

Completing the Cycle: Supporting and Retaining Teachers of Color in Houston

For decades, research has shown that the most important school factor in a student's success is the teacher. More recent research shows that students of color are more likely to have better academic performance, improved graduation rates, and to attend college when taught by teachers of color. Furthermore, a diverse educator workforce benefits all students, with reports of students feeling more cared for and academically challenged by teachers of color.¹

"We have to talk about retaining before we talk about attracting. Because you can attract, but if they leave the profession, it's a constant revolving door... More energy should be spent on retaining teachers and should be the main focus."

— Black Pre-K special education teacher and former elementary school teacher

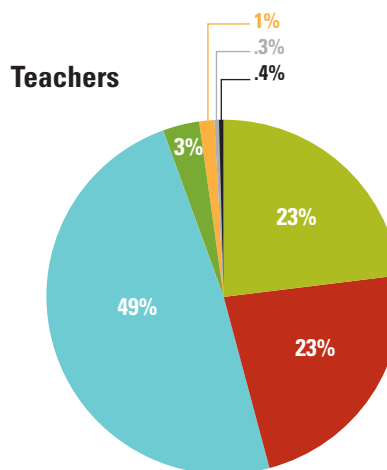
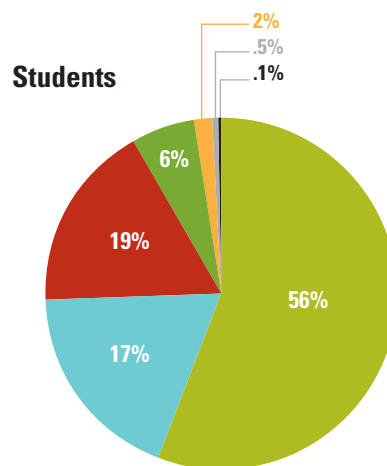
While teacher vacancies and high turnover have received more attention as a result of the pandemic, these are not new challenges, particularly for schools and school systems that predominantly educate students of color and students from low-income backgrounds.

Teachers are increasingly leaving the profession, unfortunately. In a recent survey,² 70% of teachers in Texas stated they were seriously considering quitting teaching in 2022, up a staggering 17% from just four years ago.

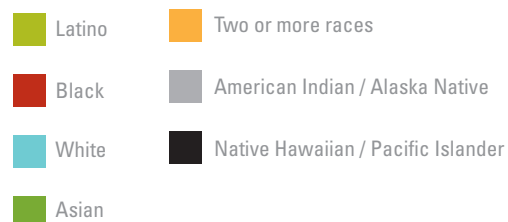
Given the unfinished learning that has resulted from the pandemic, students need more high-quality teachers. Now is the time to address this crisis by embracing the teachers who stay despite the challenges: teachers of color.

In Texas from 2010 to 2019, a significantly higher proportion of Black and Latino teachers stayed in education, regardless of how they became teachers.

Comparing Teachers of Color and Students of Color in Harris County



Source: Ed Trust analysis of 2018-2019 TAPR data



For the new report, [Completing the Cycle: Supporting and Retaining Teachers of Color in Houston](#), we spoke to 13 Houston-area educators of color to find out what keeps teachers of color in the classroom. We heard what schools can do to empower, support, and retain more teachers of color.

“Every single thing that can go wrong is always your fault. You have to always find some new creative way to fix all the problems that are happening.”

— Black middle school math teacher

Teachers of color in our focus groups demonstrated a laudable, stalwart commitment to their students. They remain in their classrooms despite suboptimal leadership and support, a lack of resources, and career trajectories that do not intentionally develop their skills or compensate them equitably. Unfortunately, this commitment to students is no panacea, as demonstrated by teacher of color retention data. School, district, and state leaders should take action to ensure teachers of color do not have to choose between their students and their personal, professional, and financial well-being.

Retaining teachers of color can help solve the current staffing challenges that Texas schools are facing.

Although recruiting more teachers of color is a great start, it is not enough: State, district, and school leaders must complete the cycle by supporting, developing, and ultimately retaining them.

Read the full report, sources and methodology at <https://edtrust.org/texas/>.

“It is a feeling of ‘it’s all on you, it’s all on the teachers.’ Well, I don’t believe that’s true. It starts from top [to] bottom — you have to be the example at the top. As the principal, show us your support. How do you treat us? Do you welcome us?”

— Latina elementary school English language arts teacher

KEY THEMES & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Policymakers can help solve the current staffing challenges that Texas schools face and support teachers of color by responding to the five key recommendations our focus groups revealed:

1. Supportive Leadership

Implement a multi-measure principal evaluation that includes teacher retention data broken down by race and ethnicity, along with demonstrated cultural competence

2. Equitably Compensated Roles and Leadership Opportunities

Invest in opportunities for teachers of color to grow and develop in their abilities and their qualifications for leadership roles, including paid advancement pathways, mentor programs, professional development, and continuing education opportunities

Implement a multi-measure teacher evaluation system that actively interrogates for potential bias and accounts for the full scope of teachers’ responsibilities and other contributions

3. High-Quality and Relevant Curriculum

Adopt high-quality and culturally relevant curricula and instructional materials and develop teachers to effectively use them

4. Interconnected Student Supports

Invest in supportive personnel and professional development to meet students’ social, emotional, and academic needs.

5. Rich Instructional and Cultural Mentorship Opportunities

Invest in induction and mentoring programs that provide targeted support to teachers of color, especially early in their careers.

1. Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color (2018). Learning Policy Institute. [Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color \(learningpolicyinstitute.org\)](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org)
2. Survey: 70% of Teachers are Quitting Their Jobs (2022). Houston Chronicle. [Survey: Majority of Texas teachers are considering quitting \(chron.com\)](https://www.houstonchronicle.com)