



# THE TEXAS PRINCIPAL WORKFORCE REPORT



**A 12-year Analysis of Principal Leadership**  
(2010-11 to 2022-23)

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# GLOSSARY

**ACADEMIC YEAR:** The school year starting at the end of each summer and ending the following year in late spring or early summer. School year 2011 refers to the academic school year beginning in the Fall of 2010. We also refer to a school year as 2010-11.

**CITY:** Territory inside an Urbanized Area and inside a Principal City.

**HISPANIC:** Individuals reporting Hispanic/Latino as race.

**LONGITUDINAL:** Repeated measurements of the same data points over an extended period of time.

**RETENTION:** Principal remained in their position on their campus at the end of the school year and into the next year.

**RURAL:** Census-defined rural territory.

**SALARY:** Total pay including supplements.

**SUBURBAN:** Territory outside a Principal City and inside an Urbanized Area.

**PRINCIPAL:** Individual whose role is classified as School Principal by the Texas Education Agency.

**TOWN:** Territory inside an Urban Cluster.

**TENURE:** Length of time a principal has held that role.

**TURNOVER RATE:** Percent of principals that exited their position in a given year.





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The work of leadership in our public schools has never been easy but, in the last few years, we have seen seismic shifts: social media has altered the relational environment of children; COVID-19 upended the way schooling was provided to children; increasing ideological polarization has led to attacks on the public education system.

During this time, principals must ensure every child receives a high-quality education. Principals oversee daily operations, foster an equitable learning environment, efficiently utilize resources, support teachers and families, and provide ongoing monitoring and support. These efforts are taxing even under the best conditions especially amid the seismic shifts of the past few years. The principal workforce is under duress. Increasing stress, burnout, high turnover, and short tenure in the principalship can have detrimental effects on teachers and students. Texans must pay close attention to the principalship and ensure policymakers and the public know all forthcoming opportunities and challenges.



# This Study

Ensuring a healthy principal workforce in Texas has never been more critical. This report clarifies the status and trends of the principal workforce in Texas over the past 12 years, in order to target our school leaders' challenges—and celebrate the gains. Using large-scale longitudinal data, the following questions are addressed:

- What are the demographics of Texas principals and assistant principals and how have they changed over time?
- How do principal demographics vary by school type and school demographics?
- What are the trends in principal pay?
- What is the principal turnover rate in Texas and how does it vary by school type and demographics?

**Chapter 1** introduces the current status in Texas and the need to address the health of the Texas Principal workforce. **Chapter 2** provides a background of current research surrounding the principalship. **Chapter 3** analyzes the demographic trends of the principal workforce over the last decade. **Chapter 4** focuses on geographic trends. **Chapter 5** examines principal turnover and principal longevity. **Chapter 6** closes with connections and implications for the future of the principal workforce.

# 1

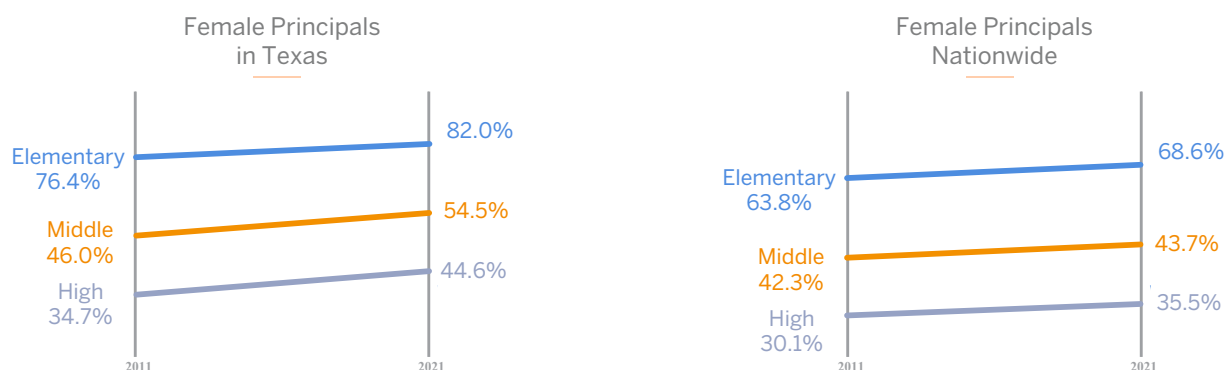
## FINDING 1

### **MOST TEXAS SCHOOL LEADERS IDENTIFY AS FEMALE, AND FEMALE LEADERSHIP IS GROWING AND DIVERSIFYING.**

Most principals and assistant principals in Texas have long been female, but that proportion has increased from 60% to 67% of principals over the last 10 years. This exceeds the national trend, which has only increased 4% (from 52% to 56% female) over the same period (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2023).

Female leaders have historically been more concentrated in elementary schools but became the majority of middle school principals in Texas around 2019. If these trends continue, female leaders in Texas will be the majority of high school principals and assistant principals within the next 5 years. This diverges from the national trend, where female principals have increased slightly but are still far from being the majority in high schools. These leaders are also increasingly diverse, with female principals of color now comprising 45% of the female principal population compared to only 27% nationwide.

#### Comparison of Female Principal School Level Assignments from 2011-2021





“

I am where I am in my career because I was tapped at the very beginning of my career. For the data to continue to trend in that direction, you have to have that at the very beginning, when someone is really just getting out and getting socialized into the district or working in education in general. You have to have positions in place so that they, we, I can make smart leadership decisions about my career trajectory and how I am going to move towards education leadership.

**PRINCIPAL CYNTHIA GRIGGS**

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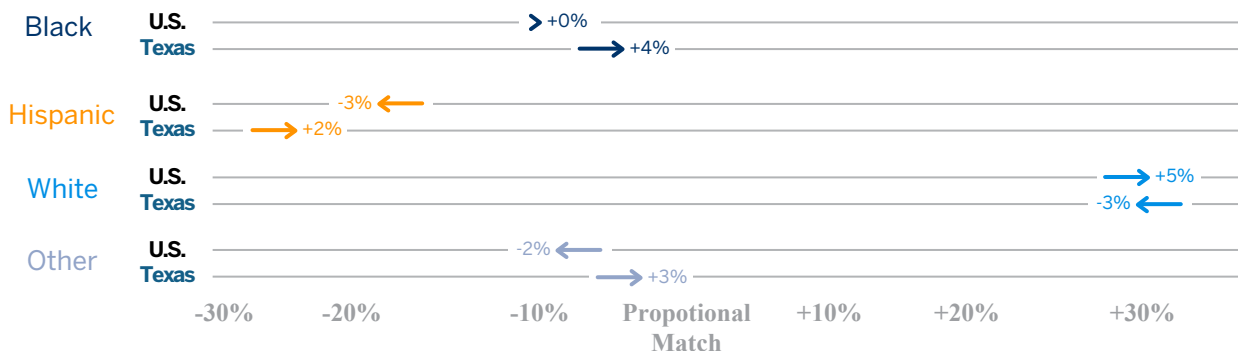
## FINDING 2

### SCHOOL LEADERS OF COLOR HAVE INCREASED IN OVERALL REPRESENTATION.

Since 2011, principals and assistant principals of color have proportionally increased in Texas, with a roughly 5 percentage point increase in both Black and Hispanic principals and assistant principals. This has greatly outpaced the national changes in principals of color, which, for Black principals, has decreased by roughly 0.5 percentage points and only increased by 1.8 percentage points for Hispanic principals. These increases in leadership representation have also outpaced moderate increases in the population of students of color. Black and Hispanic principals now make up 15% and 26% of all principals, respectively, and persons of color now make up the majority of assistant principals. While this is far from proportionality—given the student population is currently 13% Black and 53% Hispanic—it does represent a considerable narrowing of the gaps between student and leadership representation over the past decade. Indeed, while principal-student representation gaps have increased nationwide for most student groups, Texas has moved closer to proportional representation for Black, Hispanic, White, and all other racial student populations since 2011.

#### Student-Principal Racial Representation Gaps, 2011-21

How closely has the racial proportion of principals matched that of students, and how has it changed between 2011 and 2021?





As a high school principal, I want our students to feel connected to an adult on campus, at least one adult on campus. When we have diversity in leadership and within the faculty and staff, our students feel more connected.

That builds trust and then our students can be authentic and really start learning while having the safety to fail, so to speak, and really take risks and grow through those relationships.

**PRINCIPAL ROBERT ARREDONDO**

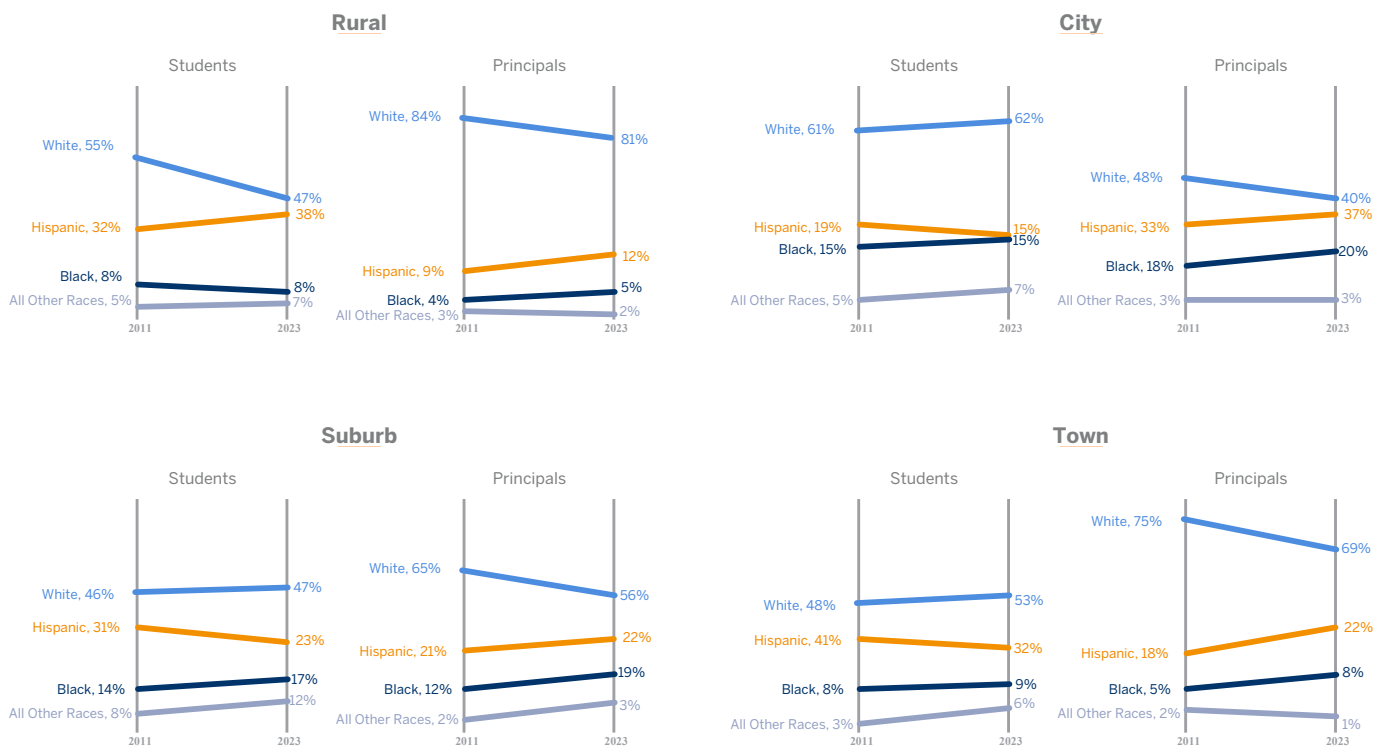


# FINDING 3

## INCREASES IN LEADERSHIP DIVERSITY ARE MOST PRONOUNCED IN SUBURBAN AREAS.

Racial and ethnic diversity of school leaders has increased greatly, with an 8 percentage point increase in the proportion of principals of color overall since 2011. Persons of color are now the majority of assistant principals in Texas. These changes have been most prevalent in suburban schools, which saw the most significant overall increase in principals of color between 2011 and 2023, including a seven percentage point increase in Black principals and a slight (<1%) increase in Hispanic and Asian principals.

Percent of Texas Principals and Students by Racial Group and Locale between 2011-2023 School Years





School district leaders who prioritize strong partnerships with students can greatly improve academic, social, and emotional outcomes. Students advocate for collaboration with their school and district leaders. They articulate their needs and aspirations, and it's our responsibility as educational leaders to honor their voices. We must proactively engage with students, attentively listen to their perspectives, and address their concerns.

By fostering genuine partnerships with students, we can create a more supportive and empowering educational environment that meets the evolving needs of our diverse student body.

**PRINCIPAL LEBON JAMES**





# 4

## FINDING 4

### WHITE SCHOOL LEADERS ARE LESS REPRESENTED IN HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS AND MORE LIKELY TO BE IN MAJORITY WHITE SCHOOLS.

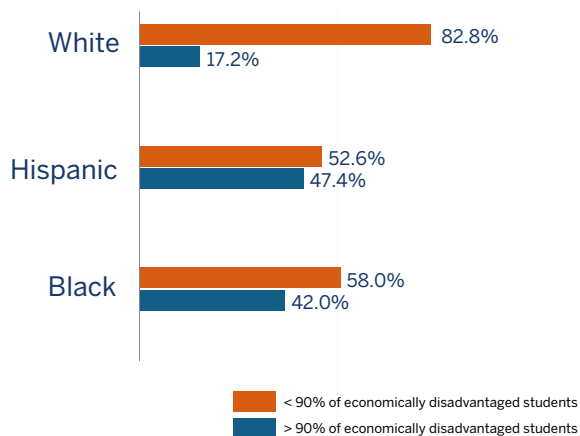
In schools serving the highest proportions of economically disadvantaged students, comparatively, few principals (17%) and assistant principals (12%) across the state were White.

This compares to higher proportions of Black and Hispanic principals (42%, 47%) and assistant principals (32%, 36%) serving in these high-needs environments.

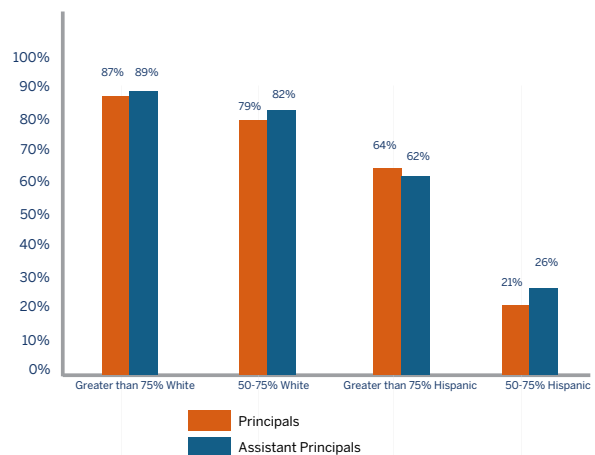
Similarly, most majority-White schools had a White principal (83%), whereas fewer mostly Hispanic schools had a Hispanic principal (42%).

#### Economic Disadvantage and Racial Match of School Leaders with Students

Racial Distribution of Principals in Texas in Economically Disadvantaged Schools



Racial Match of School Leaders in Majority White and Majority Hispanic Schools





“

As a White principal of a high poverty school that serves a majority of students of color, a question I considered before applying was, ‘Am I the right person for this role?’ I had a professor in graduate school tell me, ‘Don’t let your whiteness become a barrier to your competence. Let communities decide whether or not you’re the right person instead of making that decision for them.’ It has been conscious and intentional work.

When a racial mismatch exists between the school leader and the community they serve, the work has to be more explicit. I have to talk more often about what I’m doing because just my presence can create barriers for communities or to families, even to students.

**PRINCIPAL BRIDGET FARR**

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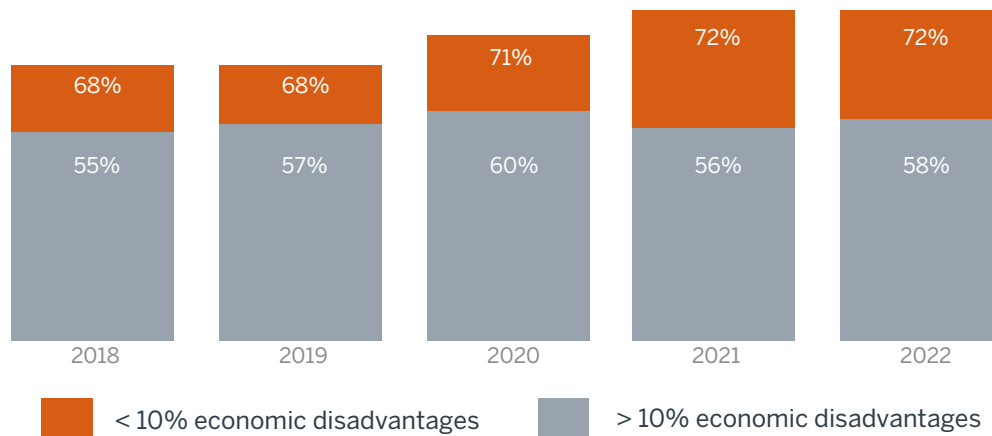
# FINDING 5

## THE RETENTION RATES OF PRINCIPALS HAVE REMAINED RELATIVELY STABLE, ALTHOUGH RURAL AND HIGH-POVERTY AREAS HAVE SEEN INCREASING LEVELS OF TURNOVER OVER THE PAST DECADE.

Over the past 12 years, the principal and assistant principal retention rates have remained relatively stable, hovering around 67% of principals being retained in their position annually.

This is lower than the national average principal retention rate, which is around 80% (Taie & Lewis, 2023). Rural schools tend to have the lowest retention rate at 62% on average, and schools serving high levels of economically disadvantaged students sit at 58% annual principal retention, meaning these areas are of the greatest need in retaining school leaders. Moreover, the average length of a principal’s tenure in a position has declined greatly from an average of 14 years of service in 2013 to 5 years of service in 2023, similar to national trends of increasing turnover rates of principals.

Principal Retention within the Most Affluent and Least Affluent Schools in Texas from 2018-2022





# VOICES FROM THE FIELD



Sustainable and compassionate social justice leadership is the cornerstone of a thriving school culture where every student feels valued, nurtured, and empowered to achieve their full potential. While we strive to promote diversity in the principalship, it's equally vital to provide principals with adequate support systems and concrete strategies that enable them to overcome challenges and remain committed to their role.

This is especially crucial in high-poverty schools where principals play a critical role in ensuring equity and educational excellence for all students.

**DR. BARDO MONTELONGO**



# RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's implications are clear. For Texans to boast a strong, skilled workforce of principals across all schools and districts, we must celebrate successes in diversifying the principalship and attend to higher rates of turnover in particular locales. We must also pay close attention to principal tenure on campus, given that sustainable improvements take time and shortened tenure can diminish continuous improvement efforts under certain conditions.

- 1)** Texas has done an excellent job creating a diverse principal and assistant principal workforce. Sustained investments by the state, educator preparation programs, and districts have led to a highly diverse leadership workforce. However, more than diversity is needed to deliver important student experiences and results. All principals, regardless of background, will require consistent, high-quality training and support to ensure they are prepared to meet the diverse needs of Texas students. This means additional efforts to strengthen preparation programs, district-university partnerships, and in-service professional development.
- 2)** The average principal tenure on a campus is in a serious decline. Some principal turnover can be positive, but struggling schools need steady leadership over multiple years. The state and districts need to identify and invest in leaders working in schools with higher principal turnover rates. Such investments include incentive pay to keep principals in their jobs longer, individualized high-quality coaching, and support with succession planning. Hence, future transitions will be smooth and will not disrupt continuous improvement efforts.
- 3)** Texas has a world-class longitudinal dataset that allows for the tracking and analysis of a broad array of patterns within its public school system. Consistent reporting on principal and assistant principal workforce trends can provide districts, school boards, and other stakeholders with important and timely information. These data can help guide targeted investments in the school leadership workforce, monitor the progress of these investments, and provide rich opportunities for other researchers to analyze data for school improvement purposes.



We hope this report and our efforts to understand the principalship and assistant principalship in Texas will spur more questions and investigation – ultimately leading to positive changes that strengthen the school leadership workforce.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Principals are in a critical position within schools and communities. Not surprisingly, researchers have consistently found that effective principals have an important impact on student achievement (Grissom et al., 2021; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Robinson, 2008). In addition, researchers have also found that effective principals can positively impact the outcomes and experiences of historically marginalized student groups, such as students with disabilities and English learner (EL) students (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Khalifa et al., 2016; Theoharis, 2007). An effective principal also recruits and retains a high-quality and racially diverse teacher workforce (Bartanen & Grissom, 2023), which has been found to raise student achievement for all students, including students of color (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019; Egalite et al., 2015). Effective principals primarily improve their schools by working closely with school district administrators, educators, and staff within their campus as well as families and community-based organizations within the school's enrollment boundaries.

Principal leadership tends to include (a) co-creating and advancing a school vision and mission that promotes academic excellence and inclusivity, (b) ensuring all students have access to high-quality instruction tailored to their unique strengths, needs, and cultural identities, (c) providing and connecting teachers with continuous professional development based on individual and school-identified areas of growth; (d) designing and improving systems and protocols to proactively identify students in need of additional support and effectively deliver that support so that struggling learners do not slip through the cracks; and (e) partnering with families and community-based organizations to make important decisions and work collaboratively to understand and address other education-related priorities (DeMatthews, 2018;

Grissom et al., 2021; Hitt & Tucker, 2016). During their tenure, principals will likely have to manage uncertainty and change stemming from shifting policies, school boards and superintendents, budgets, human resources, and student and community demographics. Thus, effective principals must be well-prepared, experienced, and flexible because school leadership is highly complex, evolving, and contextually situated, as no two schools or communities are alike.

Given the unique challenges of the principalship and the importance of knowing the school communities in which they work, we expect a healthy principal workforce in Texas to include a diverse pool of aspiring school leaders moving into the principalship and staying on the job long enough to create and sustain a healthy school community. We also expect a healthy principal workforce in Texas to be one where the most experienced and effective principals are equitably distributed across all school types (e.g., high school, high-performing) and communities (e.g., affluent, majority-minority student population) and where principals have adequate time on the job to create and sustain positive changes that can lead to important school improvements. Symptoms of an unhealthy workforce would show evidence that some groups of aspiring principals are denied or delayed access to the principalship or the principalship in certain school types and communities. Another symptom of an unhealthy principal workforce is high rates of inexperienced principals, short tenures, and elevated turnover in particular schools and communities, especially in contexts with high proportions of rural and urban, low-income students and students of color.

In this report, we ask, “How healthy is the principal workforce in Texas?” Researchers have studied the Texas principalship. However, many of these studies are published in academic journals behind paywalls and do not systematically analyze all aspects of the assistant principal

and principal workforce, especially as they relate to the multiple geographic areas across the state. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) provides several basic reports on principal demographics and turnover. One report shows trends of employed principal demographics between 2014-15 and 2022-23 by gender and race. In the 2022-23 school year, TEA (2023c) reported that 67.4% of Texas principals were female, 15.4% were Black, 25.7% were Hispanic/Latino, and 56.8% were White. The report did not provide any intersectional data, leaving it unclear how many women of color or men of color are leading Texas schools. TEA (2023a) also reports years of administrator experience (for the 2022-23 school year, the mean experience for a principal was 19.6). While these data are informative, the report provides no insight into how experience varies by principal race, gender, or school type. For example, these findings provide no insight into whether certain schools or communities have less experienced principals leading their campuses. Finally, TEA (2023b) also reports on principal turnover, but in a relatively unclear manner that could mislead the general public. Rather than report the number and percent of principals that left their campus from one year to the next, as is most common in reporting attrition or turnover, TEA counts principal attrition only when a principal is no longer reported in the state's approximately 1,200 school districts the following year. Based on this definition of attrition, the state reported a 20.2% attrition rate. TEA provides no additional context for attrition, such as the degree to which turnover is higher or lower based on school demographics, achievement, or other factors.

While little is known about the overall health of the Texas principal workforce, all of these questions can be answered using the state-created State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). The SLDS is housed by the Texas Education Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin and is one of the nation's largest and most complete longitudinal datasets in the nation.



This study leverages SLDS, publicly available data, and data acquired through public records requests to provide a detailed statewide and regional analysis of the Texas principal and assistant principal workforce between academic school years 2010-11 and 2020-21. This study is unique, given its focus on the principal and assistant workforce. The study answers four main questions:

- What are the demographics of Texas principals and assistant principals and how have they changed over time?
- How do principal demographics vary by school type and demographics?
- What are the trends in principal pay?
- What is the principal turnover rate in Texas and how does it vary by school type and demographics?

The answers to these questions are important to Texans and other states and school districts across the United States. A national audience can learn from an analysis of the Texas principal and assistant principal workforce, given the state's size, the diversity of its schools and districts, and the racial and economic variation across the state. We view Texas as a one-of-a-kind laboratory for studying principals and assistant principals, with its more than 1,200 school districts, including 8,900 public schools serving approximately 5.4 million students. Texas school districts serve a diverse student population (52.7% Hispanic, 12.8% Black, 26.3% White, 4.8% Asian, 2.9% Multiracial), although many are racially and economically segregated. Texas districts' economic and racial segregation allows for unique analyses that enable us to examine the extent to which schools get the most experienced and diverse principals. The state also has many city (210), suburban (141), town (212), and rural (652) districts that allow for comparisons across these contexts. For example, Texas has 652 rural districts, which dwarfs the number of rural districts in other rural states like Alabama (180 districts), Mississippi (157 districts),

Montana (490 districts), and Idaho (159 districts). In sum, Texas's sheer size and diversity allow other states to draw comparisons to their own contexts.

The need to closely examine the Texas assistant principal and principal workforce over the past 12 years can pay dividends for Texas students and policymakers nationwide. In what follows, we provide a brief overview of research in Chapter 2 focused on the principalship with some attention to the small body of research focused on assistant principals. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the demographics of the adult and student population of the U.S. and Texas, as well as the demographics of teachers and principals. Chapter 4 closely examines trends in the principal and assistant principal workforce and how they vary by school context and district locale (e.g., rural, town, suburban, urban). Chapter 5 overviews principal salaries and how they vary by race, gender, and district type over the 12-year study period. In Chapter 6, we present principal turnover rates by year, school type, and locale. We also focus on principal turnover in more affluent and less affluent communities and higher- and lower-performing schools. Finally, Chapter 7 provides implications and conclusions based on the findings from this study. Specifically, we provide recommendations for state policymakers, districts, and university-based principal preparation programs. We also offer brief recommendations to education researchers interested in the principal workforce.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW: WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE PRINCIPALSHIP?

### Chapter Preview

Chapter 2 provides a brief literature review to highlight what is known about the demographics and trends within the principalship. Specifically, this section highlights the following:

- Principal leadership has a meaningful impact on student achievement.
- Principals of color are more likely to recruit and retain teachers of color, which can positively impact student achievement for all students but especially for students of color.
- Some districts and schools have higher rates of principal and teacher turnover, which can negatively impact student achievement.

Principals are in a pivotal organizational position and can have a meaningful impact on student achievement and other student-related experiences and outcomes. Thus, a principal workforce that is well-prepared, experienced, and diverse is critical to the success of Texas public schools. This section briefly draws upon existing research focused on principals and assistant principals to answer four main questions:

- What are the effective leadership practices that promote student achievement and other important student-related experiences and outcomes?
- What does school-community context matter to principal leadership?
- What are the demographics of principals?
- What is principal turnover, and why does it matter?

The answers to these questions ground the study and demonstrate the importance of monitoring and taking steps to improve the principal workforce.

## Effective School Leadership Practices

Principal leadership plays a consequential role in increasing student achievement (Grissom et al., 2021; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Robinson et al., 2008; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). In a recent meta-analysis of six rigorous studies that included more than 22,000 principals across four states, Grissom and colleagues (2021) concluded the following:

The impact of replacing a below-average elementary school principal (i.e., one at the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of effectiveness) with an above-average principal (i.e., at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile) would result in an additional 2.9 months of math learning and 2.7 months of reading learning each year for students in that school. (p. xiii)

This finding highlights the critical importance of having a high-quality leader in every school, especially in schools that have historically struggled to raise student achievement over time.

In a comprehensive literature review of 56 empirical studies, Hitt and Tucker (2016) identified five overarching domains of principal leadership practices influencing student achievement: establishing and conveying the vision; facilitating a high-quality learning environment; building teacher capacity; creating a supportive organization for learning; connecting with external partners. These domains broadly include elements previously contained in widely utilized principal leadership frameworks, such as Murphy et al.'s (2006) Learning-Centered Leadership Framework and Leithwood's (2012) Ontario Leadership Framework. These frameworks help explain how effective principals increase student achievement at a schoolwide level, but principals must still adapt these practices in ways that acknowledge and undo longstanding inequities that impact how certain students are educated and included within schools, classrooms, and common areas of a campus.

Additional research has focused on the role of principal leadership in creating inclusive and culturally responsive schools that are locally responsive and build upon the assets of historically marginalized student groups. For example, research on inclusive leadership (Ryan 2006), social justice leadership (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014), and culturally responsive leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016) reflects the importance of additional leadership practices that extend beyond what has been described in more traditional frameworks. These practices include the following principal actions: reflecting on one’s personal and professional background and experiences; recruiting and retaining diverse teachers with a broad range of experiences; redesigning or modifying existing structures that maintain segregation or exclusion within the campus; meaningfully engaging and building trust with families; empowering students, teachers, and families to engage in advocacy and decision-making. Leadership practices that support inclusive and culturally responsive schools are not out-of-step with traditional approaches to improving student achievement. Rather, these practices tightly align to traditional approaches but are attentive to local context and require a depth of knowledge of special education, bilingual education, and school-community context.

### **School Leadership and Community Context**

Researchers have established that principals are critical to promoting student achievement and creating inclusive and culturally responsive schools that meet the diverse needs of all students. Yet, no two schools or communities are alike, and principals must contend with the unique contextual nuances of each school community. The context in which principals work is critical to their practice because these local features can create opportunities and constraints for improvement efforts or require adaptive approaches to leadership practice. While many

contextual factors impact the principalship, the most salient factors include state context, geography, district context, student demographics, and levels of family engagement. To be certain, these factors also influence students, teachers, families, and schools more broadly.

State context shapes the way principals lead because the state has the power to change policies that directly impact schools, such as changes to the school finance system, instructional programming, and high-stakes accountability policies. Several studies have found that shifts to state policy can change how principals understand aspects of their job and how they engage with teachers (Coburn, 2005). For example, in a study of Texas principals, DeMatthews and Serafini (2021) highlighted how a state special education policy led to widespread delays and denial of special education to eligible students with disabilities. In another study, Coburn (2005) found that a reading policy adapted by California shaped how principals understood their roles and communicated with teachers about the policy changes and reading instruction.

Geographic regions can also shape the way principals engage in leadership practice. For example, principals in urban areas may be able to access a broad array of institutions within their cities. In contrast, principals working in more rural and remote areas may need access to similar institutions. Principals in urban and rural communities may also find greater levels of community trust and buy-in or mistrust depending on an array of historical, cultural, and political dynamics that in turn shape the opportunities and constraints for effective principal leadership. Relatedly, district context can also create unique contextual opportunities and constraints for principals. Researchers have found that when district leaders advocate for equity-focused reforms and provide sustained support over time, effective principals can make meaningful changes on their campuses (Maxwell et al., 2013; Roegman, 2017). However, when districts do not have strong leadership and consistent policies, principals can struggle to find the support to challenge the

status quo and continually work toward high-achieving inclusive schools. Poor leadership at the district level can leave principals struggling to improve working conditions, fighting an overwhelming bureaucracy, or making difficult trade-offs due to a lack of clarity and resources.

Student and community demographics, as well as levels of family engagement, are also important contextual factors that shape principal leadership, especially as most regions throughout the United States continue to diversify. When principals have the diversity skills necessary to work with their student and community populations, they can thrive and help promote a school community environment that supports inclusion and high-levels of student achievement (Khalifa et al., 2016). However, when principals lack such skills or a school community has lacked high-levels of family engagement over prior years, principals may need more time and resources and a broader range of leadership skills to build family and community support for their schools.

### **Principal Demographics**

The teacher workforce feeds the principal workforce since most principals were once teachers. The teacher workforce can, therefore, be considered the initial pool from which principals will emerge. This pool has diversified over the past few decades, although the teacher workforce needs to reflect the student population. The principalship has also diversified nationally, although discrepancies in racial and gender representation persist among principals in certain school types (high school v. elementary school; urban v. rural) and principal demographics do not match student demographics in more diverse regions and locales. Nationally, the principalship has become more female and racially diverse while the average level of experience has decreased, especially in racially diverse schools. Between the 2011-12 and 2020-21 school years, the percentage of female principals in public elementary and

secondary schools rose from 52% to 56% (NCES, 2023). In the 2020-21 school year, the overall racial demographics of public elementary and secondary principals were as follows: 77% White; 10% Black; 9% Hispanic; 1% or less were of two or more races, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Pacific Islander (NCES, 2023). The percentage of public school principals by race has also changed over the same period. For example, the percentage of public school principals who were White declined from 80% to 77%, while the percentage of Hispanic principals grew from 7% to 9% nationwide.

Nationally, in 2020-21, 35% of public school principals had 3 or fewer years of principal experience (NCES, 2023). Thirty-eight percent of principals had between 4 to 9 years of experience, while 28% had more than ten years of principal experience. The overall experience of principals has been relatively stable nationwide. However, the percentage of public school principals with three years of experience as a principal has fluctuated and is trending upward from 33% in 2011-12 to 39% in 2015-16 and 35% in 2020-21 (NCES, 2023). While principal experience has remained relatively stable, the percentage of principals with 3 or fewer years of prior teacher experience has declined from 7.1% in 1993-94 to just 3.5% in 2020-21. Principals with more than ten years of teaching experience have also increased from 55.8% in 1993-94 to 61% in 2020-21.

From the most recent national data, 29,850 principals work in suburban schools making up 32.5% of all principals (NCES, 2022a). This is the largest group of principals by locale followed by city (25,600 or 27.9%), rural (24,510 or 26.7%) and town (11,940 or 13%). In 2020-21, 13.8% of principals were under 40, 42.6% were between 40-49, and 43.6% were 50 or older. Each of these age intervals have fluctuated over time. For example, 20.1% of principals in 2011-12 and 7.5% in 1993-94 were under 40 years old (NCES, 2022a). Across all experience levels



and school types, 11% of principals held a doctoral degree, 25% held an education specialist degree, 62% held a master's degree, and 2% had a Bachelor's degree or lower (NCES, 2023). Average salaries among all principals in 2020-21 was \$113,500, although high school principals averaged the highest salaries at \$119,100, followed by middle school principals at \$116,500 and elementary principals at \$111,400 (NCES, 2023). Male principals' average annual salary was \$115,500 compared to female principals' average annual salary of \$111,900. Some male-female salary discrepancies may be explained by the increased likelihood of women being elementary school principals relative to men, who more often lead high schools.

### **Principal Turnover**

Principal turnover is a critical issue that can hurt student achievement and other aspects of the school community. However, not all turnover is necessarily bad and principals can exit the school for various reasons. Generally, principals leave their campus to retire, to transfer to another principalship in their district or another district, or are promoted, demoted, or fired. Turnover can be positive for a school community when a succession plan has been implemented or when an ineffective principal is replaced with a more effective one. Turnover can be negative for a school community and contribute to higher levels of teacher turnover if the school has a history of quick principal turnover events if a qualified replacement is not readily available, or if the principal's exit disrupts aspects of the school's improvement process. Researchers refer to turnover as attrition and often use the terms "stayers", "movers", and "leavers" to describe individuals who "stay" on the job from one year to the next, "move" to another campus but remain working as a principal, or "leave" the principalship for an entirely different job or retirement.

Nationally, principal turnover has been relatively stable. For example, 2008-09, 79% of principals stayed on the job from the prior year (NCES, 2022b). In 2012-13 and 2016-17, 77% and 8% stayed on the job from the prior year. Six to 7% of principals were “movers” between 2008-09, 2012-13, and 2016-17, while 12%, 11%, and 10% of principals were “leavers” during this same period. Among the principals who were “leavers” in 2016-17, 32% retired, while 59% worked in another job within public schools, and 8% left for a job outside of public education (NCES, 2022b). Context matters when it comes to principal turnover. For example, principal retention in districts where less than 10% of the student population were students of color was 85% in 2016-17 compared to just 80% in schools that served 50% or more of students of color (NCES, 2022b). Likewise, in 2016-17, principals in city and rural locales were also more likely to be movers and leavers than suburban schools. Additional research on principal turnover suggests that principals are more likely to leave lower-performing schools, schools serving more low-income students, and schools serving more students of color for higher-performing, more affluent schools in majority White communities (Bartanen et al., 2019; DeMatthews et al., 2022; Grissom, 2011; Grissom et al., 2019). In addition, principals are more likely to leave urban and rural districts and schools. Some schools have elevated levels of both principal and teacher turnover, which can have serious consequences for student achievement, teacher recruitment and retention, and other important factors that contribute to successful schools.

## **Conclusions**

Principals play an important role in increasing student achievement and creating more inclusive and socially just schools. The diversity of the principal workforce is important because principals of color are more likely to recruit and retain teachers of color, which can positively

impact the achievement of all students. While principal turnover can be problematic, a turnover event is not always adverse. However, higher rates of principal turnover can negatively impact student achievement. Principal turnover rates are higher and potentially more harmful in schools that serve higher proportions of low-income students and students of color in lower-performing rural and urban districts because these schools because these schools may need stable leadership to advance improvement efforts.

### 3. TEXAS PRINCIPAL AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL DEMOGRAPHICS

#### Chapter Preview

Chapter 3 reviews the demographics of Texas public school teachers, assistant principals, and principals. Five key findings are highlighted in this chapter:

- Women are the majority of principals and assistant principals in Texas, and this majority is increasing.
- Hispanic and Black women have seen significant increases in representation in both the principalship and assistant principalship, although they still remain underrepresented overall.
- Most principals in Texas are White, although this proportion is declining.
- Fewer principals are White males in 2023 than in 2011.
- Principals and assistant principals from “Other Races”, including American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, and Pacific Islander, remain significantly underrepresented across the state and have remained relatively stable proportionally.

#### Texas Public School Demographics

To evaluate the diversity of Texas public school principals and assistant principals, it is important to appreciate the state’s student and teacher demographics. The statewide student enrollment in Texas public schools grew and became more racially diverse during the 12-year study period. The number of students in Texas public schools grew from 4,933,617 to 5,518,432 – representing just over 10% growth. 48.86% percent of Texas students are female. During these 12 years, Black and Hispanic enrollment increased from 637,722 to 706,775 and 2,480,000 to 2,921,416 students. Also, Asian enrollment increased from 169,338 to 280,742 (proportionally

3.4% to 5.1%), Pacific Islander enrollment increased from 6,127 to 8,718 (proportionally 0.1% to 0.2%), and Multiracial enrollment increased from 78,419 to 166,565 (1.6% to 2.9%). However, American Indian enrollment decreased from 23,602 to 17,976, from 0.5% to 0.3%.

Overall, the proportion of Hispanic students across the state grew from 50.3% in 2011 to 52.9% in 2023, while Black student enrollment fell from 12.9% to 12.8%. White student enrollment also declined by 5.5% over the same period, from 31.2% to 25.7% of all students (Texas Education Agency, 2022).

In 2023, the state's teacher workforce was less diverse than the student population. Among the 377,658 regular classroom teachers working across the state, 75.6% of regular classroom teachers were female. The majority of teachers also identified as White (55.1%). Just 29.5% identified as Hispanic, and 11.8% identified as Black or African American (TEA, 2023).

At the intersection of race and gender, close to half of Texas teachers were White females or 43.7%, and a fifth of all teachers were Hispanic females or 21.0%. White males represented 12.9% of all teachers and there were nearly equal proportions of Black females (8.0%) and Hispanic males (7.0%). Fewer than 5% of teachers were Black males, just 3.1%—additionally, only 1.5% and 1.4% of teachers identified as Asian and Multiracial females. Asian male, Multiracial male, and American Indian/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander of any gender represented fewer than 1% of all teachers during the 2021-22 school year. The lack of diversity in the teacher workforce relative to the state's student enrollment has important implications for the principal and assistant principal pipeline since virtually all principals and assistant principals were once teachers in Texas.

## **Principal and Assistant Principal Demographics**

Texas principals are not as diverse as the student body, but they match more closely with the state’s teacher and assistant principal population. In 2023, 67.25% of the 8,999 principals in Texas were women (see Table 2.1). In 2011, 60.4% of principals were women. Over the study period, the number of women in the principalship increased by 11.3%, and men were increasingly underrepresented. Principals' racial identities are also not aligned with the student population. The majority (56.8%) of principals identified as White, 25.8% identified as Hispanic, 15.2% identified as Black or African American, 0.9% as Two or More Races, 0.8% identified as Asian, and 0.3% as American Indian or Alaska Native (see Table 2.1). Principals of color increased from 35% to 43% between 2011 and 2023. The raw number and the percent of principals who identified as Hispanic increased 18.3% from 21.8% in 2011-12 to 25.8% in 2022-23. Additionally, there were more Black principals, 11.0% to 15.3%, during the same time period.

**Table 2.1**

*Change in Demographics of Principals from 2011 to 2023*

	2010-11		2022-23		Percentage Change
Demographic Characteristic	n	(%)	n	(%)	
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	4802	(60.4)	6052	(67.3)	22.0%
Male	3143	(39.6)	2947	(32.8)	-17.2%
Total	7945	(100)	8999	(100)	
<b>Race</b>					
Black	877	(11.0)	1375	(15.3)	56.8%
Hispanic	1733	(21.8)	2320	(25.8)	33.9%
White	5160	(64.9)	5107	(56.8)	-1.0%
Other Groups	175	(2.2)	197	(2.2)	12.6%
Total	7945	(100)	8999	(100)	

**Race x Gender**

Black Female	597	(7.5)	986	(16.3)	65.2%
Hispanic Female	1116	(14.1)	1584	(26.2)	41.9%
White Female	2989	(37.6)	3359	(55.5)	12.4%
Other Groups Female	100	(1.3)	123	(2.0)	23.0%
Total Females	4802	(60.4)	6052	(67.3)	26.0%

The demographics of assistant principals look similar to principals although some differences emerge. In 2022-23, females make up 69% of all assistant principals which mirrors the demographics of Texas principals (see Table 2.2). However, there are proportionally more people of color in the assistant principal role than the principal. In 2023, 51.9% of all assistant principals were people of color. When examining changes over time, there was around an 8-percentage-point decrease in the number of White principals and assistant principals. Whereas White assistant principals were the majority in 2011 (55.9%), they were less than 50% in 2023 (48.1%). In 2023, 29.1% of assistant principals identified as Hispanic, an increase from 25.5% in 2011.

**Table 2.2**

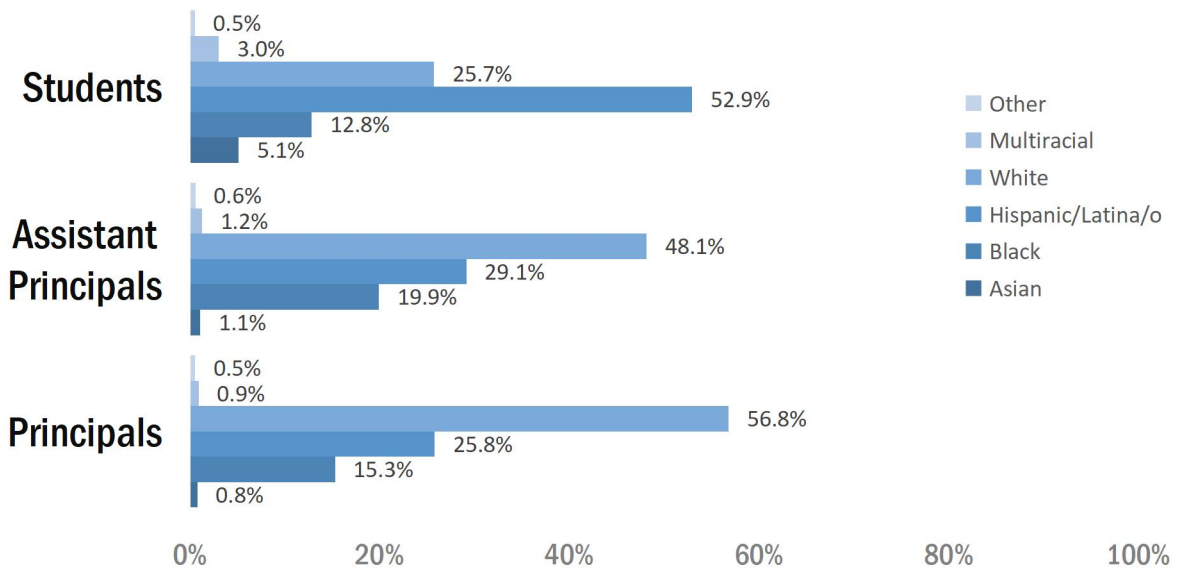
*Change in Demographics of Assistant Principals from 2011 to 2023*

Demographic Characteristic	2010-11		2022-23		Percentage Change
	n	(%)	n	(%)	
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	5850	(60.6)	9520	(69.0)	62.7%
Male	3802	(39.4)	4276	(31.0)	12.5 %
Total	9652	(100)	13796	(100)	42.9%
<b>Race</b>					
Black	1528	(15.8)	2747	(19.9)	79.8%
Hispanic	2466	(25.5)	4017	(29.1)	62.9%
White	5394	(55.9)	6637	(48.1)	23.0%
Other Groups	264	(2.7)	395	(2.9)	49.6%
Total	9652	(100)	13796	(100)	42.9%

<b>Race x Gender</b>						
Black Female	972	(10.1)	1935	(20.3)		99.1%
Hispanic Female	1502	(15.6)	2774	(29.1)		84.7%
White Female	3214	(33.3)	4524	(47.5)		40.8%
Other Groups Female	162	(1.7)	287	(3.0)		77.2%
<b>Total Females</b>	<b>5850</b>	<b>(60.6)</b>	<b>9520</b>	<b>(69.0)</b>		<b>62.7%</b>

**Figure 1**

*Percent of Texas Principals, Assistant Principals, and Students by Race/Ethnicity for the 2022-23 School Year*



Source: Texas Education Research Center (ERC)

Note: All other races include American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, combined due to FERPA protections.



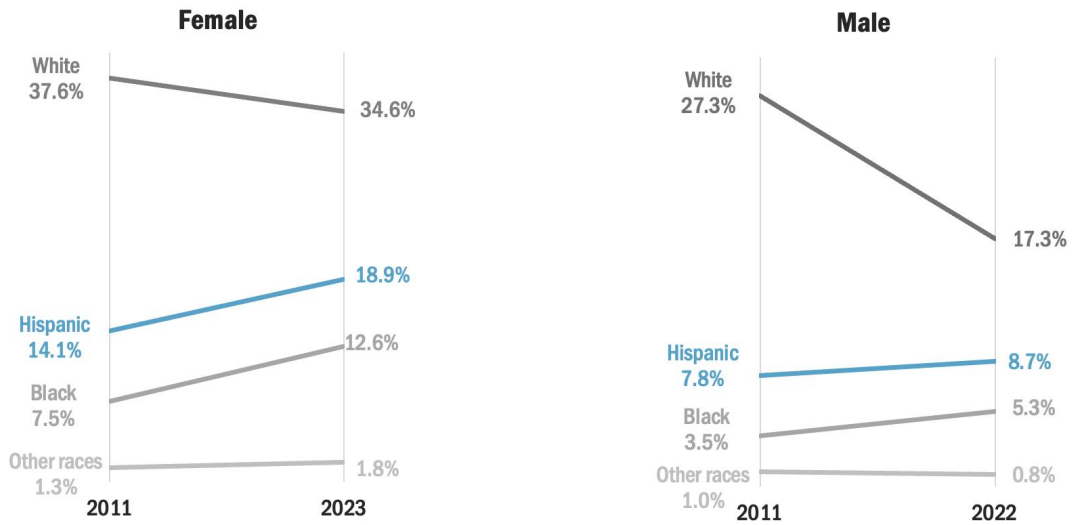
The percentage of school leaders who identified as female increased by approximately 7-9% among both assistant principals and principals between 2011 and 2023. In 2011, 60.4% of principals and 60.6% of assistant principals were female. By 2023, 67.3% of principals and 69% of assistant principals were female.

### **Principal and Assistant Principal Race and Gender**

At the intersection of race and gender, the picture of diversity among principals and assistant principals is more complex. In 2011, 27.3% of principals were White males but, by 2023, the percentage declined to 17.3% (See Figure 2.1). The proportion of Hispanic and Black male principals slightly increased while the proportion of males classified as “Other Races” slightly declined. Certain racial groups among females saw the largest representation increase over the study period. The proportion of White female principals declined by about 3%, while Hispanic and Black women saw more significant increases in representation within the principalship. For example, in 2011, just 14.1% of principals identified as Hispanic but, by 2023, the proportion rose to 18.9%. Similarly, Black women in the principalship increased from 7.5% to 12.6% between 2011 and 2023. Females classified as “Other Races” saw a marginal increase, which highlights a problem in recruiting Asian, American Indian, and other racial groups into the principalship.

**Figure 2.1**

*Changes in Diversity among Principals in Texas from 2011-2023*

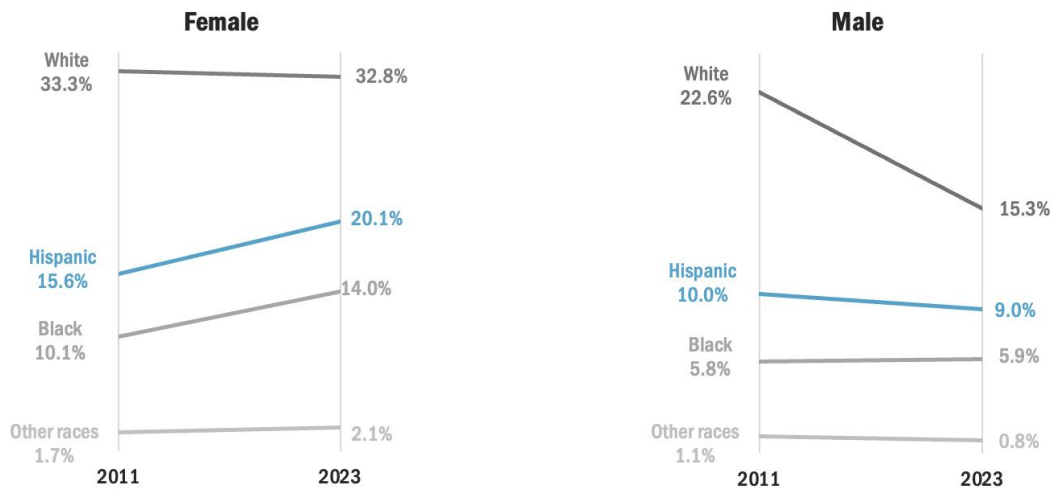


**Percent of principals by race within gender categories from 2010-11 to 2022-23**  
 Source: Texas Education Research Center (ERC)

Note: The percent of female and males within the racial groups of American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Multiracial, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander were all less than 1% for both years and combined due to FERPA protections.

**Figure 2.2**

## Changes in Diversity among Assistant Principals in Texas from 2011-2023



**Percent of assistant principals by race within gender categories from 2010-11 to 2022-23**  
Source: Texas Education Research Center (ERC)

Note: The percent of female and males within the racial groups of American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Multiracial, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander were all less than 1% for both years and combined due to FERPA protections.

At the intersection of race and gender, assistant principals' demographics are closely aligned to principals'. In 2011, 22.6% of assistant principals were White males. By 2023, the percentage declined to 15.3% (see Figure 2.2). The proportion of Hispanic male assistant principals slightly declined during this same period from 10% to 9%. Black males slightly increased over the study period from 5.8% to 5.9%, while principals from all "Other Races" declined slightly to 0.8%. White females saw a slight decline, while all other racial groups saw growth in the assistant principalship. White females made up 33.3% of the assistant principals in Texas in 2011 but decreased slightly to 32.8% in 2023. Hispanic women in the assistant principalship increased from 15.6% to 20.1%, and Black women increased from 10.1% to 14.0% during the study period. Women from "Other Races" grew from 1.7% to 2.1%.

## **Conclusions**

The Texas principalship has become more diverse in terms of race and gender. The increase in diversity is a sign of progress and increased representation that should be acknowledged and celebrated. However, more work is still needed to have a truly diverse and representative school leader pipeline. In particular, the proportion of White male leaders has been shrinking, and that of White female leaders has remained relatively stagnant. Conversely, Black and Hispanic women have seen notable growth in representation, while Black and Hispanic men had some growth in the principalship. The state's principal and assistant principal workforce is closely aligned to the teacher workforce, suggesting that future diversification of the school leadership pipeline will depend somewhat on who enters the teaching profession in the coming years.

## **4. PRINCIPAL AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY CONTEXT**

### **Chapter Preview**

Principal and assistant principal demographics at a statewide level mask many demographic trends within specific geographic locations within Texas. Chapter 4 attends to context. Four key findings are presented:

- Racial demographics among school leaders vary across contexts.
- Increases in racial diversity were most pronounced in schools located in rural areas and towns.
- White principals and assistant principals were substantially underrepresented in more economically disadvantaged schools.
- Most high school principals are male, although the gender gap has steadily decreased over time.

### **School Leadership Demographics Across ESC Regions**

Texas has 20 Education Service Centers (ESCs). Each ESC represents a specific region within the state. For example, Region 4 represents the Houston area, while Region 19 represents the El Paso area. Each region serves a select group of districts, with some ESCs serving extremely large and dense population centers like Houston (Region 4) and Dallas/Richardson (Region 10). Other ESCs serve more rural and less densely populated areas like Huntsville (Region 6) and Mount Pleasant (Region 8). While Texas is racially diverse as a state, each region is unique and is more or less racially diverse compared to the state. For example, in 2023, 56.8 percent of Texas principals were White. However, the majority of principals identified as Hispanic in Regions 1, 2, and 19. Regions 4, 5, and 10 had relatively higher proportions of Black principals (28%, 28%, 25%) (see Figure 4.1). More than 50% of principals were White in all

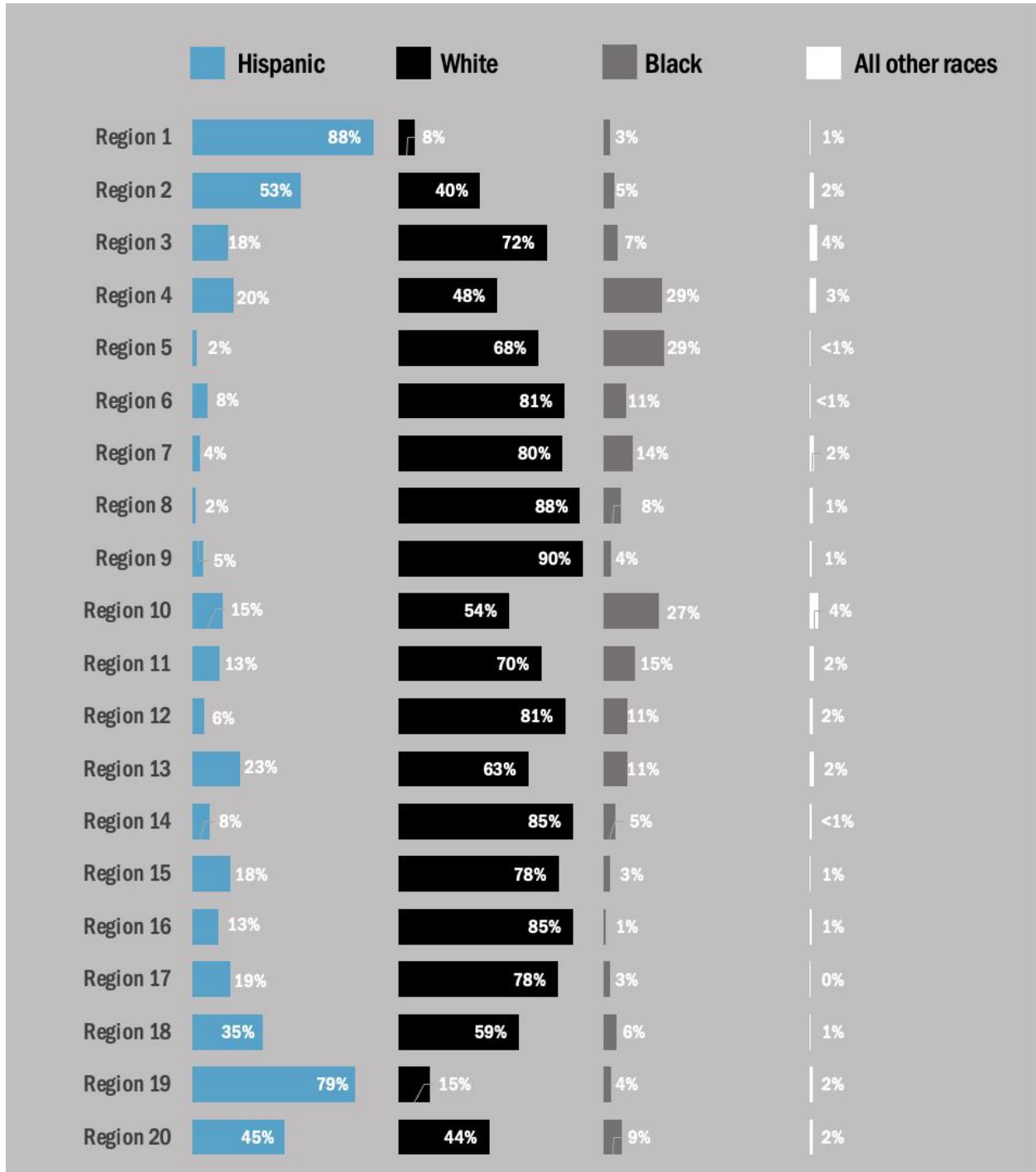
regions except 1, 2, 4, 19, and 20. These proportions indicate that, in certain parts of the state, the principal workforce is closer to or reflects the student population.

Similar patterns emerged among most regions for assistant principals although the assistant principal workforce appeared to be more diverse than the principal workforce, potentially signaling increased principal diversity in future years. For example, in 2023, 48.1% of assistant principals across the state identified as White (see Figure 4.2). Yet, in regions 1 and 19, just 7% and 16% identified as White. In regions 1 and 19, the overwhelming majority of assistant principals identified as Hispanic (88% and 82%). Regions 4, 5, and 10 had the most Black assistant principals (34%, 30%, and 33%).

When looking at the principal and assistant principal workforce within regions, some interesting patterns emerge. Some regions have very similar assistant principal and principal demographics that show little or no change in demographics. For example, in Region 2, 53% of principals identified as Hispanic while 41% and 4% identified as White and Black, respectively. Region 2's assistant principal demographics were very similar (56% Hispanic, 39% White, and 3% Black). Other regions may likely see increased principal diversification based on trends in the region. For example, Region 12 (Waco) has a more racially diverse assistant principal workforce in comparison to their principal workforce. In Region 12, 83% of principals identified as White while only 69% of assistant principals identified as White. Just 6% and 9% of principals were Hispanic and Black in the region, but 11% and 18% of the region's assistant principals were Hispanic and Black, respectively. Only Regions 18 and 19 had proportionally more White assistant principals than White principals.

#### **Figure 4.1**

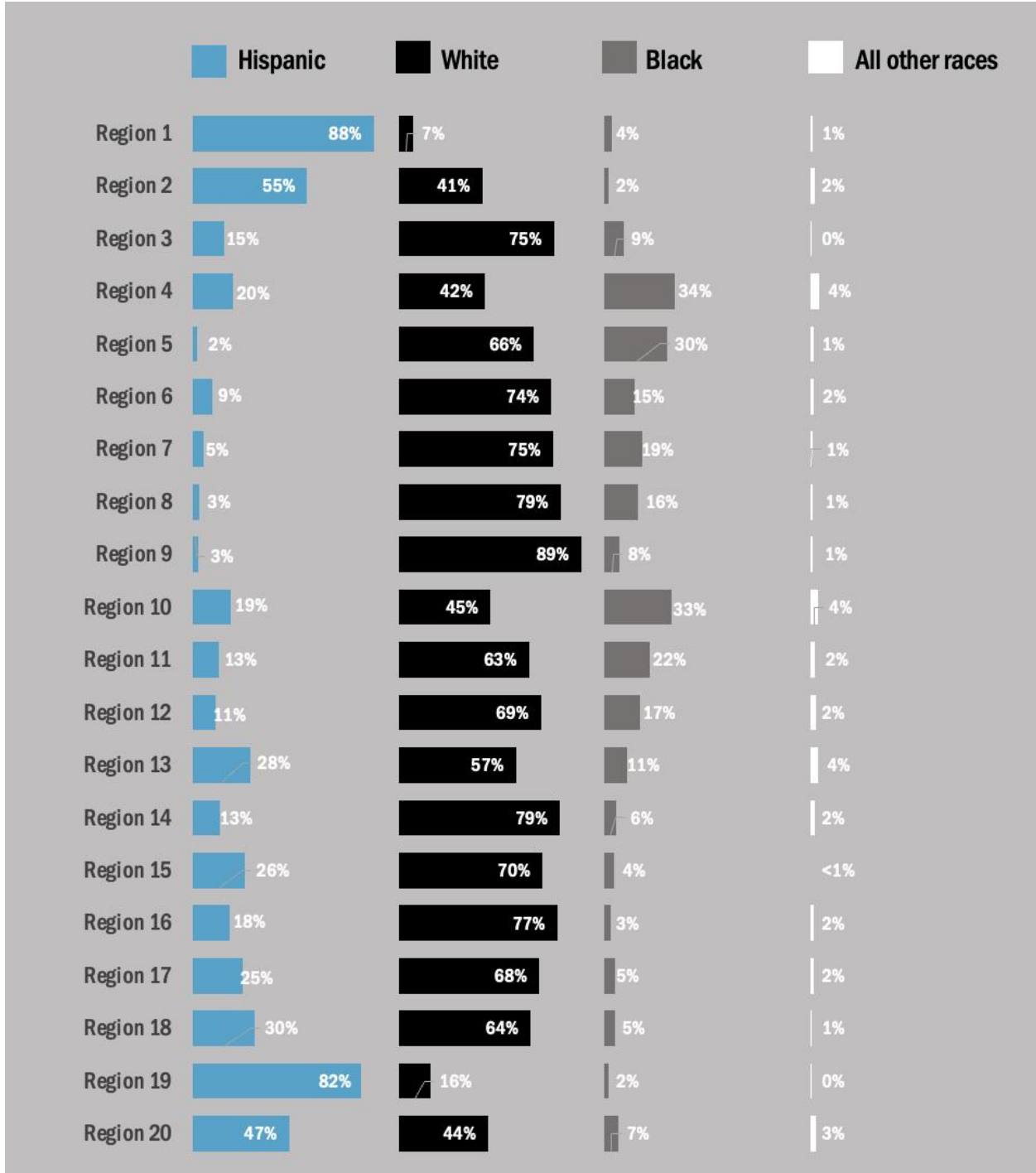
*Principal Racial Demographics during the 2022-23 School Year by ESC Region*



Note: All other races include American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Multiracial combined due to FERPA protections.

**Figure 4.2**

*Assistant Principal Racial Demographics during the 2022-23 School Year by ESC Region*



Note: All other races include American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Multiracial combined due to FERPA protections.



## School Locale

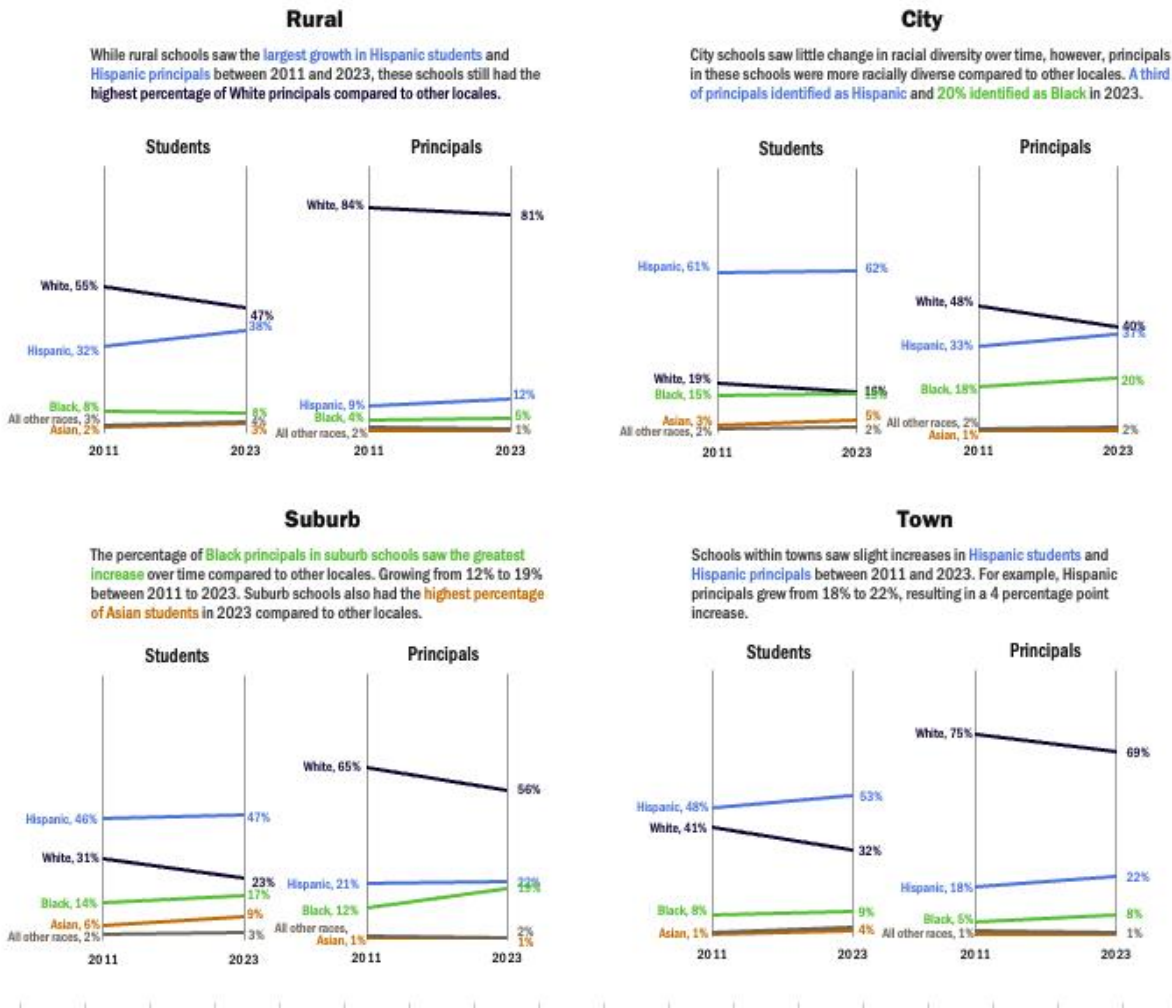
The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) uses four broad locale classification codes: rural, town, suburban, and city. Each classification reflects a “general geographic indicator that describes the type of area where a school is located” (NCES, 2021). During the 2023 school year, 39.9% of principals served in cities, compared to 26.7% in suburbs, 11.6% in towns, and 21.7% in rural locales. Similar to ESC regions, racial groups were not equitably distributed across locales. However, the principal workforce became more diverse across locales between 2011 and 2023, with the greatest changes in schools located in rural areas and towns (see Figure 4.3). The smallest changes in racial diversity for principals were in campuses located in cities. Suburbs saw a slight increase in principal diversity.

For assistant principals, more substantial increases in diversity were apparent across locales. Schools in rural locales had the largest growth in Hispanic assistant principals, from 12% in 2011 to 17% in 2023. Similarly, schools located in towns also had important gains in Hispanic and Black assistant principals, with a roughly two percentage point increase over time. Additionally, suburban schools had a two percentage point increase and a seven percentage point increase among Hispanic and Black assistant principals. In contrast, the racial demographics of assistant principals in city schools were stagnant over the study period.

White principal leadership decreased by three and six percentage points in town and rural locales, respectively, and the percentage of White assistant principals decreased by roughly similar magnitudes (see Figure 4.4). The most significant change between 2011 and 2023 was evident in Hispanic leadership within rural locales. Hispanic principals represented 9% of all rural principals in 2011 but grew to represent 12% of principals in 2023. Additionally, the representation of Hispanic assistant principals increased from 12% to 17% in rural schools.

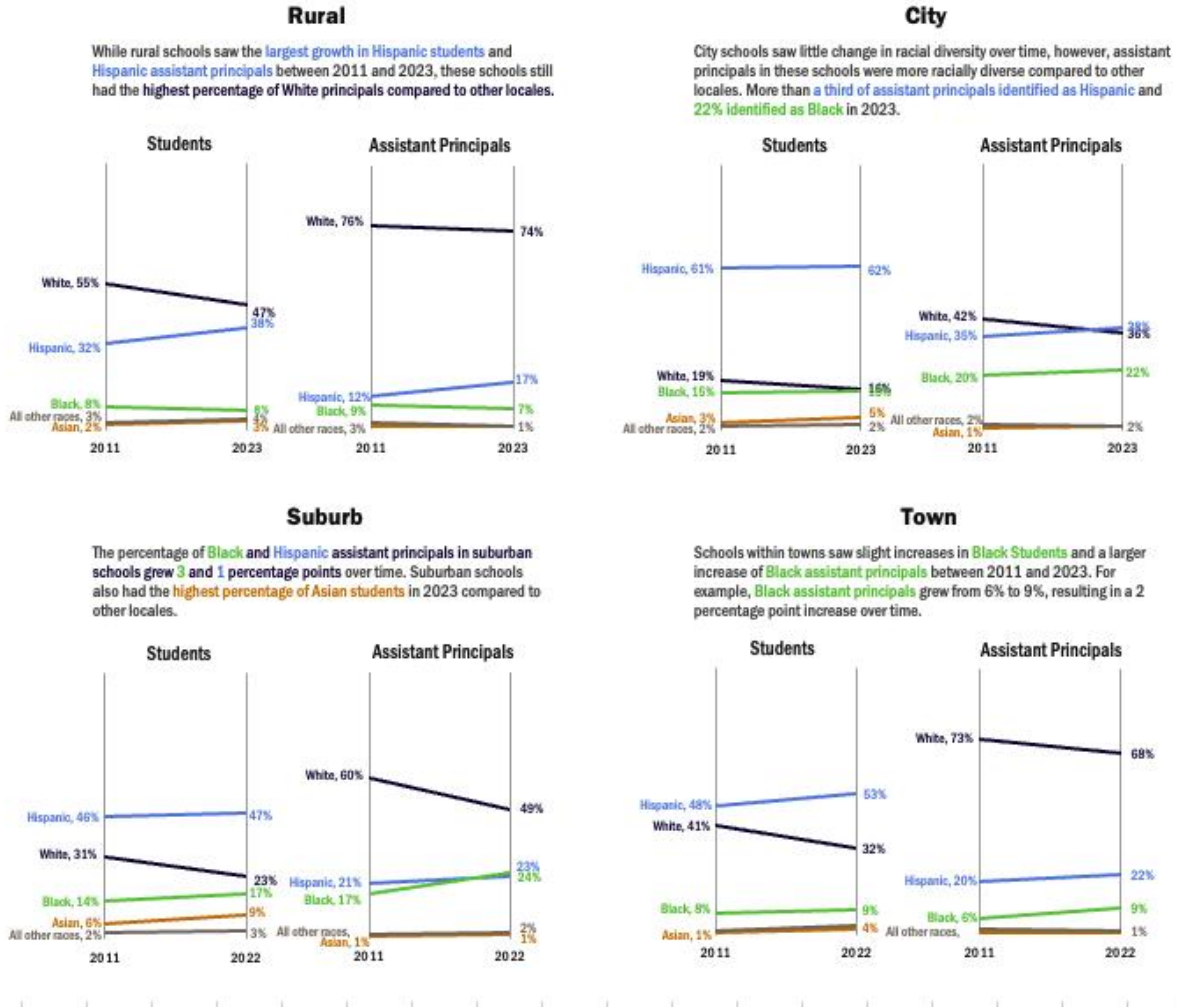
**Figure 4.3**

*Percent of Texas Principals and Students by Racial Group and Locale between 2011 and 2023 School Years*



**Figure 4.4**

*Percent of Texas Assistant Principals and Students by Racial Group and Locale between 2011 and 2023 School Years*



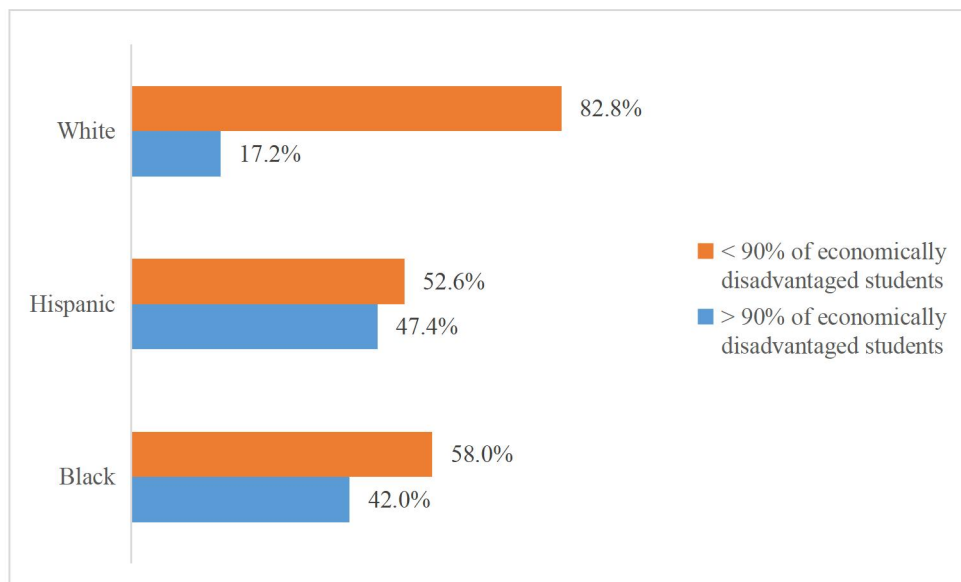
**School Leadership Demographics by Campus Student Population**

Another way to consider the demographics of the principal and assistant principal workforce is to assess the student populations they serve. Recall that nearly 57% of principals and 48% of assistant principals identified as White during the 2023 academic year. One might expect principal demographics to be relatively the same across school types or populations of students served – such as schools with more or less students classified by the state as

economically disadvantaged. However, in schools where more than 90% of students were classified as economically disadvantaged (n = 2,598 principals and 3,191 assistant principals with working half-time or more for the campus, or fte of .5 or greater), just 33.6% of principals and 24.8% of assistant principals were White (see Figure 4.5).

**Figure 4.5**

*Distribution of Principals in Texas and in the Most Economically Disadvantaged Schools in 2022*



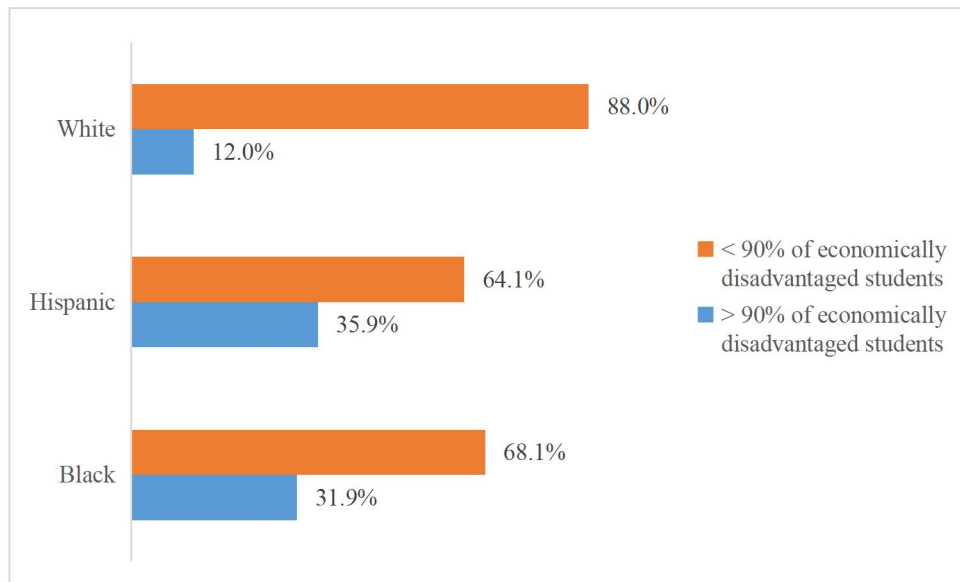
Source: Texas Education Research Center (ERC)

In schools with over 90% of economically disadvantaged students, 33.6% of principals and 24.8% of assistant principals were White. In these most economically disadvantaged schools, 42.3% of principals were Hispanic, almost double their representation across the state, and 22.1% were Black. 45% of assistant principals were Hispanic and 27.3% were Black (see Figure 4.6). Yet in the state, 19.9% of assistant principals were Black and 29.1% were Hispanic. These

findings suggest that White principals and assistant principals are more likely to serve in communities with greater resources than principals of color.

**Figure 4.6**

*Distribution of Assistant Principals in Texas and in the Most Economically Disadvantaged Schools in 2023*



Source: Texas Education Research Center (ERC)

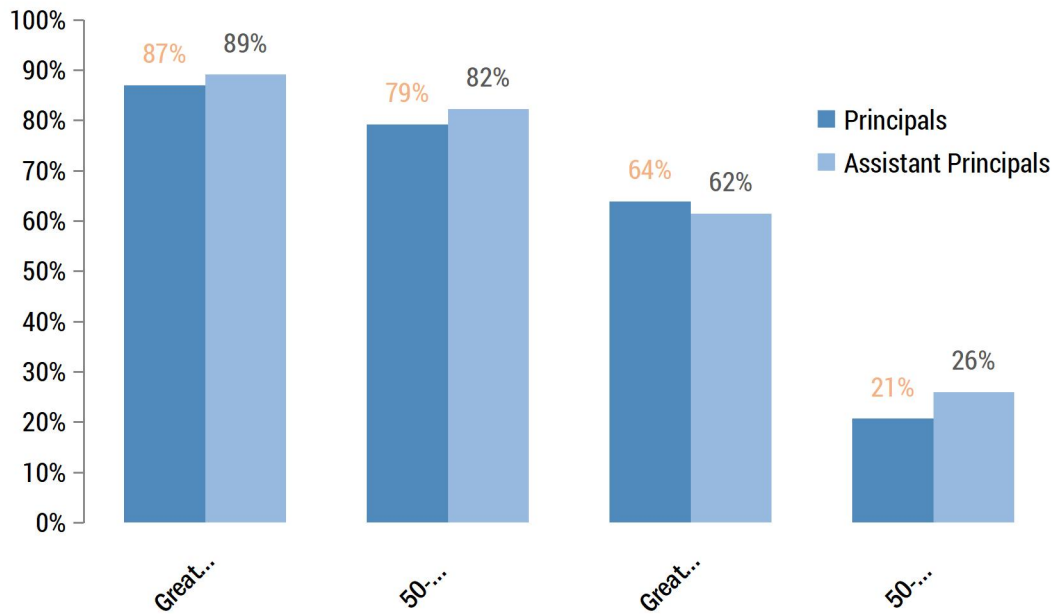
Nearly three-quarters, or 70%, of school leaders, were female in the least affluent schools, where more than 90% of students were classified as economically disadvantaged, and in the most affluent schools, where fewer than 10% of students were classified as economically disadvantaged. Additionally, experience among principals remained relatively high between the most and least affluent schools. Mean years of experience was 18.8 in the least affluent schools and 20 in the most affluent schools for principals. The mean years of experience among assistant principals were 15.6, which is the least affluent, and 15 years in the most affluent schools.

Median pay 2023 in schools serving more than 90% of students classified as economically disadvantaged was \$99,742 compared to \$105,929 for principals in schools where less than 10% of students were economically disadvantaged. A similar trend in pay was found among assistant principals, where median pay in the least affluent schools was \$78,987, nearly three thousand less than the most affluent schools, or \$80,410.

In campuses where half to three-quarters of all students identified as Hispanic during the 2023 school year, just 21.2% of principals and 26.4% of assistant principals were also Hispanic. In schools where more than 75% of students were Hispanic, 64% of principals and 62% of assistant principals identified as Hispanic (see Figure 4.7)

**Figure 4.7**

*Racial Match of School Leaders in Majority White Schools and Majority Hispanic Schools in 2023*



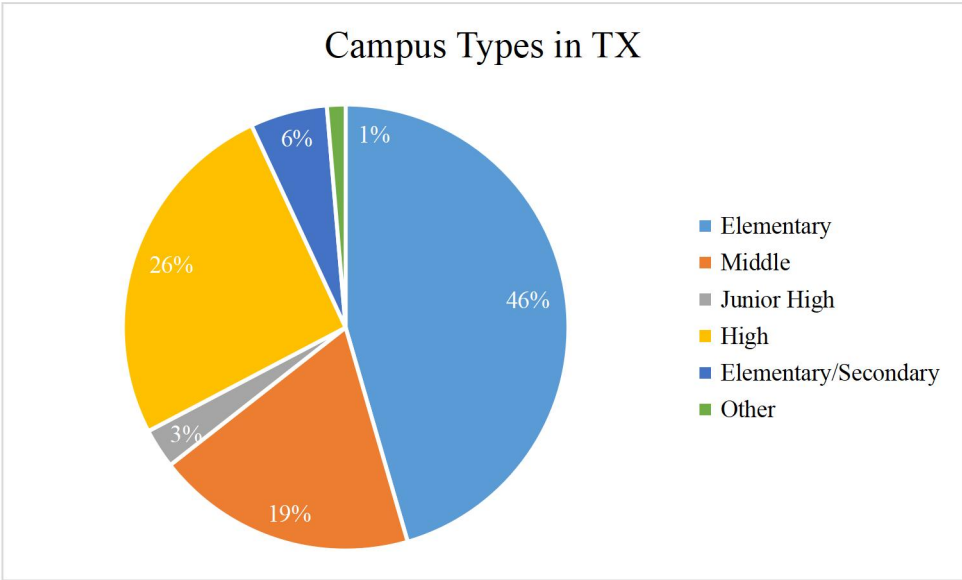
Note: Light grey text refers to percent school White leaders; light blue text refers to percent Hispanic school leaders.

### School Leadership Demographics by Campus Type

Texas has many different campus types across the state. In 2023, 52% of campuses were elementary, 16% were middle schools, 2% were junior high schools, 17% were high schools, 11% were elementary/secondary schools, and 2% were other grade groups (see Figure 4.8).

**Figure 4.8**

*Distribution of Campus Types in Texas in 2023*



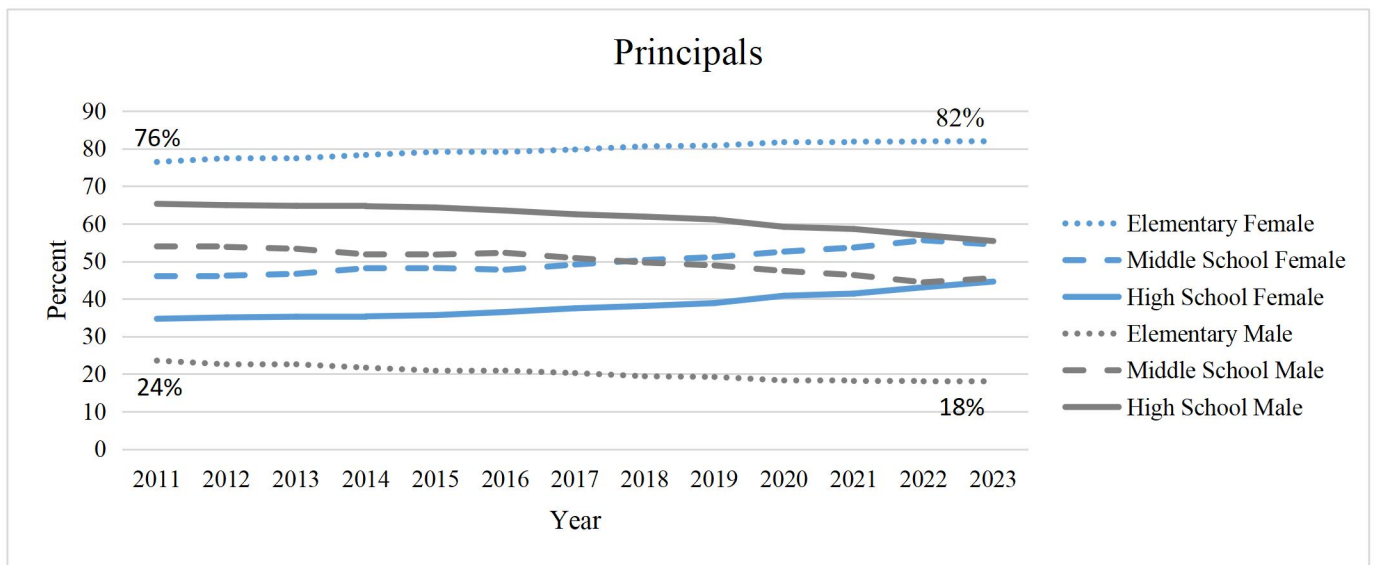
Source: Texas Education Research Center (ERC)

The representation of females in the principalship declines as students grow. In 2023, just about half (55%) of middle school principals and only 45% of high school principals were female, whereas 82% of elementary school principals were female. Recall that the representation of males in the principalship has declined between 2011 and 2023 from 40% to 33%. Thus, despite a larger share of female principals in Texas, the majority of high school principals were

male in 2023 (55.9%). However, this gender gap among high school principals steadily declined over the study period. Also, females became the majority of middle school principals in 2023 (see Figure 4.9), shifting from 2011 when the majority of representation was male. The gender gap in elementary school leadership increased over time. Table 4.1 provides data concerning the gender gap in different types of campuses over time.

**Figure 4.9**

*Change in Representation of Female and Male Principals serving Elementary School, Middle School, and High School Campuses between 2011 and 2023*



Source: Texas Education Research Center (ERC)

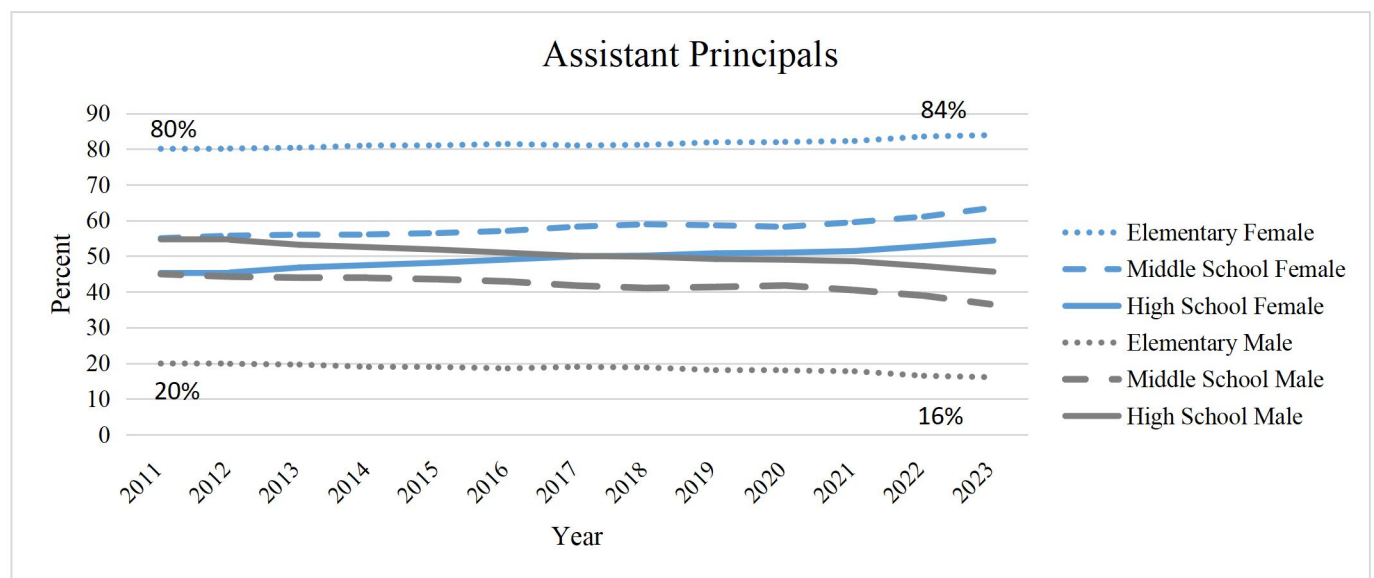
In 2023, most assistant principals (greater than 50%) across all school types were female. Specifically, 83.5% of elementary school assistant principals, 61.1% of middle school assistant principals, and 52.8% of high school assistant principals were female in 2022. As shown in Figure 4.10, in contrast, during the 2011 school year, assistant principals in high schools and



elementary/secondary schools were more likely to be male (54.7% and 56.4%). The largest gender gap in 2022 was in elementary schools, where 83.5% of assistant principals were female, a slightly larger gap than in 2011 when 80.3% of assistant principals were female.

**Figure 4.10**

*Change in Representation of Female and Male Assistant Principals serving Elementary School, Middle School, and High School Campuses between 2011 and 2023*



Source: Texas Education Research Center (ERC)

**Table 4.1**

*Change in Representation of Female and Male Principals and Assistant Principals serving Elementary School, Middle School, and High School Campuses between 2011 and 2023*

Year	Principal (% Female)			Assistant Principal (% Female)		
	Elementary	Middle School	High School	Elementary	Middle School	High School
<b>2011</b>	76.44	46.04	34.7	80.07	55.02	45.29
<b>2012</b>	77.43	46.18	35.05	80.15	55.74	45.44

<b>2013</b>	77.42	46.67	35.24	80.37	56.02	46.82
<b>2014</b>	78.32	48.16	35.34	81.01	56.1	47.49
<b>2015</b>	79.13	48.21	35.67	81.06	56.47	48.18
<b>2016</b>	79.11	47.75	36.5	81.43	57.09	49.06
<b>2017</b>	79.76	49.14	37.49	81.01	58.27	49.94
<b>2018</b>	80.61	50.33	38.11	81.19	58.93	50.15
<b>2019</b>	80.79	51.1	38.87	81.92	58.64	50.8
<b>2020</b>	81.72	52.58	40.83	82.01	58.22	50.99
<b>2021</b>	81.86	53.66	41.4	82.25	59.52	51.43
<b>2022</b>	81.95	55.59	43.08	83.52	61.07	52.78
<b>2023</b>	81.98	54.48	44.6	83.91	63.57	54.34

More than 50% of principals were White regardless of campus type; however, the share of White principals declined in every school type, including elementary, middle, and high school campuses, between 2011 and 2023. Hispanic and Asian school leaders were proportionally more likely to serve in elementary schools. Sixty-one percent of Hispanic and 67% of Asian principals served in elementary schools in 2023. In comparison, only half of Black, White, and Multiracial principals served in elementary schools in 2023.

## Conclusions

Texas is a racially diverse state, and the different regions serve different student populations. Some areas have a more diverse principal and assistant principal workforce than others, but the principalship is becoming more diverse regardless of context. Women are the majority of principals and assistant principals across the state. While males are still the majority of principals in high schools, women and women of color have seen significant increases in principalship access. In addition, nearly half of Texas principals are women, which has historically been male-dominated. While findings reflect significant progress in diversifying the

principalship, inequities exist within specific regions, locales, and school demographics, especially regarding economic advantage.

## 5. PRINCIPAL TURNOVER: TRENDS AND STUDENT OUTCOMES

### Chapter Preview

While the principalship is becoming more diverse in many parts of the state, other trends in principal race, experience, and retention can have important implications for student experiences and outcomes. Chapter 5 includes five key findings that more closely consider principal retention and student outcomes:

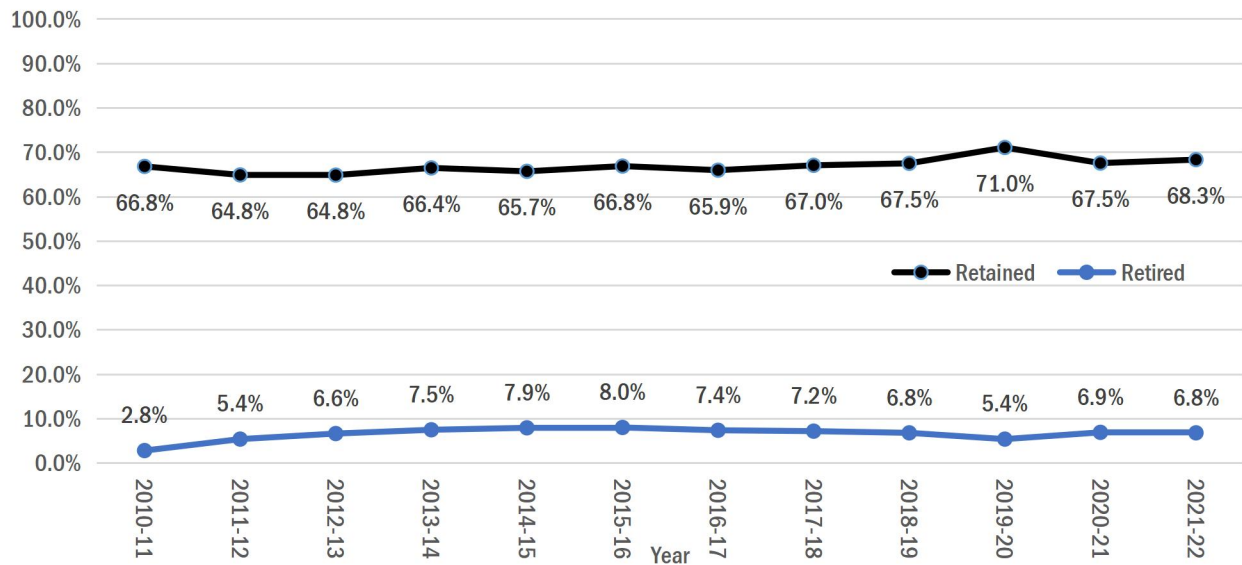
- The average retention rate for principals over the course of the study was 66.9%.
- Female principals are retained at slightly higher rates than male principals, and rural schools have lower rates of principal retention compared to campuses in suburban areas and cities.
- In highly disadvantaged schools, principal turnover was nearly 50%.
- Principal retention is higher in higher performing schools.
- Male teachers are almost twice as likely as female teachers to be promoted to principal within 3 years and are promoted to principal with fewer years of experience than females, on average.

### Principal Retention, Mobility, and Retirement

Two-thirds of principals were retained annually except 2019-20 when 71% of principals were retained (see Figure 5.1). Retirement rates in the principalship for 2010-11 remained low during the study period and never reached above eight percent (see Figure 5.1). Most commonly, principals served for three to five years, yet 40.5% of principals served as school leaders of their campus for 6 or more years (see Figure 5.2).

**Figure 5.1**

*Principal Retention and Retirement Across all Campuses from 2010-11 to 2021-22*



Note: Retirement reflects principals from the 2010-11 cohort. The 2021-22 school year is the last year principal retention rates can be calculated based on current data.

**Figure 5.2**

*Number of Years of Continued Service on Campus in the Principal Role*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
6.74	11.93	14.66	13.9	12.22	9.74	7.42	6.38	5.28	3.37	3.09	5.26

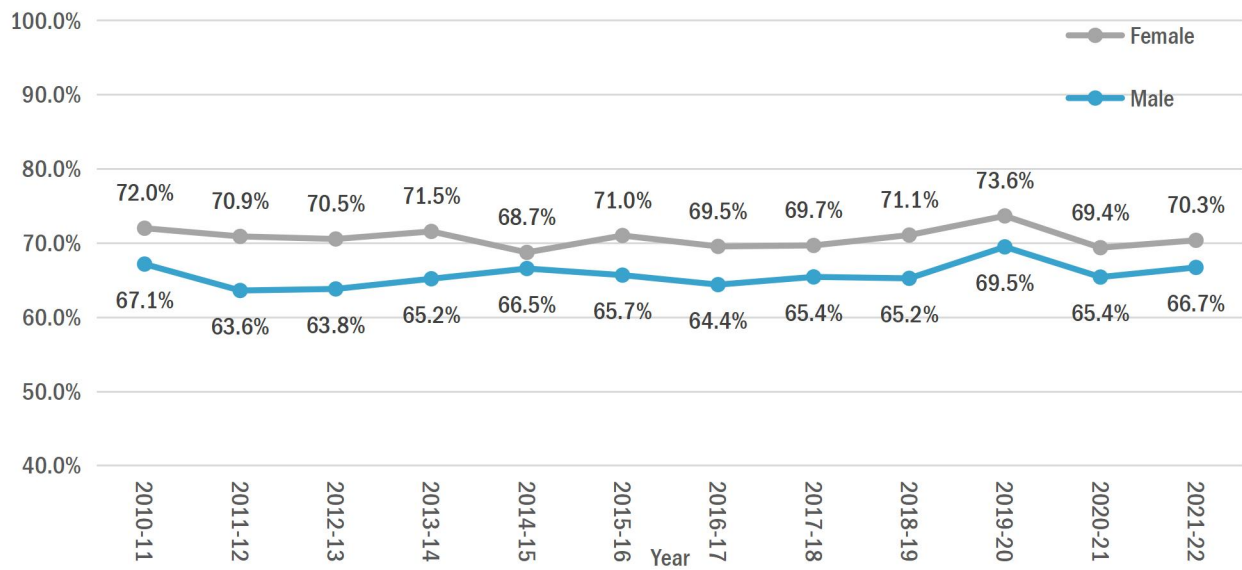
**Principal Retention by Gender and Race/Ethnicity**

As previously noted, the average retention rate in 2022 was 68.7% for all principals across all Texas public schools. The average principal retention rate for females across study years was 70.7%, nearly five percentage points higher than males who averaged 66%. In every

year, females were retained at a higher rate than male principals (see Figure 5.3). In the most recent year of available data, 70.3% of female principals remained in their leadership position on their campus between 2021 and 2022 compared to 66.7% of male principals.

**Figure 5.3**

*Principal Retention between 2010-11 and 2021-22 by Gender*



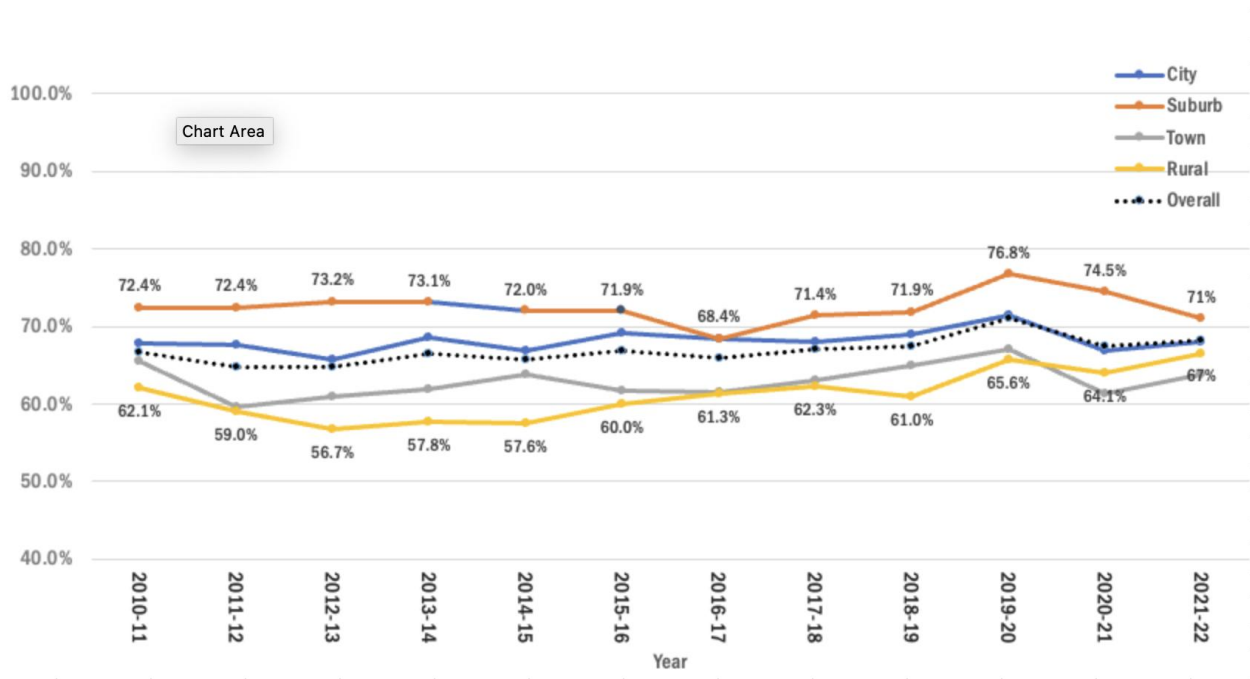
### Principal Retention by Locale

Principal retention varies by locale across the state of Texas. In the most recent year, suburban principals were most likely to be retained compared to their city, town, and rural counterparts. Nearly 75% of suburban principals stayed at the same school in the most recent study year compared to 67% for city, 61% town, and 64% for rural districts. Principal retention

in suburban schools was highest per locale type across the entire study period, ranging from a low of 68.4% in 2017 to a high of 76.8% in 2020. Cities had a principal retention range from 65.7% to 71.5%, while towns had a principal retention rate from 59.6% to 67.1%. Rural schools had the lowest retention rate among the locales, ranging from 56.7% in 2013 to only 65.6% in 2020 (see Figure 5.4).

**Figure 5.4**

*Principal Retention between 2011-2022 for Texas by Locale*

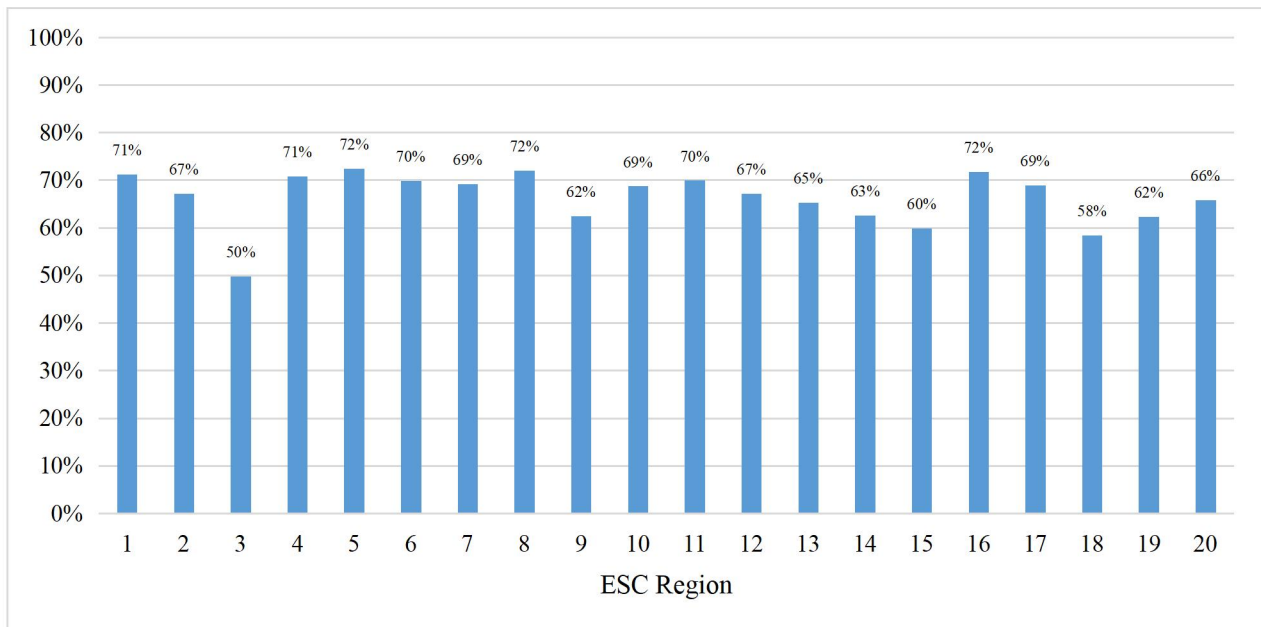


### Principal Retention by ESC

Principal retention rates varied by ESC region. In 2022-23, retention rates of campus principals varied across ESC region from a high of 72% in Region 8 to low of 50% in Region 3 (see Figure 5.5). When retention rates between 2010-11 and 2022-23 are compared, half of ESC regions saw declines in retention. Region 20 remained stable and the remaining nine saw increases in principal retention. Nevertheless, there was annual variation over time.

**Figure 5.5**

*Principal Retention Rate by ESC Region in 2021-22*



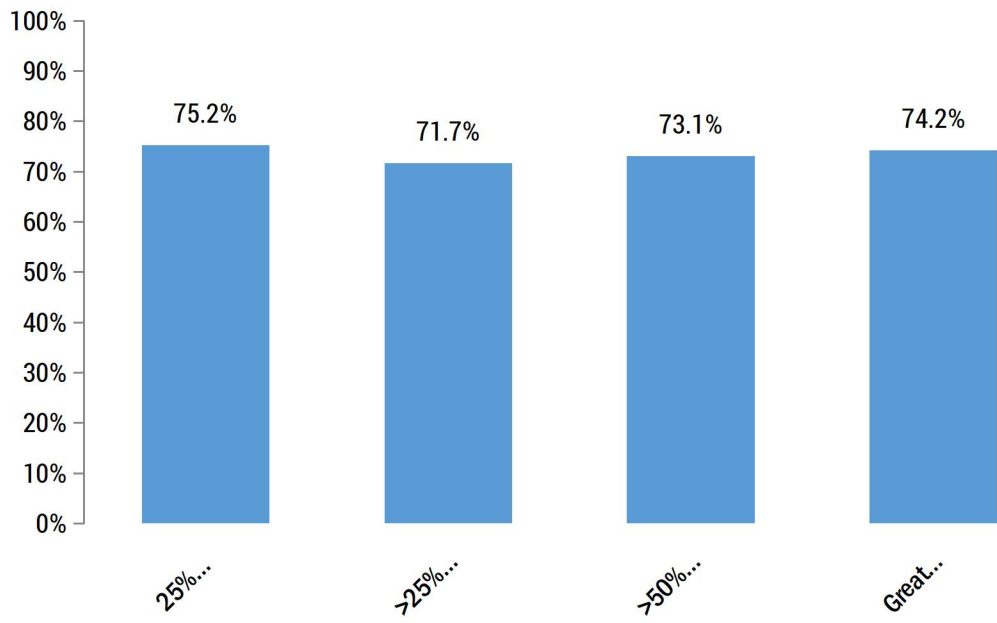
### **Principal Retention and Student Body Characteristics**

Principal retention varied slightly by student characteristics including student race and economic disadvantage. Among instructional campuses where more than three-quarters of students were Hispanic, principal retention was, on average, 10% less than campuses where 75% or fewer enrolled students were Hispanic, 66.9% compared to more than 72% (see Figure 5.6). The disparities were even more pronounced between instructional campuses serving more than 75% Black students, where retention was 46.8% during the 2021-22 school year (see Figure 5.7)

**Figure 5.6**

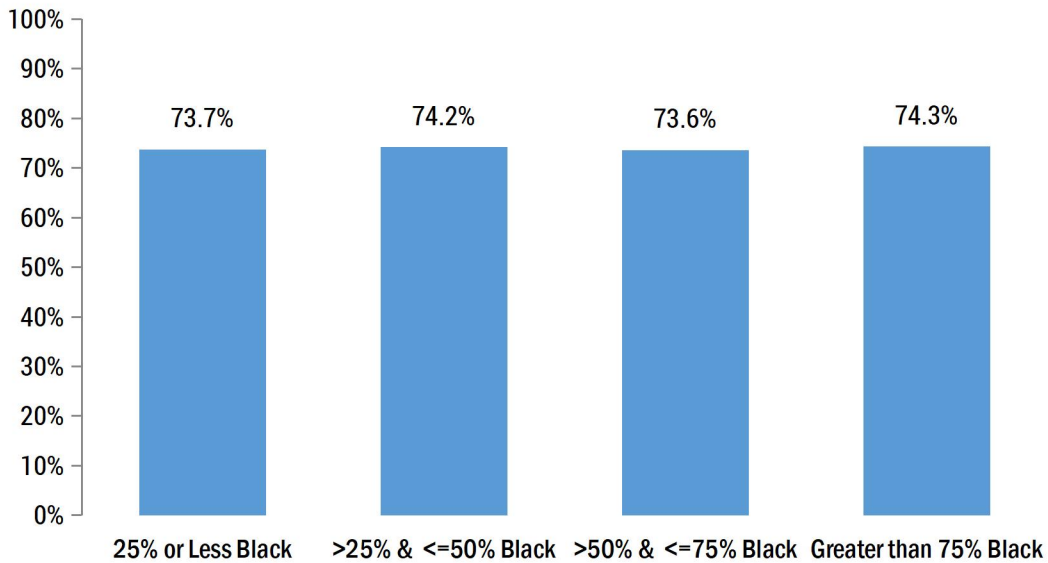
*Principal Retention by Hispanic Student Enrollment within Instructional Campuses in 2022-23*





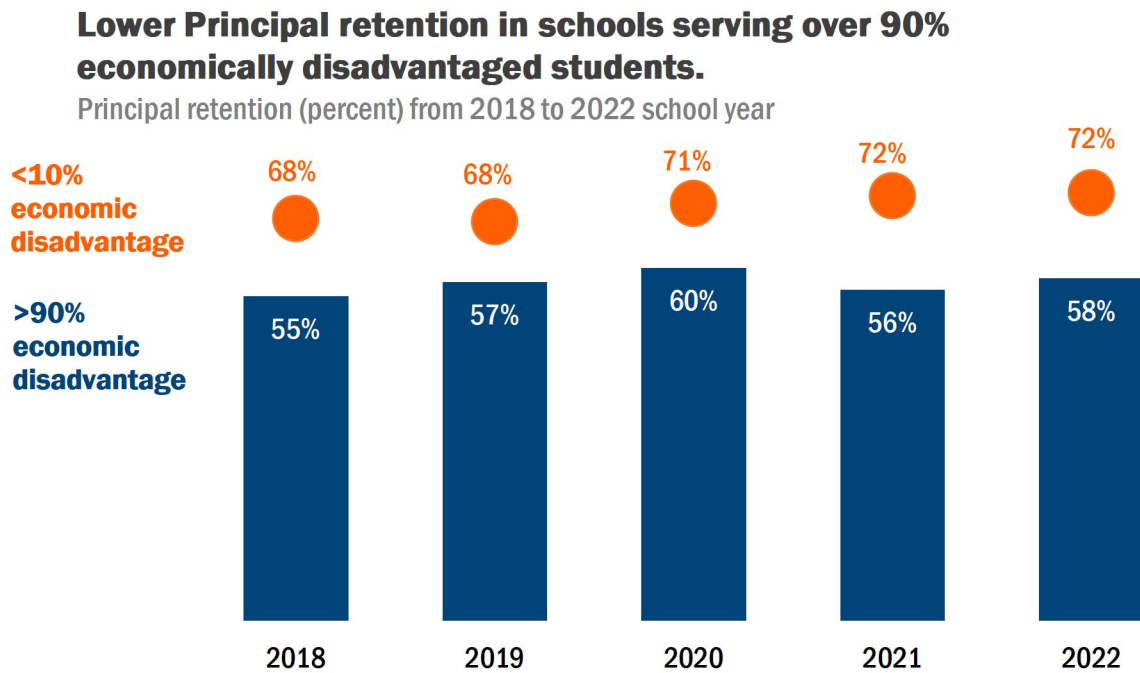
**Figure 5.7**

*Principal Retention by Black Student Enrollment within Instructional Campuses in 2021-22*



Principal retention varies by schools serving more or less students classified as economically disadvantaged. The average retention rate 2022 was 72.4% for all principals across Texas public schools. Retention was higher in most affluent schools and less in economically disadvantaged ones. The gap in retention between these school types was consistently greater than 10% in recent years. For example, in 2022, schools serving less than 10% of economically disadvantaged students had 72% of principals return the next year, compared to 58% in schools serving more than 90% of economically disadvantaged students (see Figure 5.8).

**Figure 5.8**



*Principal Retention within the Most and Least Affluent Schools in Texas from 2018-2022*

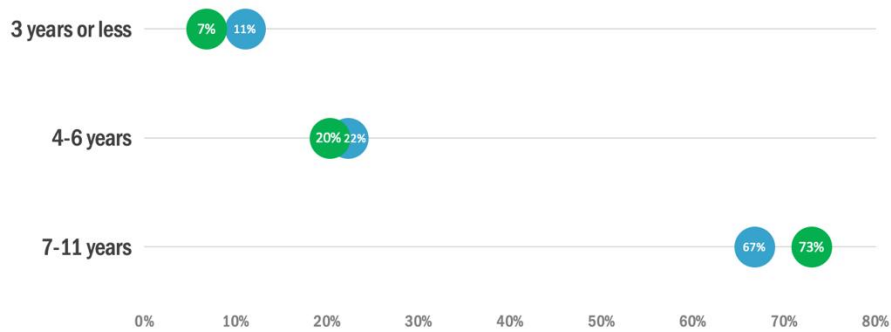
### **Assistant Principal and Principal Pipeline: Racial and Gender Demographics**

The average principal moves from a teaching position to the principalship in 7.7 years. Additionally, more than 50% of teachers were only promoted to principal eight years of service and more than 50% of assistant principals were promoted to principal within four years. An analysis of principals' career trajectories from 2011 to 2022, specifically what position they held each year, shows differences in promotion timing per an individual's race and gender. Male and female teachers and assistant principals were not promoted to principal at equal rates. Figure 5.9 shows that males were almost twice as likely as females to be promoted from teacher to principal within 3 years (11% compared to 6.8%).

**Figure 5.9**

*Time to Principalship from a Teaching Position by Gender for the 2022 Cohort of Texas Principals*

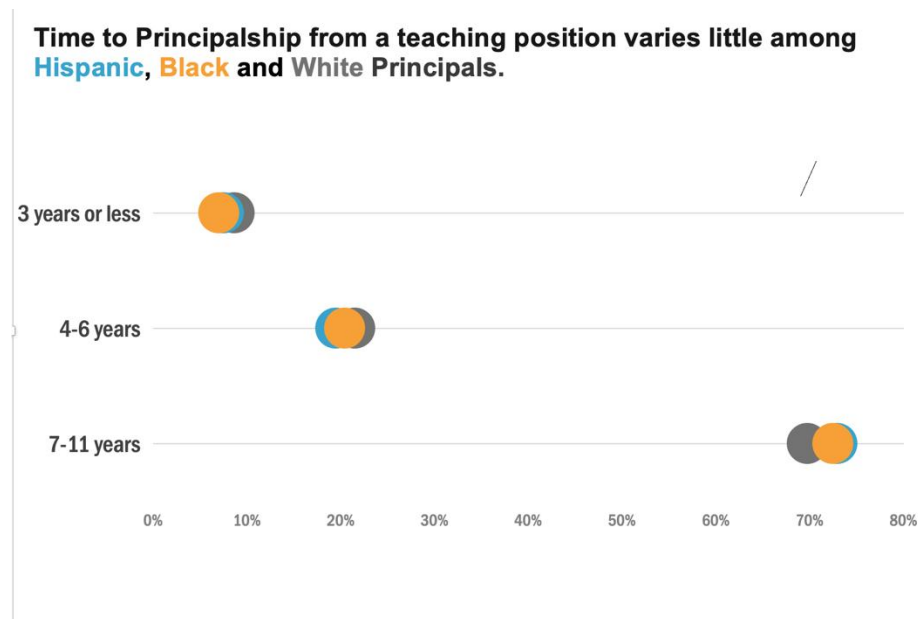
**Time to Principalship from an a teaching position varies among Female and Male Principals.**



Regarding race, persons identifying as White were slightly more likely to be promoted in 3 years or less (8.7% of Whites compared to 7.1% of Black and 7.5% of Hispanic). Nearly three-quarters of women, Black, and Hispanic teachers were not promoted until 7 or more years serving in the Texas educational system (see Figure 5.10).

**Figure 5.10**

*Time to Principalship from a Teaching Position by Race for the 2022 Cohort of Texas Principals*



In contrast to gender inequities in promotion to principal from teacher, the differences in promotion timing from assistant principal to principal among the 2022 cohort of principals was negligible. Forty-five-point-eight percent (45.8%) of female assistant principals and 45.2% of male assistant principals were promoted within 1-3 years of service (see Figure 5.11). Promotion across racial groups tells a different story. There was nearly a 5% gap between Hispanic and White assistant principals receiving a promotion within 1-3 years of service (42.7% compared to 47.2%). Black and White assistant principals showed closer parity (see Figure 5.12).

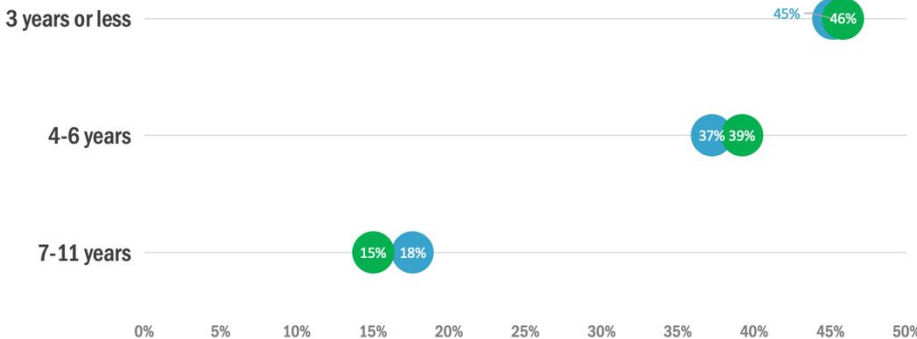
Additionally, on average, males were promoted to principal with fewer years of experience than females. The mean years of experience for males was 13.5 compared to 14.8 for

females. However, differences in years of experience at promotion time did not vary substantially between racial groups (see Appendix for relevant figures).

**Figure 5.11**

*Time to Principalship from Assistant Principal by Gender for the 2022 Cohort of Texas Principals*

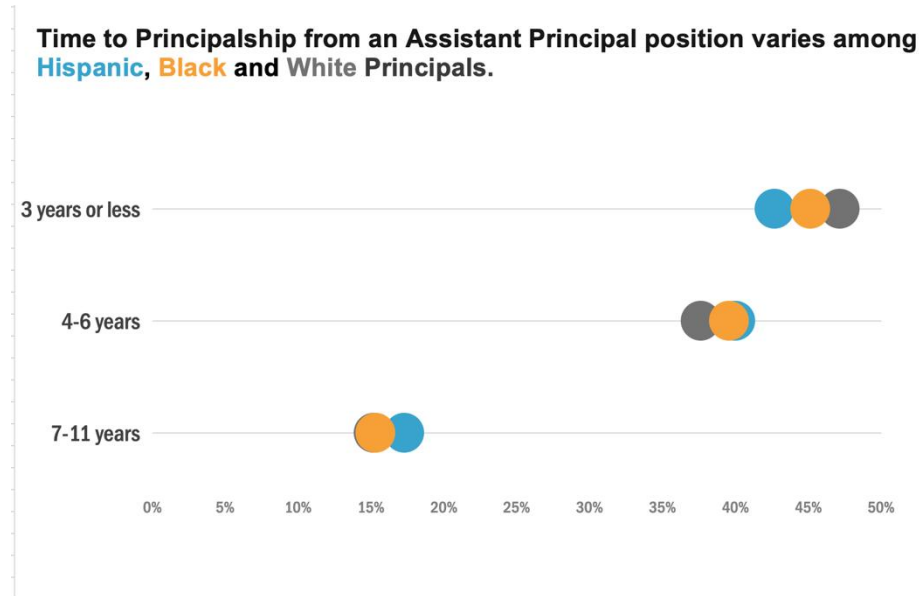
**Time to Principalship from an Assistant Principal position varies somewhat among Female and Male Principals.**



## Figure 5.12

*Time to Principalship from Assistant Principal by Race for the 2022 Cohort of Texas*

*Principals*



## Student Performance

An important question to consider is how leadership stability relates to student performance. Therefore, we examined principal retention rates across district accountability ratings related to student performance on standardized assessments. Although these relationships are descriptive and not causal, the findings indicate that principal retention is related to campus performance. Future research is necessary to determine the direction and strength of the relationship. In districts where fewer than 25% of campus principals were retained following the 2020-21 school year (e.g., new principals in 2021-22), only 25% of those 124 districts had a 2022 District Overall Grade of A. In comparison, in districts where more than 75% of principals were retained on their campus, 35.2% of those 637 districts had a 2022 District Overall Grade of A.

Performance on the standardized state assessments nearly scales with principal retention, where retention is greatest in the highest performing schools, and principal retention is lowest where fewer students meet grade level (see Table 5.2). Of the schools performing in the top 20% in Texas, as measured by meeting grade level for all students across all tests (grades 3 –12) on Texas STAAR state assessments), 79.6% of principals were retained. In comparison, only 66.4% of principals were retained in the schools performing in the bottom 20%.

**Table 5.2**

*Principal Retention by Campus STAAR Performance in 2021-2022*

2022 STAAR Performance Quintiles	Percent Meeting Grade Level (Mean)	Principal Not Retained		Principal Retained		Total	
		n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Bottom 20% of Campuses	23.81	568	(33.61)	1,122	(66.39)	1,690	(100)
2	37.12	503	(28.63)	1,254	(71.37)	1,757	(100)
3	45.46	411	(25.61)	1,194	(74.39)	1,605	(100)
4	54.54	443	(26.45)	1,232	(73.55)	1,675	(100)
Top 20% of Campuses	71.02	333	(20.43)	1,297	(79.57)	1,630	(100)

Note: Quintiles refer to percent meeting grade level, grades 3-12, all students, all tests rate.

## Conclusions

Principal retention has been relatively steady over the study period at a state level. However, women move through the pipeline from teacher to assistant principal to principal at a slower rate than males. In addition, schools in rural communities, schools serving the highest proportions of economically disadvantaged students, and schools with a higher proportion of Black or Hispanic students enrolled have significantly lower rates of principal retention, which



can undermine improvement efforts and achievement. Principal retention is highest in higher-performing schools. While all retention is not necessarily good (e.g., an ineffective principal can be retained), hire rates of principal retention in higher-performing schools suggest that these schools may benefit from greater stability and long-term planning relative to schools serving more economically disadvantaged students.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS

This study has provided significant insight into Texas's principalship and assistant principalship. The most important findings are as follows:

- Most Texas school leaders identify as female and female leadership is growing and diversifying.
- School leaders of color have increased in overall representation.
- Increases in leadership diversity are most pronounced in suburban areas.
- White school leaders are less represented in high-poverty schools and more likely to be in majority White schools.
- The retention rates of principals have remained relatively stable overall, although rural and high-poverty areas have seen increasing levels of turnover over the past decade.

These findings have important implications for policymakers, school boards and search firms, educators and administrators, and families who rely on the public school system. The findings from this report clearly show that the Texas school leadership workforce is more diverse than ever before and that efforts to diversify the principalship appear to be working. However, principal stability and tenure are concerning, especially in certain schools, districts, and regions of the state. In the current public school system, principals serving high proportions of low-income students are more likely to turnover. Moreover, the average tenure of a principal on a given campus is in decline. Consequently, those schools that might benefit from consistent, stable leadership may suffer from the highest rates of principal turnover and lowest rates of principal tenure on campus.

In response to these findings, we conclude with three immediate recommendations to strengthen the state’s principal pipeline further and help ensure that every Texas student has a school with stable leadership and a high-quality principal and assistant principal.

## **Recommendations**

The study’s implications are clear. For Texans to boast a strong, skilled workforce of principals across all schools and districts, we must celebrate successes in diversifying the principalship but also attend to higher rates of turnover in particular locales. We must also pay close attention to principal tenure on campus, given that sustainable improvements take time and shortened tenure can diminish continuous improvement efforts under certain conditions. In conclusion, we offer the following recommendations:

- Texas has done an excellent job creating a diverse principal and assistant principal workforce. Sustained investments by the state, educator preparation programs, and districts have led to a highly diverse leadership workforce. However, more than diversity is needed to deliver important student experiences and results. All principals, regardless of background, will require consistent, high-quality training and support to ensure they are prepared to meet the diverse needs of Texas students. This means additional efforts to strengthen preparation programs, district-university partnerships, and in-service professional development.
- The average principal tenure on a campus is in serious decline. Some principal turnover can be positive, but struggling schools need steady leadership over multiple years. The state and districts need to identify and invest in leaders working in schools that have had higher rates of principal turnover. Such investments include incentive pay to keep

principals in their jobs longer, individualized high-quality coaching, and supports with succession planning so future transitions are smooth and do not disrupt continuous improvement efforts.

- Texas has a world-class longitudinal dataset that allows for the tracking and analysis of a broad array of patterns within its public school system. Consistent reporting on principal and assistant principal workforce trends can provide districts, school boards, and other stakeholders with important and timely information. These data can help guide targeted investments in the school leadership workforce, monitor the progress of these investments, and provide rich opportunities for other researchers to analyze data for school improvement purposes.

We hope this report and our efforts to understand the principalship and assistant principalship in Texas will spur more questions and investigation – ultimately leading to positive changes that strengthen the school leadership workforce.

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## Research Team

**David DeMatthews, Ph.D.**, is an associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy at the University of Texas at Austin. He holds a courtesy appointment in the Department of Special Education. Prior to arriving at UT-Austin, DeMatthews was an assistant professor at the University of Texas at El Paso. He began his career in education working as a teacher, campus leader, and district administrator in Baltimore City Public Schools and the District of Columbia Public Schools. DeMatthews' research focuses on equitable and inclusive school improvement, with an emphasis on leadership and policy. More specifically, he aims to understand how districts and schools create equitable and inclusive schools at the intersections of race, social class, language, and other markers of identity. Given the importance of stable school leadership to school improvement processes, he has also cultivated a stream of research focused on principal career pathways, job-related stress and burnout, and turnover.

**Alexandra Aylward, Ph.D.**, is an assistant professor of educational leadership at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). Prior to joining UNR, Dr. Aylward was a research scientist in the Texas Education Leadership Lab at the University of Texas at Austin. In this role, she led the quantitative analyses to provide insights into diversity and turnover among school leaders within Texas schools and districts. Dr. Aylward's research relies heavily on quantitative and mixed-methods approaches to investigate the relationship between social contextual factors, federal policy, and racial/ethnic inequity in educational opportunity.



**Andrew Pendola, Ph.D.** is an associate professor of educational leadership at Auburn University. Prior to joining Auburn University, Dr. Pendola was a social studies teacher and educational policy analyst. Currently, his research focuses on the intersection of educator labor markets, school finance, and educational policy.

**David Knight, Ph.D.** is an associate professor of education finance and policy at the University of Washington College of Education. His research focuses on the economics of education and school finance. He studies educational systems through the lens of economic theory and methodologies. His work emphasizes distributive justice, racial/ethnic and socioeconomic finance equity, systematic racial segregation into under-resourced school districts, and policies aimed at reducing inequality and addressing longstanding racial and income-based disparities in educational opportunity.

**Pedro Reyes, Ph.D.,** is an experienced professor with over 30 years of teaching experience in higher education and public schools. He has a Ph.D. in Education Policy and Administration, specializing in research on executive leadership, state and federal policy, student learning success, research design, and evaluation studies. He holds the Ashbel Smith, Professor of Education Leadership & Policy. He has held other executive positions as a Special Advisor to the Chancellor, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, and University President. He has also obtained over 23 million dollars in funding for research and development projects and has presented his work in numerous conferences and other scholarly venues. He has published over 100 books, articles, and policy briefs in national journals. His current research is focused on the intersection of student success,

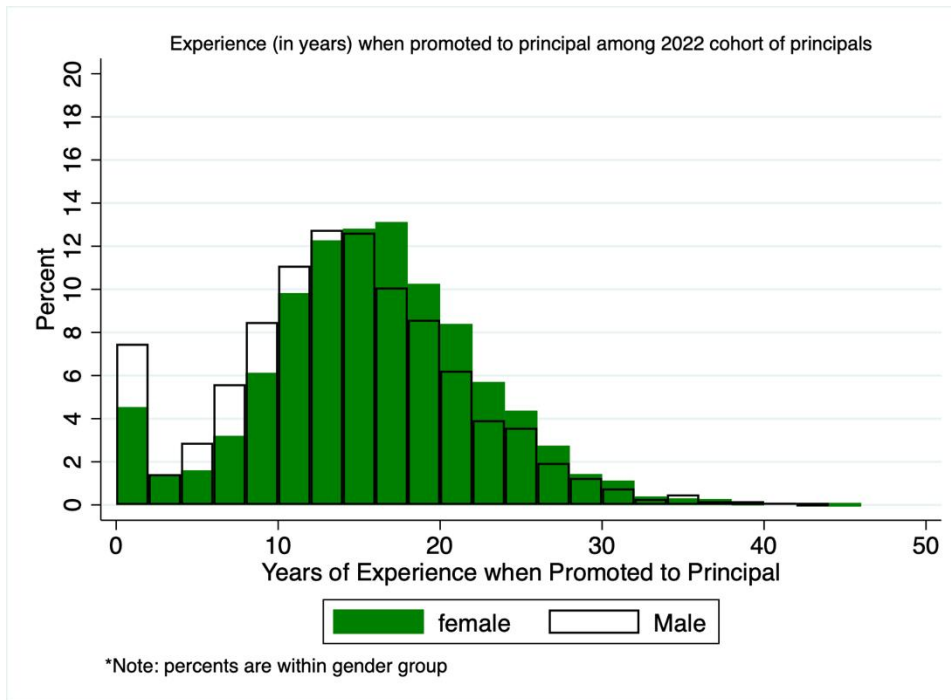
leadership, and policy. He works primarily with students experiencing poverty to understand how we can create more success among them. He wants to know how school leadership and state and federal policy help advance or detract student success.

**Torri Hart** is a doctoral student in Educational Policy at The University of Texas at Austin. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in English and Secondary Education from Radford University and a Master of Arts in English from George Mason University. Inspired by her years as a secondary English teacher in suburban and rural communities, Hart’s research explores how school leaders in rural contexts support students with disabilities through their leadership practices. Her research aims to identify and describe how rural school leaders create inclusive, equitable schools. Hart hopes to support the development of rural-focused educational policy and leadership preparation that equips future school leaders to create inclusive schools across diverse rural contexts.

## Appendix

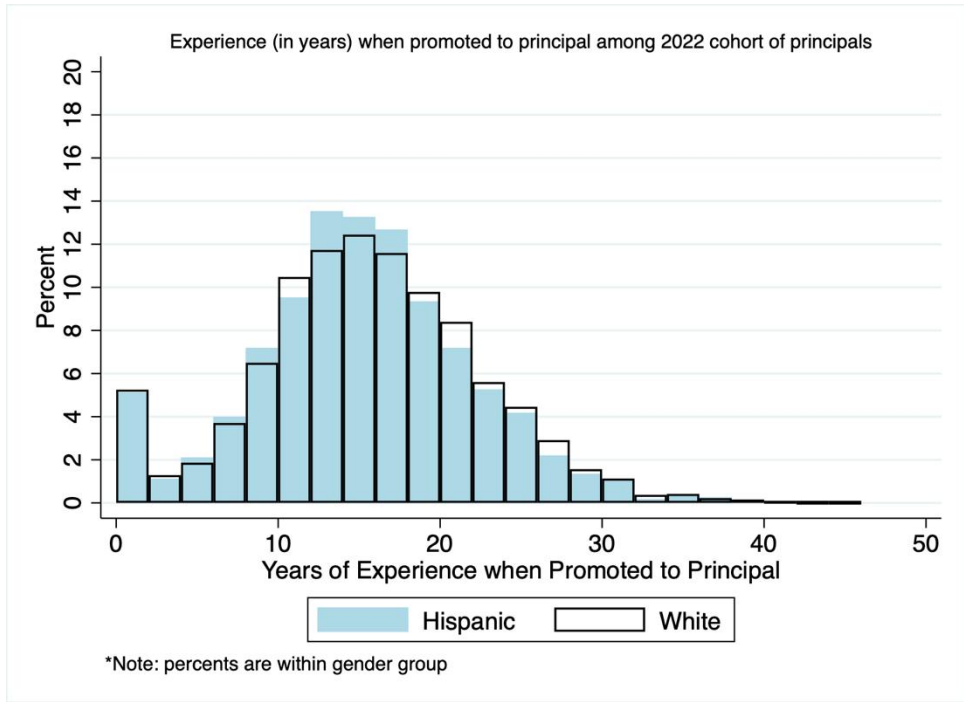
**Figure 5.13**

*Years of Professional Experience when Promoted to Principal by Gender*



**Figure 5.14**

*Years of Professional Experience when Promoted to Principal between Hispanic and White Educators*



**Figure 5.15**

*Years of Professional Experience when Promoted to Principal between Black and White*

*Educators*

