



## Retention and Mobility Patterns for Teachers of Color in Texas: Examining Variation by Teacher and Campus Characteristics

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### What We Studied

Increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of the teacher workforce is vital to the success of all students nationally. Calls to prepare, recruit, and retain more teachers of color come from a variety of stakeholders, including policymakers, state and district leaders, as well as school community members (Boser, 2014; Ciesielski, 2015; US Department of Education, 2016). Yet, a growing body of evidence demonstrates the persistent lack of racial and ethnic diversity across teacher labor markets nationally (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Researchers and policymakers now point to efforts at increasing retention rates for teachers of color as one important solution towards expanding teacher racial and ethnic representation.

Meanwhile, there is a well-identified gap in the research when it comes to studies investigating systematic patterns of retention and mobility for teachers of color. There is also a distinct need for research that can separate out results for Black and Latinx teachers (Achinstein, et al., 2010). In this study I investigated the extent to which key school work environment and personal background characteristics were associated with retention and mobility outcomes for teachers of color in Texas.

### How We Analyzed the Data

I analyzed longitudinal administrative data from Texas's 20 largest districts, representing information from over one million unique teacher-year observations. Drawing on over a decade of employment records, school-level student information, and teacher certification data, I asked the following three research questions:

- 1) What are the characteristics of teacher work environments and how do these characteristics vary depending on the racial/ethnic composition of teachers at the school-level?
- 2) What are the characteristics of career trajectories (e.g., retention and mobility) for teachers of color compared to White teachers within the twenty largest school districts in Texas?
- 3) To what extent do teacher background and campus-level characteristics predict teacher retention and mobility for teachers of color across their career trajectories?

I first used descriptive analyses to summarize the variation in teacher retention and mobility by teacher and school characteristics. I summarized differences in this variation for teachers disaggregated by race/ethnicity. I also described trends in teacher mobility, which is composed of four categories of teacher movers (new school, new district, principal track, exit system) and how these outcomes differ by teachers' racial/ethnic background. Next, using inferential statistics, I measured whether teacher background and school work environment variables differ significantly for

teachers who are retained compared to those who leave, switch schools, change positions, move to a new district, or leave the system.

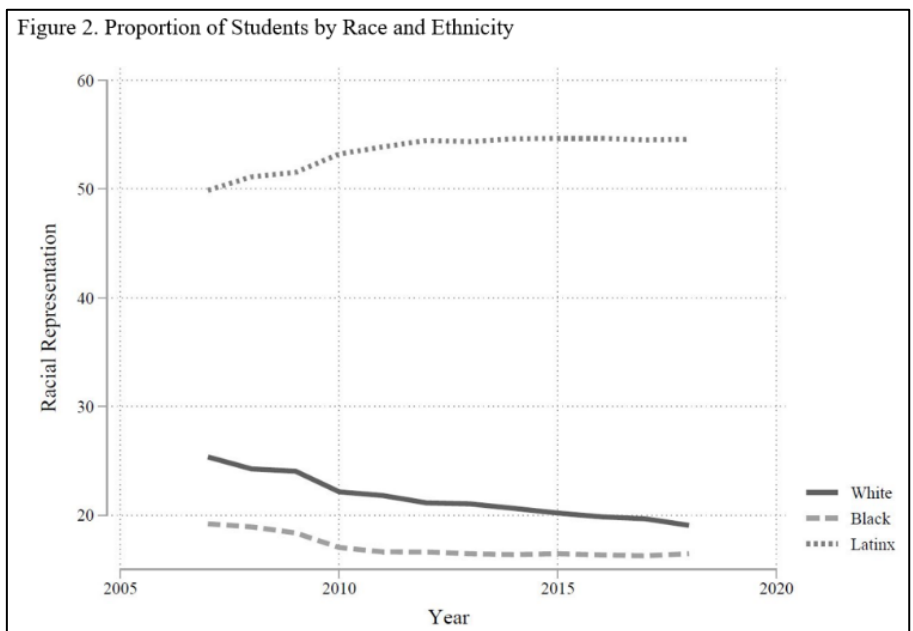
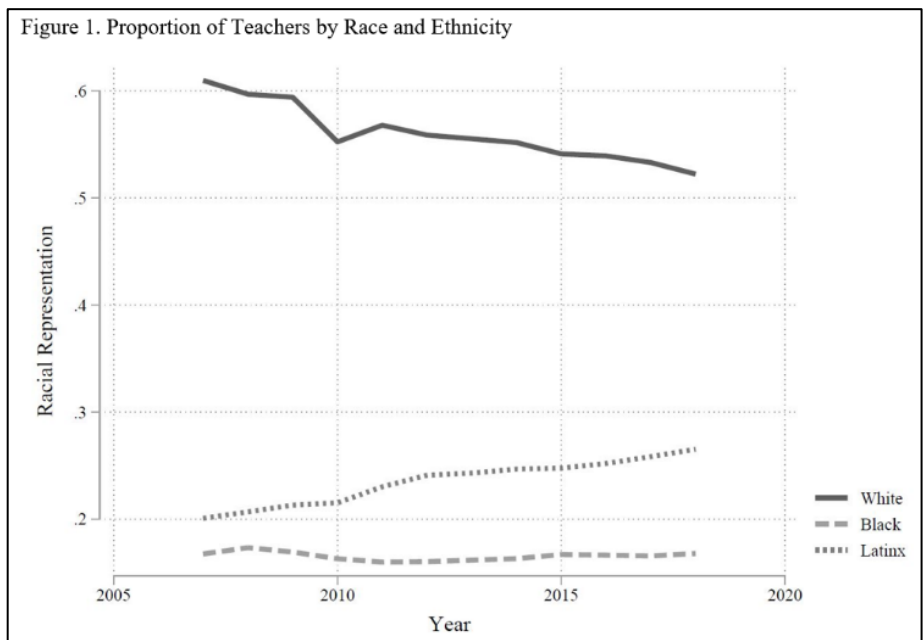
To understand how teacher background and school work environment characteristics were related to retention and mobility patterns I fit a series of regression models: first a set of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models and then a multinomial logit model to estimate my categorical mobility outcome (Sun, 2018). The first series of models included the main predictors of interest, teacher background characteristics and school work environment variables, regressed on the outcome of interest, retention. In the multinomial model, again measuring movements from one year to the next, I set the outcome of interest to one of four types of teacher departures: 1) moved to a different school within the district, 2) moved to a new district, 3) moved into an assistant principal or principal position, or 4) leaves the system. Both models included robust controls for teacher and campus-level covariates as well as dummy variables for districts included to net out the time-invariant effects of labor market impacts that will likely differ across district contexts.

### What We Discovered

My analysis provides an important look at the teacher and student racial demographics in Texas’s largest urban and suburban school districts. Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate a key pattern in demographic trends: both the teacher and student populations are increasingly less White, driven by growth in the share of Latinx students and teachers.

Thus, these figures also indicate that Latinx students are substantially underrepresented in terms of the race/ethnicity of their teachers. Approximately 55 percent of students and 25 percent of teachers in the districts studied are Latinx. On the other hand, White students in these districts are relatively overrepresented.

My regression results indicate that relative to White teachers, Black and Latinx teachers in the state’s largest urban and suburban districts were less likely to leave their campus teaching position at the end of the school year, less likely to find a position in a new district, and more likely to move into a school leadership position. See Tables 1 and 2 for retention/mobility results by teacher race.



I also found that principal retention, principal-teacher race match, teacher salary, and a traditional preparation background predict increases in retention for all teachers—but especially for Black and Latinx teachers.

Yet, as a cause for concern, my results in Table 3 suggest stark differences in exposure to ‘hard-to-staff’ work environments for Black teachers relative to the work environments of both Latinx and White teachers (Simon & Johnson, 2015). This group of teachers were consistently more likely to teach in a school experiencing year over year accountability pressures related to student test scores, chronically high teacher turnover rates, and lower rates of principal retention.

### Policy Recommendations

The results from this investigation underline the need for a better collective understanding of the variation in career trajectory outcomes for teachers within large district contexts. The evidence of career persistence for Black and Latinx teachers in such contexts suggests that researchers, policymakers, and school leaders learn from and build on the current school-level practices in place to support the most underrepresented groups of teachers. As many of my results were related to features of leadership or the characteristics of school leaders, it is important that district policy makers and leadership preparation programs place a renewed focus on efforts to better prepare, recruit, support, and retain school leaders of color.

District leaders should celebrate the trends of persistence amongst racially underrepresented groups of teachers, especially Latinx teachers. At the same time, these leaders—such as superintendents and central office administrators in charge of recruitment and hiring—should pivot to strengthen existing teacher preparation pipelines while also learning from the growing share of experienced Latinx teachers. Many of these teachers who might be approaching mid-career ought to be tapped for teacher-leader, teacher mentor, or campus leadership positions (Myung et al., 2011).

At the same time, my results indicate that for Black teachers in the districts studied, working with a Black principal is associated with improved career outcomes in the form of retention and promotion. If the patterns I observe hold, increases in representation for this group of teachers could result in more positive aggregate retention outcomes across entire districts.

	(1)	(2)
Black	0.007*** (0.001)	0.036*** (0.002)
Latinx	0.023*** (0.001)	0.033*** (0.002)
Female	0.003*** (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)
Teacher background controls	Yes	Yes
Work environment controls	No	Yes
Principal retention controls	No	Yes
Teacher fixed effects	No	No
District fixed effects	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes
<i>N</i>	1,114,054	1,112,308
R <sup>2</sup>	0.017	0.025

Note. Race coefficients can be interpreted as the effect compared to the base group, White teachers. The model also includes year fixed effects, district fixed effects. Standard errors, in parentheses, are clustered at teacher level. \*p<0.5, \*\*p < .01., \*\*\*p < .001. Reported R<sup>2</sup> values for models with teacher fixed effects show the proportion of variation in retention within teachers can be explained by the set of predictors.

	New School	New District	Principal Track	Exit System
Black	0.043* (0.017)	-0.172*** (0.018)	0.473*** (0.069)	-0.486*** (0.015)
Latinx	0.107*** (0.024)	-0.190*** (0.028)	0.284** (0.099)	-0.477*** (0.022)
Female	-0.042** (0.012)	-0.043*** (0.012)	-0.636*** (0.041)	0.067*** (0.010)
<i>N</i>	1,112,308			
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.040			

Note. Race coefficients can be interpreted as the effect compared to the base group, White teachers. The model also includes year fixed effects, district fixed effects. Standard errors, in parentheses, are clustered at teacher level. \*p<0.05, \*\*p < .01., \*\*\*p < .001.

Concurrently, my findings point to the need for policies aimed at supporting Black principals with the end goal of increasing their likelihood of retention. District leaders could start by asking Black principals what they need in order to feel more supported. Leaders could also draw on the expertise of Black principals with long tenures if they aren't already.

Additional policy implications:

- District leaders should target and support principal retention in schools employing large shares of underrepresented teachers as part of a larger effort to improve student achievement outcomes.
- Policymakers should consider legislation that incentivizes teacher leadership roles in Texas's largest districts.
- As the Texas teacher workforce is likely to become starkly younger and more racially/ethnically diverse following the effects of COVID-19, state policymakers should invest in quality professional development aimed at teacher/principal retention sooner rather than later as school begin to reopen.

	Black	Latinx	White
Percentage of Beginning Teachers	0.08	0.07	0.06
Principal Retention Rate	0.78	0.82	0.83
Principal Race match	0.47	0.39	0.70
Principal Gender match	0.61	0.63	0.62 <sup>^</sup>
High Turnover School ( $\geq 30\%$ per year)	0.19	0.10	0.07
Student Disciplinary Rate	1.35	0.50	0.63

Note. All standard errors are  $<0.01$ . All reported differences are significant at the  $p<0.01$  level unless otherwise noted. <sup>^</sup> indicates that the reported difference is not significant at the  $p<0.05$  level.

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