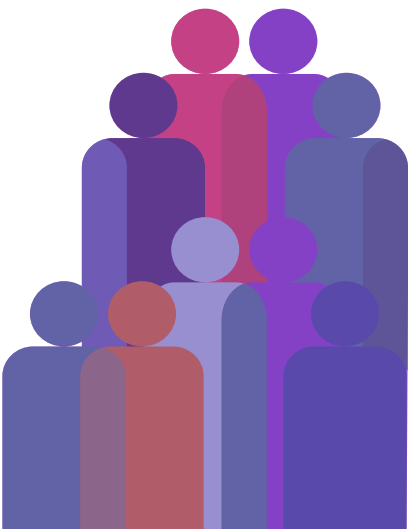**For local system leaders, policymakers, and school districts/local education agencies:**

- **TRACK AND MONITOR ADMINISTRATOR OF COLOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION DATA** and target resources towards districts in LA County with the most stagnant growth in the administrators of color workforce.

- **INVEST IN IMPLEMENTING TARGETED, RESEARCH-DRIVEN RETENTION STRATEGIES**, like the culturally responsive leadership framework, mentorship programs, and affinity spaces that have proven benefits for teachers and administrators of color.

- **BUILD OUT SYSTEM-WIDE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE FOR LOCAL LEADERS** that deepen district capacity and understanding of what it takes to support, recruit, and retain administrators of color.

- **CREATE INTENTIONAL PIPELINES FOR ASPIRING ADMINISTRATORS OF COLOR** and build leadership programs that provide driven, high-performing teachers of color with opportunities to become administrators.

- **SUPPORT CONTINUED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CURRENT ADMINISTRATORS OF COLOR** and provide administrators with stipends, professional learning with a lens on equity, confronting anti-Blackness, and one-to-one coaching to deepen their skills as campus leaders.

For school site leaders:

- **SUPPORT AND ADVOCATE ANTI-RACIST, EQUITY-ORIENTED RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION BEST PRACTICES** and ensure staff are committed to campus culture and values.

- **WORK WITH STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND FAMILIES TO CO-CREATE A SHARED CAMPUS MISSION AND VISION** that creates an affirming and supportive school climate for teachers and students of color.

- **EMPOWER TEACHERS OF COLOR AND PRIORITIZE CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES** that create space for teachers of color to advocate for students and serve as leaders on campus.

- **IMPLEMENT RESTORATIVE, HUMANIZING, AND CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PRACTICES ON CAMPUS** that prioritize teachers and students of color. This includes accepting and celebrating unique identities, modeling inclusive instructional and behavioral strategies, and elevating student voice.

- **CREATE REGULAR OPPORTUNITIES TO CELEBRATE TEACHERS** and ensure they are regularly appreciated and honored for the contributions they make to students and families.

We hope this report is a call to action to push for race-explicit policy shifts, for example "**Black Student Excellence through Educator Diversity, Preparation, and Retention"**, that put administrators, teachers and students of color front and center. The findings point to the need to continue recruiting, retaining, and developing administrators of color for the sake of our students and teacher workforce.
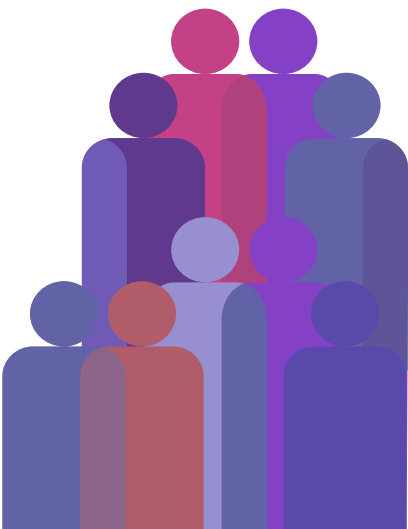
METHODOLOGY

To conduct this quantitative analysis, we used 2018 California Department of Education (CDE) staffing data, 2018 CAASPP performance data, 2018 California dashboard data, and 2018 CDE data on school characteristics of all traditional public schools and charter schools in California. We used 2018 data throughout because it was the most updated data on staffing available at the time of analysis. We used linear regressions to analyze the association between having a leader of color and various school-level outcomes in 2018-19. We considered full-time Black or Latinx administrators "leaders of color," and, in cases where there were multiple full-time administrators, we required that all leaders be Black or Latinx. We included all public schools in LA County (both traditional public schools and charter schools) in our analysis. This allowed us to maintain a large sample of over 2,000 schools. When controlling for school-level characteristics that influence performance, we included the following variables: charter status, parent education, demographics, student mobility, number of years the school has been open, grades served, and urbanicity. We also controlled for teacher effects by including the average age of teachers at a school, the percentage of teachers with a master's degree, and average years of teaching experience.

To conduct our qualitative analysis, we used the same 2018 CDE staffing data to identify school sites in Los Angeles County with: 1) an administrator of color on site, 2) positive school-level student outcomes, and 3) a set of teachers of color employed at the site for a significant number of consecutive years (i.e., high retention rates). We included all public (district and charter) schools in Los Angeles County in our sample. In order to operationalize teacher of color retention rates, we focused on Black and Latinx teachers retained for at least four years in charter schools and six years in district schools. Our selected sample included administrators at five school sites (four elementary and one high school). We conducted 60-minute one-on-one semi-structured interviews with school leaders at those five school sites. Their tenure on campus ranged from one year to 19 years. All the leaders we spoke with self identified as people of color.

We coded themes using an open and axial coding approach. Our final list included four axial codes and 20 sub-codes. We coded 380 total impressions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ENDNOTES

[1]"Advancing a Diverse Future: Recruiting and Retaining Educators of Color in Los Angeles County." The Greater LA Education Foundation (2020).

[2]California Department of Education Staffing and Enrollment files (2018-19).

[3]Grissom, Jason A., Egalite Anna. J., and Lindsay, Constance, A. "How principals affect students and schools: A systematic synthesis of two decades of research." New York: The Wallace Foundation. (2021).

[4]Grissom, Jason A., and Keiser, Lael R. "A supervisor like me: Race, representation, and the satisfaction and turnover decisions of public sector employees." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 30.3 (2011): 557-580.

[5]"Advancing a Diverse Future: Recruiting and Retaining Educators of Color in Los Angeles County." The Greater LA Education Foundation (2020).

[6]California Department of Education Staffing and Enrollment files (2019).

[7]Ibid.

[8]"Advancing a Diverse Future: Recruiting and Retaining Educators of Color in Los Angeles County." The Greater LA Education Foundation (2020).

[9]This report focuses specifically on Black and Latinx students, teachers, and administrators because Black and Latinx students make up such a significant portion of the LA County student population; referred to throughout as "students of color," "teachers of color," and "administrators of color."

[10]Besecker, Megan, and Andrew Thomas. "Black Educators in LA Unified: The Distribution of Black Teachers, Black Administrators, and Black Students in the District from 2016-2022" (2022).

[11]Grissom, Jason A., Egalite Anna. J., and Lindsay, Constance, A. "How principals affect students and schools: A systematic synthesis of two decades of research." New York: The Wallace Foundation. (2021).

[12]Grissom, Jason A., and Keiser, Lael R. "A supervisor like me: Race, representation, and the satisfaction and turnover decisions of public sector employees." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 30.3 (2011): 557-580.

[13]Besecker, Megan, and Andrew Thomas. "Black Educators in LA Unified: The Distribution of Black Teachers, Black Administrators, and Black Students in the District from 2016-2022" (2022).

[14]We considered full-time African American Black or Latinx administrators "leaders of color," and, in cases where there were multiple full-time administrators, we required that all leaders be Black or Latinx.

[15]Carver-Thomas, Desiree. "Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color." Learning Policy Institute (2018).
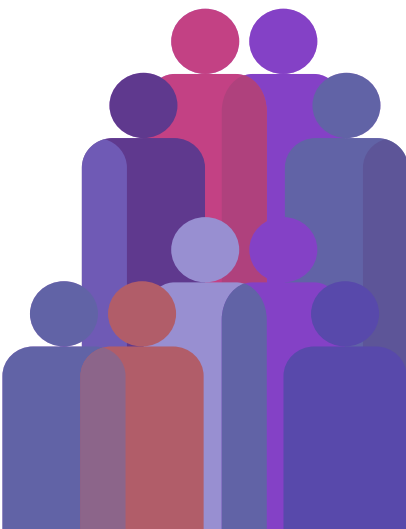
[16]This means that we cannot say whether the results we got happened by chance or conclude definitively that educators of color were more inclined to stay in their roles when they had an administrator of the same race.

[17]In order to operationalize teacher of color retention rates, we focused on Black and Latinx teachers retained for at least four years in charter schools and six years in district schools.

[18]Carver-Thomas, Desiree. "Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color." Learning Policy Institute (2018).

[19]Dixon, Davis, Griffin, Ashley, and Teoh, Mark. "If you listen, we will stay: Why teachers of color leave and how to disrupt teacher turnover." Washington DC: The Education Trust & Teach Plus (2019).

[20]Griffin, Ashley, and Tackie, Hilary. "Through our eyes: Perspectives and reflections from Black teachers." The Education Trust (2016).

[21]Dixon, Davis, Griffin, Ashley, and Teoh, Mark. "If you listen, we will stay: Why teachers of color leave and how to disrupt teacher turnover." Washington DC: The Education Trust & Teach Plus (2019).

[22]Ibid.

[23]Carver-Thomas, Desiree. "Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color." Learning Policy Institute (2018).

[24]White, Terrenda. "Teachers of color and urban charter schools: Race, school culture, and teacher turnover in the charter sector." *Journal of Transformative Leadership and Policy Studies* 7.1 (2018).

[25]Dixon, Davis, Griffin, Ashley, and Teoh, Mark. "If you listen, we will stay: Why teachers of color leave and how to disrupt teacher turnover." Washington DC: The Education Trust & Teach Plus (2019).

[26]Ingersoll, Richard, and May, Henry. "Minority teacher recruitment, employment, and retention: 1987 to 2013." Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute (2017).
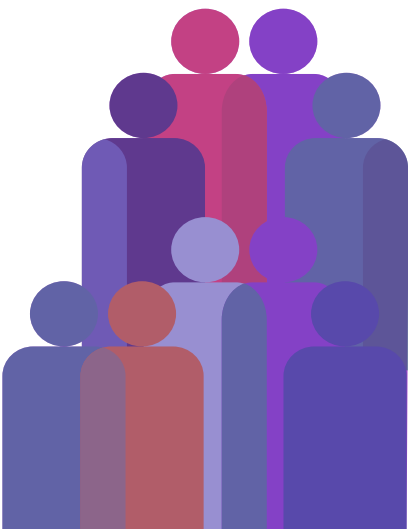
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