

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Teacher Retention Practices: Cultural Wealth and Retention Insights from a Single District Study

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Doctor of Education

Title: Teacher Retention Practices: Cultural Wealth and Retention Insights from a Single District Study

High turnover of teachers in schools is a problem. When teachers leave, students lose relationships, mentors, champions, and knowledgeable instructors, and schools lose consistent focus and coherence due to loss of institutional memory and curricular knowledge. On average, 8% of teachers leave the profession each year and another 8% move to a new position in a different school (NCES, 2024). The rate of turnover is even higher for BIPOC educators (Carver-Thomas, 2017; Ingersoll, 2018). This study builds upon prior research that identified unwelcoming school climates and insufficient leadership support as significant barriers to the retention of BIPOC educators. Drawing on Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework, this study examined the experiences and perspectives of BIPOC educators to inform strategies for improving their retention in K–12 public schools in Oregon. Findings from this study indicated that BIPOC educators did not report significantly different experiences from their White peers in survey responses. The qualitative data gathered through leader rounding revealed the importance of relational trust, leadership support, and opportunities to grow as critical factors in BIPOC educators' decisions to remain in the profession.

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

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TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

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TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

DEDICATION

For my Family

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	13
Cultural Mismatch.....	13
Impact of Cultural Mismatch.....	15
Teacher Turnover.....	17
Teacher Diversity.....	18
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	20
Community Cultural Wealth and BIPOC Teacher Retention.....	26
A Structure for Understanding Culturally Affirming Retention Practices	27
Aspirational Wealth.....	28
Familial Wealth	28
Social Wealth.....	29
Linguistic Wealth.....	29
Navigational Wealth	30
Resistance Wealth.....	30
My Study	31

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Chapter	Page
Research Questions	31
III. METHOD	32
Research Design Overview.....	32
Composite Variables	35
Setting	37
Participants	40
Sources of Data.....	41
National Center for Education Statistics	41
Oregon Statewide Educator Survey	41
District Staff Engagement Survey	41
Leader Rounding	44
Data Analysis.....	46
Design Features to Increase Trustworthiness of Findings.....	48
IV. RESULTS	50
District Teacher and Student Demographics	50
National Center Education Statistics.....	51
Oregon Demographics.....	54
Teacher Turnover.....	54

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Survey Analysis 55

 Research Question 1 55

Research-Guided Composite Variables..... 60

Community Cultural Wealth Composite Variables..... 61

Rounding Data 62

 Research Question 2 & 3..... 62

 Aspirational 65

 Familial 66

 Linguistic..... 66

 Navigational 67

 Resistant 68

 Social 69

V. DISCUSSION 70

Interpreting the findings 70

Community Cultural Wealth..... 72

Relational Trust and Belonging 74

Principal Influence and Equity Commitments 74

Work Conditions, Efficacy, and Autonomy..... 75

Implications for Practice..... 76

 Support Principals as Equity Leaders 76

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Sustain and Expand Culturally Responsive Structures 76

Address Perceptions of Equity Gaps..... 77

Rounding as a Reflective Practice 77

Policy Implications..... 78

Limitations 79

Recommendations for Future Research..... 81

 Disaggregate BIPOC Educator Experiences 81

 Longitudinal Study 81

 Explore Principal – Teacher Dynamics..... 82

 Investigate Districts with High BIPOC Teacher Retention..... 82

Recommendations 83

Closing Reflection..... 83

REFERENCES CITED 86

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Fig. 1 Leader Rounding Form.....	45
2. Fig. 2 Racial and Ethnic Demographics for Study District.	50
3. Fig. 3 BIPOC Students and Teachers Graph	51
4. Fig. 4 Percentage Distribution of Teachers by Race/Ethnicity (NCES).....	53
5. Fig. 5 Percentage of Racially and Ethnically Diverse Students and Teachers in Oregon	54

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Table 1 Community Cultural Wealth Composite Variable	36
2. Table 2 Research Supported Composite Variable.....	37
3. Table 3 Comparison of Student and Staff Demographics	38
4. Table 4 Survey Item and Correlating CCW.....	42
5. Table 5 Survey Population	43
6. Table 6 Racial/Ethnic Demographics of Students and Teachers, Nationally	52
7. Table 7 Percentage of Probationary Teachers Who Stayed.....	55
8. Table 8 Descriptive <i>t</i> -Test Results for Select Survey Items	58
9. Table 9 Descriptive <i>t</i> -Test Results for Composite Variable	60
10. Table 10 Descriptive <i>t</i> -Test Results for Composite Variable: CCW	62
11. Table 11 Leader Rounding Data	63

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Closing achievement and opportunity gaps is a priority for the K – 12 public school system (Eddy & Easton-Brooks, 2011; Klopfenstein, 2005; Public Impact, 2018). Improving outcomes for students of color is discussed at the federal, state, and local levels and is often associated with educational accountability efforts and measures (Mathis, 2015). Such measures can offer increased funding and support to implement technical fixes such as improved curriculum alignment, improved progress monitoring, more rigorous standards (Public Impact, 2018); or targeted professional development for teachers (Gregory et al., 2016). Despite these efforts, achievement and opportunity gaps persist (Delpit, 1995; Learning Policy Institute, 2020; Voight et al., 2015). One approach to improving outcomes for students of color may be to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of teachers in K-12 public schools (Delpit, 1995).

Cultural Mismatch

Emerging research indicates all students benefit when they have teachers from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds (Pitts, 2007). Students of color experience improved graduation rates, fewer discipline referrals and feelings of connection when they have at least one teacher of color in their K-12 school career (Pitts, 2007). Clues to understanding the effect BIPOC educators may have on improving outcomes for students rest in the experiences of Black students post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). One particular outcome studied by social scientists after *Brown v. Board of Education* is Black students' beliefs in themselves and their academic abilities after desegregation (Bergner, 2009). As schools went through forced desegregation, Black students lost their connection to educators who shared their cultural background and experiences, something researchers call a “cultural mismatch” (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Public

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Impact, 2018). This disconnect between family and school, community and school, or culture and school has been documented by many educators (Bergner, 2009; Delpit, 1995; Klopfenstein, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2013; Yosso, 2005) and can be traced back to the loss of Black teachers after desegregation (Lutz, 2017; Rafa & Roberts, 2020) as Black students were integrated into White schools staffed by predominantly White educators.

Prior to *Brown v. Board of Education*, public schools operated under the doctrine of separate but equal and other Jim Crow laws (Lightfoot, 2006). Such policies and laws had the impact of maintaining two public school systems that were differentially funded (Anderson, 1988). According to historian James Anderson (1988), after the end of the Civil War and during the early twentieth century, there was demand among Southern Black families for a common school system that served their children. Southern landowners and capitalists realized they needed to allow education of Black students or risk losing their workforce, who might leave to seek educational opportunities for their children (Anderson, 1988). Unfortunately, racist ideologies and policies limited funding for Black schools. For the first two decades of the 1900's, "every southern state sharply increased its tax appropriations for building schoolhouses, but virtually none of this money went for Black schools" (Anderson, 1988, p. 356).

Despite assistance from sympathetic White supporters, liberal foundations, and school systems, much of the land, labor, and cash needed for establishing and maintaining common schools for Black children came from their own communities and families (Anderson, 1988). Thus, from the beginning these schools were created for the benefit of Black children and the Black community. Desegregation of schools changed that. Although integration of schools was important for the nation and a milestone in the Civil Rights Movement, it had the unintended

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

consequence of closing many Black schools and eliminating Black educators (Lash & Ratcliffe, 2014).

White schools offered access to better-funded programs and opportunities, yet the closure of many Black schools resulted in removing Black children from culturally affirming spaces taught by educators who looked like them and reflected their experiences (Hudson & Holmes, 1994; Lash & Ratcliffe, 2014). The one-way integration efforts “implied that the White education system was intrinsically better than the Black education system” (Hudson & Holmes, 1994, p. 389). Lash and Ratcliffe (2014) noted that post-*Brown v. Board of Education* Black students lost role models, people who understood them, educators personally invested in their success, and trusted adults. What the Supreme Court decision may have missed was that one-way integration placed Black children into White school systems that were not as invested in their success as their prior all-Black schools had been. While there are educators who acknowledge, support, and celebrate the cultural assets of their students, the current public school system still reflects a legacy that often fails BIPOC students, in part because educators, process, and programs within the system do not fully recognize or value the cultural strengths these students bring (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Delpit, 1995; Yosso, 2005).

Impact of Cultural Mismatch

Using data from the 2002 Educational Longitudinal Study (ELS), Gershenson et al. (2016) examined the impact of teachers’ expectations on students of color and found “non-Black teachers have significantly lower educational expectations for Black students than do Black teachers” (p. 222). Researchers recommend additional examination into the possible connections between teachers’ cultural backgrounds and outcomes for students who share their cultural backgrounds. Gershenson et al. (2016) suggests additional professional development for teachers

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

is needed so they may learn to support, nurture, and encourage all students regardless of background. Although professional development for staff is a key intervention to improve outcomes and experiences for students and the overall school climate, I would argue that professional development is not enough. Another approach that might prove successful is to lessen the cultural mismatches that occur in schools by increasing teacher ethnic, racial, and linguistic diversity.

Researchers have noted teachers' beliefs about students' abilities to learn and be successful are important (Public Impact, 2018). Hiring more BIPOC educators will provide opportunities for students of color to see educators who reflect their language, racial makeup, communities, and cultural heritages. A diverse staff may also bring different beliefs and approaches to educating students of color (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2013; Yosso, 2005). One area where differential beliefs about students based on race is evident is educators' interpretations of student behaviors (Skiba et al., 1997). Disproportionate discipline can have the effect of creating an unwelcoming environment for students of color (Ladson-Billings, 2013; Losen & Martinez, 2020) or have the more significant impact of interrupted or lost instruction due to suspensions or expulsions (Gershenson & Papageorge, 2018; Gregory et al., 2016; Holt & Gershenson, 2015).

Rates of misbehaviors are approximately the same for Black and White students, but racial disparities in application of out-of-school suspensions (OSS) are well documented (Bryant & Wilson, 2020; Skiba et al., 2002). For example, Holt and Gershenson (2015) noted that suspensions of students of color increased by 15% when taught by a White teacher. Reviewing U.S. Civil Rights data, Losen and Martinez (2020) determined that across all grades and all students, for every 100 public school students in the U.S., there were 23 days of OSS. However,

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

when the researchers looked at data for secondary level Black students, the number of OSS jumped to 103 days for every 100 students. Adding the layer of gender resulted in even more days of instruction lost for Black males, who experience 132 days of OSS per 100 students. Black girls lost 77 days per 100 students, and White girls lost 11 days. Student discipline is often associated with a teacher's perceptions about students' behaviors (Skiba et al., 1997), so one approach might be to change teacher behavior. Initial steps to changing behavior are to track data (Skiba et al., 2002) and provide more professional development (Garcia & Weis, 2017; Gregory et al., 2016). However, these approaches are not consistently effective, and disproportionate discipline persists (Losen & Martinez, 2020). Increasing teacher ethnic and racial diversity may increase a school's capacity to interpret students' behaviors in a manner that reduces loss of instructional time.

Teacher Turnover

The spotlight on the teacher workforce has intensified over the past two decades because of the aging population (Aaronson & Meckel, 2008; Dillon, 2007; Shakrani, 2008) and high turnover rates among early career educators (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll, 2001). When researchers consider other conditions such as compensation packages, geography, or school characteristics, the turnover rates among teachers increase (Ingersoll, 2001). Ingersoll et al. (2018) updated a longitudinal study of the teacher workforce by analyzing national data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) from 1987 to 2016 and noted that over that period, the teacher workforce was older, more female, more ethnically and racially diverse, and more unstable. An older and unstable workforce indicate there is a core group of long-term educators, 50 years or older, and a consistent group of early

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

career educators who enter each year to replace the 17% who leave each year (Ingersoll et al., 2018).

Some researchers examine teacher turnover rate on an annual basis, estimated to be 17% per year (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017) and others think of teacher attrition as the percentage of teachers who leave early in their careers, estimated to be 44% (Ingersoll et al., 2018). Although teacher turnover rates may be on par with other professions, the impact of high turnover rates on students and schools cannot be underestimated (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The relatively high annual teacher turnover rates “mask large differences in departure rates among different types of teachers and different locales, revealing the need to disaggregate our data” (Ingersoll et al., 2018, p.18). In other words, high turnover rates disproportionately affect marginalized and underserved student populations (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Disaggregating data will help researchers and educational leaders clarify salient factors that play into why some teachers leave, thus helping to refine retention efforts to make them more strategic and effective.

Teacher Diversity

In 1954, at the time of *Brown v. Board of Education*, there were approximately 82,000 Black educators for two million Black children (Hudson & Holmes, 1994), about one Black teacher for every 24 Black children. Slightly more than 60 years later, during the 2017-18 school year, approximately 21% of teachers identified as a teacher of color (Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native or multiracial) and 52% of the student population identified as a member of one or more of those racial or ethnic groups (Hussar et al., 2020). This equates to 735,000 BIPOC educators and 26,365,000 students of color, or about 36 students of color for each teacher of color. These contemporary figures support Ingersoll et al.’s

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

(2018) findings that efforts to increase teacher diversity are having an effect and the number of BIPOC educators has increased. However, they and other researchers have noted that BIPOC educators leave the profession earlier in their careers, and students of color are increasing at a faster rate than that of the teaching workforce (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Factoring in school environments adds another layer of complexity to understanding teacher diversity. Student demographics, geographic locations, and Title I status tend to influence where BIPOC educators and White teachers work (Schaeffer, 2021). For example, BIPOC educators are more likely than White teachers to work in urban and high-poverty schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll et al., 2018; Schaeffer, 2021) and less likely to work in rural schools (Schaeffer, 2021).

Without coordinated interventions to recruit, hire, and retain BIPOC educators, the gap between students and BIPOC educators will grow (Villagomez et al., 2016). Explicit and implicit policies, laws, and regulations that followed the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision impeded Black people and other people of color from continuing or pursuing teaching as a career (Hudson & Holmes, 1984). The Whitening of the teacher workforce has been an enduring legacy that will require a cohesive and comprehensive approach to undo. Although there may be many angles that should be addressed to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of teachers, my study focused on retention strategies that can be implemented by school districts and administrators.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

I conducted searches of the past 20 years of peer reviewed English-language journals using pre-defined terms and criteria (e.g., *teacher retention*, *teacher turnover*, *BIPOC educators*, *U.S. public schools*, *K-12 schools*, *teacher recruitment and retention*, *teacher compensation and retention*, *teacher satisfaction and retention*, *teacher shortage*, *cultural mis-match*, *Community Cultural Wealth*) in Google Scholar, University of Oregon library databases, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and Research in Education: SAGE Journals. In addition, I found numerous relevant policy reports produced by government agencies, research organizations, and policy institutes. Analysis of the literature focused on identifying “indicators of the nature of research activity in the area, thereby mapping key concepts, summarizing emerging themes and identifying gaps” (Booth et al., 2021, p. 114).

Teacher turnover is defined as when a teacher leaves a school or the profession within a school year (Achinstein et al., 2010; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll et al., 2018; Sutchter et al., 2016) because either one of those conditions creates an open position that will likely need to be filled. Additionally, as the educator workforce has become older (Ingersoll et al., 2018) retirements can play a more significant factor that is beyond the control of district leaders. However, retirees represent less than a third of educators who leave the profession (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll et al., 2018) during any given year and is something district leaders can predict and plan for (Johnson & Kardos, 2008). It is the unexpected and early career leavers who present the biggest challenge to school districts (Ingersoll et al., 2001), perplex policymakers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Council of Chief State School Officers, 2019), and provide impetus for a call to action

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

(Council of Chief State School Officers, 2019; Goldhaber & Cowan, 2014; Ingersoll, 2018; Johnson & Kardos, 2008; Learning Policy Institute, 2020).

Research suggests the experiences of teachers within their schools are a significant factor in decisions to stay or leave (Hughes, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001; Kelchtermans, 2017; Olsen & Anderson, 2007). Like most human decisions, though, deciding to leave one's school or profession is a complex process that can be influenced by a multitude of factors such as family pressures (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Hughes, 2012; Hurst & Brantlinger, 2022; Olsen & Anderson, 2007), school demographics (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Ingersoll, 2001), compensation (Clotfelter et al., 2008; Colson & Satterfield, 2018); and work conditions (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Hughes, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll et al., 2018; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Sutchter et al., 2016). A more thorough examination of work conditions reveals distinct factors such as school leadership (Baker et al., 2022; Boyd et al., 2011; Husain et al., 2023), mentoring and collegial relationships (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Johnson & Kardos, 2008; Kelchtermans, 2017), school resources and facilities (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Schneider, 2003), and professional support and growth (Baker et al., 2022; Hughes, 2012; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Johnson & Kardos, 2008) can affect teacher turnover. For the purpose of this study, I focus on work conditions because those are areas that typically can be addressed by district and school leaders.

Some research suggests retention of teachers begins as soon as an educator is hired into a position (Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Kardos, 2008). Thus, setting up new hires with a network of support, which includes an affirming and welcoming school leader (Boyd et al., 2011; Ingersoll, 2001) and an induction and mentor program (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Waterman & Ye, 2011) can help new hires navigate their transition into a new

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

district or school. The effect of school leadership can be so significant some researchers even noted that male teachers are more likely to leave a school when a woman is hired into the principal position (Husain et al., 2023). The school leader can play a significant role in the day-to-day working conditions for educators (Ingersoll, 2001) and improve teacher retention because of their ability to marshal supportive resources (Baker et al., 2022), assign mentors (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), effectively communicate (Johnson & Kardos, 2008), and structure schedules to allow for collaboration time (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Waterman & Ye, 2011). With all the support that principals can provide, there is no one size fits all approach to teacher retention (Baker et al., 2022; Carver-Thomas, 2018). Smith and Ingersoll's (2004) analysis of the 1999-2000 School and Staffing Survey (SASS) reveals no single induction or mentoring activity had a statistically significant effect on retention. However, when school leaders offered a combination of activities, "teachers participating in combinations or packages of mentoring and group induction activities were less likely to migrate to other schools" (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p.706). In other words, school leaders can affect teacher dissatisfaction and mitigate a teacher's reasons for leaving (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Dixon et al., 2019; Ingersoll & May, 2011).

The level of support that principals can provide can also be a "protective factor" for those conditions that are beyond the school leader's control such as school geography and demographics, parent-teacher communications, and compensation (Boyd et al., 2011). In their examination of the influence of school factors such as staff relations, student demographics, facilities, safety, and administration on decision to stay, leave the profession, or transfer to a new school, Boyd et al. (2011) found that administrative support was the most important factor. The building principal has domain over school operations and can set a vision for teaching and

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

learning and mitigate the perceived negative effects of student behavior (Boyd et al., 2011; Kim & Cooc, 2020). Effective school personnel practices such as hiring, assigning, and developing teachers are typically carried out by building leaders and, according to Loeb et al. (2012), may help to attract and retain teachers. Though there may be different actions or steps that school leaders can take to improve retention and reduce turnover, what is most important is that school leaders recognize and embrace their role in improving work conditions for staff (Baker et al., 2022; Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Ingersoll, 2001; Loeb et al., 2012).

There are some data that suggest schools that serve a high percentage of students of color, urban schools, and underfunded schools are likely to see higher turnover rates when compared to the national average (Boyd et al., 2008; Carver-Thomas, 2018; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll, 2018) or when compared to other schools that serve a different student population within the same district (Hughes, 2012). However, several of those studies were based on analyzing national data sets and did not include survey responses. For example, Olsen and Anderson (2007) reviewed national data and interviewed 15 urban educators during the 2004 – 05 school year and suggested teacher agency can be a factor in improving retention of teachers. Though their sample size was small, the findings suggest school leaders think about educational careers in nonlinear ways “with careers emerging from the dynamic interaction among the individual, the workplace context, and the teaching profession” (Olsen & Anderson, 2007, p.20). Thus, one foundational strategy school leaders can do is engage their teachers, especially early career educators, and listen to them (Dixon et al., 2019). Tapping into teacher agency also recognizes early educators’ professional status (Ingersoll et al., 2018) and can be further developed by administrators who can include early educators in decisions that affect school climate and work conditions (Baker et al., 2022; Kelchtermans, 2017).

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Part of the equation for considering factors that affect teacher retention are the future goals of early career educators (Ingersoll et al., 2018; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Johnson & Kardos, 2008; Olsen & Anderson, 2007). Instead of thinking about turnover as a matter of “leaving,” Olsen & Anderson (2007) reframe this issue as a matter of “shifting” because many teachers who leave shift to another aspect of education or engage in activities to further their educational goals such as earning an advanced degree. Similarly, researchers suggest educational leaders develop differentiated career pathways to retain teachers while also helping them take steps to meet their professional goals (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Johnson & Kardos, 2008). Hughes (2012) acknowledges administrators play a significant role in retaining teachers but also suggests some of the attrition may reflect general attitudes toward employment because early career respondents “were less likely to plan to teach until retirement” (p. 254).

Despite the documented and publicized challenges of teaching, there are more educators in the workforce now than there were before, and thousands continue to choose education as a career path (Ingersoll et al., 2018). Hughes (2012) suggests teachers maintain their commitment to their ideals of making a difference for students and were less likely to leave based solely on school or student characteristics. This pattern is also supported by Olsen and Anderson (2007), who surveyed educators working in urban Los Angeles and found many of their respondents liked the schools in which they taught. This commitment to making a difference in the lives of students is echoed among BIPOC educators who enter the profession to advocate on behalf of underserved student populations (Gist & Bristol, 2022) or because of an overall commitment to social justice (Villegas & Davis, 2008).

All the factors that affect teacher retention may shift when examining underlying reasons that contribute to higher attrition rates for BIPOC educators than for White teachers (Carver-

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Gist & Bristol, 2022). Part of the issue may be that BIPOC educators are more likely to be assigned to or gravitate toward urban schools with larger class sizes, less funding, and more underserved students of color (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Ingersoll et al., 2017; Ingersoll et al., 2018; Villegas & Davis, 2008) because of a strong desire to make a difference for students and the community. This commitment, though, can have a double edge because the “more responsible and committed a teacher is, the less willing she or he may be to continue working in a situation where success seems impossible” (Villegas & Davis, 2008, p. 600). Yet, the initial commitment to students and larger systemic change is likely to remain (Olsen & Anderson; 2007) and thus is worth exploring as a basis for retention strategies (Dixon et al., 2019).

Some current research suggests building administrators play a critical role in teacher retention because of their role in setting the tone and climate for a school (Goings et al., 2018). Specifically, BIPOC educators identified support from their building administrators as critical for their feelings of being included and welcomed in their schools (Andrews et al., 2019). BIPOC educators are particularly sensitive to school climates and the contexts in which they teach (Gist et al., 2019; Kohli, 2018a). Implementation of retention practices and efforts to retain BIPOC educators begins with building administrators, but much of the research is derived from analysis of national data sets such as SASS, National Teachers and Principal Surveys (NTPS), Civil Rights data, and other annually reported educational data. Though this is an emerging area of study, there are still too few studies that engage BIPOC educators in interviews, focus groups, or settings for professional discourse (Ardley et al., 2023; Todd – Breland, 2022).

Community Cultural Wealth and Teacher of Color Retention

A growing number of researchers and state education departments have articulated the issue of the lack of teacher diversity. One approach to addressing the widening gap between student and teacher demographics is through state or federal policy changes (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2019; Educator Advancement Council [EAC], n.d.; Rafa & Roberts, 2020). Despite policy shifts that collect and analyze teacher and student demographics to develop data-based interventions, the teacher workforce continues to be predominantly White (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021). One of the challenges of policy-driven mandates is that these policies are expected to be enacted at the local level with building leaders who may not have the knowledge, will, or skills to implement strategies to diversify the workforce (Goings et al., 2018). My hypothesis is that using race-based theoretical constructs within current retention practices will increase retention of staff of color.

Many BIPOC educators enter the profession for reasons that are rooted in their racial or ethnic identities and experiences (Andrews et al., 2018; Carver-Thomas, 2018; Kohli, 2008, 2018b). For many people of color, teaching is a demonstration of their commitment to social justice (Andrews et al., 2021; Burciaga & Kohli, 2018; Gist et al., 2019; Zygmunt & Cipollone, 2019) and to students with similar identities or experiences (Achinstein et al., 2010; Kim & Cooc, 2021; Kohli, 2008). Additionally, people of color have their own individual experiences as K-12 public students that can be a foundation for their work to improve outcomes for students of color (Goldhaber et al., 2015; Kohli, 2018b; Maddamsetti, 2021; Zygmunt & Cipollone, 2019). Despite these strong personal and professional commitments, many BIPOC educators leave the profession within three years (Goldhaber & Cowan, 2014; Hernandez-Johnson et al., 2021; Rafa & Roberts, 2020) because of the pressures of being a new teacher and navigating institutional

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

racism in their schools (Kim & Cooc, 2021; Kohli, 2008; Pizarro & Kohli, 2020). In their review of literature, Kim and Cooc (2021) note social justice was a key motivation for Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAPI) to become teachers and cited two studies that provide examples of “how school leadership and climate can mitigate the racialization experienced by AAPI teachers” (p.210). The ability of school leaders to listen to BIPOC educators (Dixon et al., 2019); affirm their racialized identities and experiences (Kohl, 2008), acknowledge the emotional work inherent to teaching (Dixon et al., 2019; Kohli, 2018a; Pizarro & Kohli, 2020), and engage them in leadership activities (Smith et al., 2023) may lead to improved retention of BIPOC educators.

Several researchers suggest incorporation of racial identity and the racialized experiences of BIPOC educators in recruitment and retention efforts may result in increased teacher diversity by creating conditions that improve retention (Carver-Thomas, 2018; CCSSO, 2018; Curry-Stevens & Lopezvoredodo, 2015; Goldhaber et al., 2015; Pizarro & Kohli, 2020). Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) framework offers a theoretical foundation for school districts to retain BIPOC educators. The six forms of community cultural wealth are *aspirational, familial, linguistic, social, navigational, and resistance*. BIPOC educators access their internal resources and networks (cultural wealth) as they navigate public school systems, especially when those systems are hostile toward BIPOC educators (Kohli, 2008, 2018a). Building and district administrators have a role in retaining teachers and diversifying the teacher workforce (Goings et al., 2018), and Yosso’s (2005) six forms of community cultural wealth provide a roadmap for administrators to improve retention practices.

A Structure for Understanding Culturally Affirming Teacher Retention Practices

One of the chief responsibilities of district and building administrators is to ensure each child has access to a trained and knowledgeable educator workforce (Holmes et al., 2019; Shuls

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

& Flores, 2020). Retention of staff plays a key role in fulfilling that responsibility because of the time, effort, and expense required to recruit, hire, and train new staff. According to Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017), replacing a new teacher can cost a district approximately \$10,000-\$20,000, depending on the geographic location of the school (rural, suburban, or urban). Thus, aligning efforts to retain teachers to Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework may result in improved retention efforts that maintain consistency of staff and focus more budgetary resources on the classroom and less on replacing staff. Additionally, improved retention efforts can decrease cultural mismatches, which could lead to improved outcomes for students of color (Gissom et al., 2015).

Aspirational Wealth

Considering that BIPOC educators may have also experienced long-standing narratives that made them feel inadequate, incapable, or unwelcome during their K-12 careers, enrolling in a teacher education program requires a strong commitment to education (Kohli, 2008). The ability to maintain focus on goals despite actual or perceived barriers, negative stereotypes, or lack of role models is what Yosso (2005) terms *aspirational capital*. In other words, these are educators who have persisted despite obstacles, and showing up each day to teach is a demonstration of their goals. Therefore, school administrators can support these goals by having explicit conversations with BIPOC educators about their aspirations and finding pathways that support them and their career trajectories.

Familial Wealth

For many communities of color, the term "family" is universally applied to people who may not fit within the traditional related-by-blood understanding of family. Additionally, BIPOC educators may consider students of color "family" because of common experiences,

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

backgrounds, or communities. Developing opportunities for BIPOC educators to plan, learn, and operate collaboratively in the school can support *familial wealth* (Yosso, 2005) and help BIPOC educators to develop feelings of kinship with colleagues. Creating networks among BIPOC educators can also combat feelings of isolation (Dixon et al., 2019) and provide opportunities for BIPOC educators to commiserate and support one another when they receive or perceive race-based slights from White colleagues (Kohli, 2018b).

Social Wealth

Districts hire BIPOC educators for a variety of reasons: content knowledge, instructional practices, linguistic skills, and diversity of perspective. Even with all their assets, BIPOC educators may need a network of colleagues who share their perspectives, background, and experiences (Dixon et al., 2019). Additionally, districts hire BIPOC educators because they represent different experiences that students need to see. Thus, district administrators can demonstrate valuing the social wealth that BIPOC educators carry with them by acknowledging and compensating BIPOC educators for work outside of their actual teaching. Such activities might include participating in equity committees, mentoring, hiring, and other activities where a diverse perspective is wanted and might represent work that is beyond that which is asked of White teachers.

Linguistic Wealth

Linguistic diversity is valued and promoted by encouraging and supporting BIPOC educators who may have different accents, speak other languages, or use a vernacular that could be viewed as “non-standard” English. Standard American English (SAE) is most often promoted within K-12 public schools and teacher education programs (Clyde, 2005) but may also not be the language that students of color use in their communities (Yosso, 2005). BIPOC educators

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

who model speaking with different accents, languages, or dialects of English demonstrate for students that students' linguistic styles or languages are welcomed, valued, and viewed as assets, as opposed to deficits that need to be corrected. Additionally, these teachers will be able to model code switching so students can witness how the teachers navigate different spaces and contexts.

Navigational Wealth

To earn a license to teach, BIPOC educators must have successfully navigated several educational, testing, and credentialing systems. The skills and abilities are examples of *navigational wealth* and are sometimes coded as acting “professional” (Dixon et al., 2019). BIPOC educators can mentor students of color to build their own navigational wealth and skills that do not simultaneously invoke a lesser-than mentality about their own cultural backgrounds or experiences (Daniels, 2018). Additionally, when building administrators are looking for staff to develop into leaders, it is critical for them to acknowledge and value the navigational skills that many educators of color possess (Dixon et al., 2019). Even though all teaching staff must qualify for a license, their paths might not have been the same and some, especially BIPOC educators, may have needed to persevere more to be able to navigate systems that may have been unfamiliar or hostile to them (Kohli, 2018a, 2018b).

Resistance Wealth

The right to a free and equal public education has been fought for in courts, in schools, and on the streets. For many students and BIPOC educators, resistance is part of going to school because of implicit and explicit racist practices that result in opportunity and achievement gaps, disproportionate discipline, and lowered expectations. School administrators who engage in explicit anti-racist work and demonstrate a willingness to stand in solidarity with BIPOC

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

educators are likely to be considered allies in the work (Love, 2019). In some studies, BIPOC educators reported feeling alone because no one else understood or acknowledged their experiences in a majority-White staff (Kohli, 2018a).

My Study

In my dissertation, I use the Community Cultural Wealth framework (Yosso, 2005) as a foundation for understanding the experiences of educators of color in efforts to improve retention practices. I believe Yosso's critique of deficit-based understandings of students of color can be applied to retention of BIPOC educators. Considering the centrality of the building administrator for training, supporting, and retaining teachers (Learning Policy Institute, 2017), if districts are to increase the ethnic and racial diversity of teachers, then it is critical that building principals are coached to incorporate Community Cultural Wealth in their training, support, and retention efforts. Research on Community Cultural Wealth and teacher retention efforts are beginning to emerge. Such prior research prompts me to solicit information about the experiences of BIPOC educators in schools and with their administrators using a survey and leader rounding interviews. I plan to address the following three research questions:

1. Do BIPOC educators report feeling less connected to their colleagues, principals and school than White educators, as the research might suggest?
2. Why do BIPOC educators stay in the district?
3. What types of Community Cultural Wealth (aspirational, navigational, familial, social, linguistic, or resistance) are BIPOC educators accessing in their profession?

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Research Design Overview

I used a mixed method scoping study to explore the experiences and perspectives of BIPOC educators in a public school district in Oregon. This mid-size school district that serves approximately 5,000 students provided an opportunity to examine strategies to improve retention of teachers, especially BIPOC educators. In spring 2023, the board of directors for the district adopted a 5-year strategic plan that included dozens of initiatives designed to improve learning outcomes for students, engagement with families and the community, and work experiences for educators. Some of those initiatives were directed at addressing educator work conditions and job satisfaction by creating “welcoming employment processes” and providing “supports for diverse staff members.” Other initiatives called on staff to embed equity, inclusion, and diversity within their educational and instructional practices. Although this study does not aim to establish a causal relationship between the district’s efforts related to the strategic plan and the district’s rates of retention for BIPOC educators and their responses to survey and interview questions, the district’s strategic efforts to listen to staff and improve retention efforts may have an effect that is worth exploring. As much as work conditions such as adequate resources, curricula, facilities, and materials affect a teacher’s decision to continue in the profession or at a school, social factors such as relationships, feelings of belonging, and the building leader are also critical factors, as well (Johnson et al., 2012).

A scoping study employs an iterative process of reviewing literature, analyzing extant survey data, and a close examination of qualitative data (Booth et al., 2021). A scoping study lends itself to my topic because of the growing, yet under-examined topic of retention of BIPOC

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

educators (Brown, 2014; Robinson & Gozalez, 2022) and the complexities within teacher recruitment and retention (Ingersoll et al., 2022). Educators, in general, enter and leave the profession for a myriad of reasons (Achinstein et al., 2010; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll, 2001). My study adds another layer of complexity, as I examine the effects of racialized identities and experiences on retention of BIPOC educators navigating a public school district in Oregon. A mixed methods scoping study acknowledges “the complex, interacting influences” on teacher retention (Booth et al., 2021, p. 3) and can help formulate targeted strategies and policies to improve retention of BIPOC educators. I reviewed the 2023 Oregon Statewide Educator Survey results and analyzed the district’s third-party staff engagement survey and the district’s rounding data to test findings from my review of the literature, identify trends or patterns in extant data, and develop additional lines of inquiry that should be explored.

At the core of my research is a wondering about what districts and schools can do differently to retain BIPOC educators. I believe the experiences and perceptions of BIPOC educators should be at the center of how I answer my questions. Such a perspective was echoed by other researchers who centralized the voices of BIPOC educators (Griffin et al., 2022; Hernandez-Johnson et al., 2023; Kohli, 2008). I drew on Tara Yosso’s (2005) theory of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) to provide the overarching framework for developing key terms for the literature review and for coding the district’s quantitative and qualitative data. Yosso (2005) critiqued Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural capital by applying Critical Race Theory (CRT) because Bourdieu’s model did not recognize the unique strengths and assets found within ethnic and racial communities. Challenging traditional views of capital, Yosso (2005) identified six types of capital that communities of color activate as they navigate dominant culture spaces.

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Although I did not expect survey responses or rounding responses to explicitly identify one of the types of capital, my basic premise was to use Yosso's (2005) framework to center the research to reveal the "assets and resources in the histories and lives of [BIPOC educators]" (p. 77). Teachers remain in the profession for several reasons which vary. However, BIPOC educators may be navigating experiences of racism, discrimination, and microaggressions (Kohli, 2008) that may influence the relationships they maintain with colleagues, administrators, students, and families. Such racialized experiences are in addition to the general stressors faced by teachers such as workload, high stakes testing, professional growth, and access to adequate resources (EAC, 2024). Additionally, BIPOC educators enter the profession for some of the same reasons as White colleagues (Johnson & Kardos, 2008), but their racialized identities and experiences are factors to consider (Carver-Thomas et al., 2024; Griffiths et al. 2024; Yosso, 2025). The cultural and social assets Yosso (2005) identified are aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigational, resistant, and social capital.

In addition to the literature review and qualitative analysis, I reviewed data from the Oregon Statewide Educator Survey (OSES) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to describe the overall status of teacher retention and experiences. This information provides a baseline understanding of trends and attrition rates within the area where my study is set. These data also provide information about the conditions of education, including teacher perspectives, feelings, and opinions about their work. Although the extant data may reveal retention-related themes such as *belonging* and *job satisfaction* that could be relevant for BIPOC educators, relying only on extant data has limitations because responses to questions in a survey or data submitted to state education departments may be overly broad or simplistic (Booth et al., 2021).

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Teacher retention can be personal and contextual, so drawing on qualitative data, with supporting quantitative data, allows me to delve into the nuances of participants' reasons for becoming teachers and staying in education (Booth et al., 2021; Creswell, 2014; Houser, 2020). For this study, the source of the qualitative data was extant data regularly collected by district personnel. The district engages in short cycles of improvement modeled on the *Plan, Do, Study, Act* approach by engaging staff, students, and families with uniform questions that are asked of general and targeted groups (Shakman et al., 2020). District administrators, supervisors, and human resources staff meet with various groups of staff and engage in a process called *leader rounding*. Dr. Janet Pilcher (2023) describes leader rounding, or *rounding*, as opportunities to make a meaningful personal connection with staff and to identify celebrations, challenges, supportive colleagues, and aspirations for future success. This approach also encourages sharing of stories, which can be a rich source of data and reflective of cultural traditions that use storytelling to share knowledge (Brown, 2014).

Composite Variables

To better understand the factors that influence BIPOC educator retention, this study drew on both the existing literature on teacher retention and Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) framework to guide the development of composite variables. Prior research identified several factors associated with teacher retention, including autonomy, supportive relationships with colleagues, positive work culture, feelings of efficacy, access to growth opportunities, supportive leadership, and access to adequate resources (Booth et al., 2021; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Additionally, the CCW framework outlines six forms of cultural wealth that center the strengths and experiences of BIPOC educators and why they may be particularly interested in a career in education (Griffiths et al., 2024; Kohli, 2021).

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Beginning with 80 survey items that are part of the third-party staff engagement survey administered to educators, I worked collaboratively with colleagues to code items into composite variables aligned to these frameworks. Two separate groups of composite variables were developed for analysis: one group reflected the literature-based retention factors, and the other group reflected the six domains of Community Cultural Wealth (Table 1). Survey items were not reused within each group; each item was only assigned to a single composite variable to preserve conceptual clarity and reduce overlap. Items were selected based on their alignment with the underlying constructs of each retention category or CCW, and each composite variable included multiple items. However, the number of items mapped to each category or CCW capital was not uniform because alignment was determined through a conceptual coding process that grouped items according to thematic fit. Additionally, there were some items that were not used for either of the composite variables. For example, some of the items were specific to using student academic data or professional development that were not used across survey administrations because they were related to a specific activity in the district.

Table 1

Community Cultural Wealth Composite Variable and Survey Item Alignment

CCW Capital	Item <i>n</i>	Survey Item Concept
Aspirational	11	Purpose, career opportunities, classroom impact, commitment
Familial	17	Supportive leadership, care and connection, sense of belonging
Linguistic	5	Representation, cultural conversations, inclusive dialogue
Navigational	14	Professional development, instructional autonomy, evaluation,
Resistant	7	Support actions related to diversity, equity, and inclusion
Social	9	Peer trust, teamwork, shared responsibility

Table 2*Research Supported Composite Variable and Survey Item Alignment*

Research Construct	Item <i>n</i>	Survey Item Concept
Autonomy	5	Discretion with curriculum and instruction
Colleague Relationships	6	Collaboration, peer trust, mutual support
Culture	10	School climate, recognition, diversity of representation
Efficacy	15	Teacher confidence, purpose, classroom impact, time management
Growth & Leadership	12	Professional advancement and leadership opportunities
Principal	14	Administrator support and relationships
Resources	5	Access to materials, facilities, and school funding

Creating two composite variables allowed for analysis of educator experiences through both an institutional lens (focused on workplace conditions and systems of support) and a cultural lens (focused on how educators draw on their identities, relationships, and resilience). These composite variables provided the structure for quantitative comparisons between BIPOC and White educators and informed the interpretation of qualitative themes that emerged from leader rounding interviews.

Setting

The setting for this study was a mid-sized school district located in the mid-Willamette Valley in Oregon. The district's racial and ethnic demographics for students and teachers educators are reflected in Table 3.

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Table 3

Comparison of student and staff demographics, 2023 – 24 SY

Race/Ethnicity	Students		Teachers	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	49	1	3	1
Asian	98	2	6	2
Black	49	1	3	1
Latino	1380	28	21	7
Multiracial	444	9	12	4
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	49	1	n.a.	<1
White	2858	58	251	85
Total	4927		296	

Oregon provides a unique setting for this study because of the passage of legislation that funds efforts addressing educator recruitment and retention. The *Educator Equity Act* (2015) revised the 1991 *Oregon Minority Teacher Act* and required school districts to take steps to increase hiring of diverse educators, so the demographics of staff will reflect that of their students (Oregon Education Investment Board, 2015). During the 2017 legislative session, Oregon politicians approved Senate Bill 182, which funded the creation of the Education Advancement Council (EAC). As a statewide coordinating body, the EAC is responsible for many initiatives. Of particular importance to this study is its goal of “increasing educator retention, diversity, mentoring and coaching” (Educator Advancement Council, n.d.). The EAC

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

provides funding to support WREN activities and goals of improving retention of staff, especially BIPOC educators.

Legislative action to improve recruiting and retaining diverse educators is important to note within my study because the heightened awareness and political rhetoric may affect how participants responded to survey and leader rounding questions. Oregon created systems and structures that bring recruitment and retention of BIPOC educators into the open among districts, teacher preparation programs, and many educational leaders. These explicit discussions, overt recruitment efforts, and changes in legislation may create an educator pool that maintains a level of commitment to equity and inclusion. I will address the possible threat to validity later, but it is important to note that it may be challenging to find a setting in the U.S. that is not attending to the issue of teacher diversification (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Council of Chief State School Officers, 2019).

As I completed this study, it seemed relevant to note shifts in the national narrative regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts in education. The public attacks and reversal of long-standing policies on DEI, including the removal of protections for groups such as transgender students and individuals expressing diverse gender identities, reflect a broader political and legal backlash. Lawsuits and state-level bans on DEI initiatives have been filed or passed in multiple states, creating an environment of uncertainty and fear among educators and districts (Hartocollis et al., 2025; Mallory et al., 2024). These developments may have a chilling effect on teacher recruitment and retention—particularly among BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and equity-minded educators—who may perceive these shifts as signals of professional risk or unwelcoming school environments. The national climate surrounding DEI, therefore, may shape both who

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

enters the teaching profession and how current educators interpret and respond to questions about equity, belonging, and school culture.

Participants

This study draws on extant data collected through existing professional practices and state-level surveys. Specifically, the participants in the study were licensed educators employed in the district. The study used convenience sampling, drawing on extant data from staff who voluntarily responded to a third-part engagement survey. All teachers were invited to complete the anonymous survey in spring and fall since the spring of 2023. However, only those who completed the survey, and met demographic threshold levels, were included in the analysis. For the purposes of this study, I analyzed survey data from 4 different survey administration periods: spring 2023, fall 2023, spring 2024, and fall 2024.

Purposive sampling was used to identify leader rounding responses for the qualitative analysis. District leaders rounded with a variety of educators during the 2022 – 23 and 2023 – 24 school year. I drew on rounding responses for the 2023 – 24 school years. An email invitation went to 52 BIPOC educators to let them know a district leader would be in their building on a specific day to meet with them to round using specified questions. In the email, staff were notified the goal of the rounding was to gather information from BIPOC staff to understand their experiences as a group in the district. Twenty BIPOC staff responded to the email, and of those 20, district staff completed 15 rounding conversations.

Other passive participants were Oregon educators who completed the 2023 *Oregon Statewide Educator Survey*. According to the most recent Oregon Statewide report card, most teachers in Oregon are White (82%) women (71%), with a Master's degree (75%) and have taught for at least five years (73%) (Oregon Department of Education, 2022a). Twelve percent of

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

all teachers, approximately 24,154, completed the survey. Although the survey response was not as robust as I had hoped it would be, the responses from this participant group do provide an overall picture of Oregon education and educators rather than serving as the primary source of data.

Sources of Data

National Center for Education Statistics

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is a rich source of information about public schools, students, and educators. I used extant data available through NCES's *Digest of Education Statistics* to quantify teacher turnover, teacher demographics, and student demographics for the nation and Oregon.

Oregon Statewide Educator Survey

The *Oregon Educator Survey* is a state-sponsored survey made available to all Oregon school-based licensed educators. Oregon's Educator Advancement Council (EAC) based the survey on Action for School Quality Initiative (ASQi) areas of focus: professional development, educator and school leadership, instructional practices, use of time, and behavior management (EAC, n.d.). The anonymous survey was made available to participants online from February 15, 2023 to March 24, 2023. I used the Oregon Statewide Educator Survey Initiative (OSSES) data that the EAC made available to the public in August 2023 to analyze the experiences of educators across Oregon using descriptive statistics.

District Staff Engagement Survey

Although the survey instrument was developed by a third-party vendor, the survey items were developed by researchers and draw from literature and previous research about recruitment and retention (Hanson & Kraft, 2024) and about the experiences of BIPOC educators in public

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

school settings (Edwards & Kraft, 2024). Using a four-point Likert scale, the survey asked teachers to rate if they agreed or disagreed with items that were categorized into 23 domains related to: (a) their relationships with members of the school community, (b) their sense of belonging within the school, (c) instruction and matters related to equity, inclusion, and diversity, (d) their perceptions of disrupting racism and discrimination, (e) their intellectual freedom to adjust the curriculum to meet their students' needs, and (f) the support they receive from members of the school community.

I focused on a set of survey items that aligned to the factors identified in research that support retention of BIPOC educators and include a correspondent CCW (see Table 4).

Table 4

Survey Item and Correlating CCW

Individual survey item	CCW
Colleague trust	Familial
Colleague support	Social
Colleague care	Familial
Principal support	Social
Sense of belonging	Familial
Trust with leaders	Social
Principals create an inclusive and welcoming school culture for all	Navigational
Feelings of success in their work with students	Aspirational
Principals show appreciation for good work	Social
Sense of purpose in work	Aspirational
Ability to balance workload	Navigational
Opportunities to advance and explore new roles	Aspirational

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Individual survey item	CCW
Opportunities are accessible regardless of race, ethnicity, or culture	Navigational
Principals value racially, culturally, or ethnically diverse perspectives	Linguistic
Principals consistently work to prevent and respond to discriminatory behaviors	Resistant

All licensed staff were sent an email link to complete the survey each time it was administered. Table 5 captures the number of teachers who completed the survey for each administration period and within the parentheses the percentage of teachers that represents.

Table 5

Survey population

Survey Period	BIPOC Teachers		White Teachers		Total
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Spring 2023	39	14	236	86	275
Fall 2023	44	16	238	84	282
Spring 2024	45	16	230	84	275
Fall 2024	42	16	224	84	266
Total	170	15.5	928	84.5	1098

Because the survey was administered four times over two years, it is likely that some individuals responded more than once across different periods. These repeated responses were not linked across each survey administration and are treated as independent responses in the analysis. Thus, educators could be represented up to four times.

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

When the original data source was shared with the district, the vendor suppressed data for educators when the response rate for a specific race or ethnicity was below four. For example, African American teachers' responses were only included in spring 2023 data because the response rate of African American teachers was not high enough to be reported in the other survey periods. Accounting for the suppressed responses, the total number of responses included in the qualitative analysis are 158 BIPOC teachers and 928 White teachers.

The experiences of BIPOC educators are not homogenous and present many differences within and across the racial and ethnic identities that merit a deeper exploration when considering specific retention strategies that could be tailored for specific groups. However, the number of BIPOC teachers in this school system, and across many in Oregon, is not robust enough to have enough statistical power to examine the responses of educators grouped by a specific race or ethnicity. Therefore, I reviewed data for BIPOC teachers in aggregate, not to conflate the experiences and identities of the respondents, but to acknowledge the limitations due to the sample size when compared to the responses for White teachers.

Leader Rounding

Leader rounding is an intentional practice that provides data that adds nuance and depth to the survey results (Morgan, 1996). Rounding data are collected during regularly scheduled visits and follow a semi-structured protocol that includes a uniform set of questions. District leaders document the responses to the questions and then identify themes, opportunities, and possible actions to take at the building or district level.

Rounding Protocol

From the pool of teachers who work in the district, district leaders rounded with 20 BIPOC educators. Figure 3 provides the headings and questions I used to guide the discussions

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

with teachers who accepted leaders' invitations to meet. Rounding typically begins with a goal for understanding educators' experiences and building relationships. A communication is then sent to staff, inviting them to participate in a 10-minute rounding conversation. Figure 3 provides a template for questions asked and the form in which data are collected.

Rounding is a regular strategy employed by district staff within the intention of collecting formative data on staff experiences in general or specific to an initiative or program. Oftentimes, these data are shared back with all staff who participated in that cycle of rounding in a summarized form, partly as a member check to assure staff they were heard and also as a form of accountability.

This study is based on examining the lived experiences of BIPOC educators to understand how they have navigated an Oregon K-12 public school system. A semi-structured approach allows the facilitator to guide the conversation with some general questions while also allowing participants to speak to their own experiences and how they make meaning of what they have experienced (Gale et al., 2013; Larkin et al., 2019). It is quite likely I know the educator because I work in the same district as these educators and I am responsible for Human Resources. However, I will not be the only one who rounds with the educators and all the responses are collected in one shared document that is reviewed by many. In this manner, my proximal or distal relationships with the participants will not be a barrier to them responding to the rounding questions.

Figure 1

Leader Rounding Form

Goal for Rounding: Purposeful Engagement with BIPOC educators
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TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Question	What was heard	Action taken	Date completed or follow-up
What's the one thing about this year that you want to celebrate?			
What supports have you received that have helped you be successful?			
How can we better support you to be more successful in your work?			
Is there any reason that you feel this is not the right place for you?			
Have there been any individuals who have been helpful to you that we can recognize?			
What is your overall employee satisfaction level on a scale of 1 to 10?			

Data Analysis

Statistical Analysis

Because this study included both quantitative and qualitative data, I used different analytic approaches at different times. I calculated descriptive statistics for all sources of quantitative data in my study. I used independent *t*-tests to check for meaningful differences between BIPOC educators and their white peers in their responses to the surveys.

Framework Analysis

To understand the experiences of participants and how participants make meaning of their world, I used Framework Analysis to analyze qualitative responses collected through leader rounding where “key themes can take place across the whole data set [while] the views of each research participant remain connected to other aspects of their account” (Gale et al., 2013, p.2). The Framework method can accommodate pre-defined coding and provides a systematic method for analyzing qualitative data, so I worked with two other district colleagues to code the transcripts using Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth as the thematic framework.

Working with colleagues, I followed the step-by-step Framework method outlined by Gale et al. (2013) which included familiarizing ourselves with the rounding data, identifying a thematic framework, applying the thematic framework to the data, identifying patterns, and analyzing the data with the intent of answering research questions two and three. The sample population was small, the comments were limited to four questions, and interviews were limited to under 20 minutes because most of the rounding interviews occurred during the teacher’s workday. Therefore, the data were collected on a single Google spreadsheet without names of employees who were interviewed and I employed a manual process for coding.

Each of us read the comments for all the rounding and circled common words or phrases for each participant and then across all responses. We each individually reviewed circled comments to see if they matched one of Yosso’s (2005) capitals. As a part of administrator professional development, I instructed colleagues on Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth and possible applications for students, families, and staff within the school district. Therefore, we each had familiarity with the six categories of CCW. We then compared our charts

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

with the words or phrases that were aligned to each of the CCW categories. We engaged in this process for coding checks and to build our own knowledge and application of Yosso's work.

Design Features to Increase the Trustworthiness of My Findings

Validity and reliability are a fundamental part of research. In this study, I used a variety of techniques to increase the trustworthiness of my interpretations. The primary sources of data were the responses provided by teachers from the survey and leader rounding. The leader rounding was conducted by a variety of leaders across the district and staff were provided opportunities to accept or decline an invitation to round. Despite this, there is still a power differential when rounding with someone who is an administrator in the district. As close as I am to the data and the study, I worked with other district colleagues to read transcripts and code the data for themes. Taken together, these steps strengthen the trustworthiness of the conclusions I draw.

The extant data used for the descriptive statistical analysis drew on well-respected sources: a national staff engagement company, NCES and an anonymous statewide survey made available to all licensed educators in Oregon. The Oregon survey was only available through an online link and was sent directly to educators through established official Oregon Department of Education channels. Educators needed access to a device and the internet, so this approach may have limited participation to educators who have reliable internet and devices, and receive and read announcements from ODE, EAC, or other partner organizations. Despite these potential limitations, the demographics of survey participants are representative of Oregon educators.

A possible challenge for this specific school district is the pool of BIPOC educators is relatively small and are likely to know each other. Additionally, many activities in education are shared by word-of-mouth, so participants' leader rounding may have encouraged other

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

participants because of their similar points of view or predisposition to identify issues related to recruiting and retaining educators of color. Although I could not control the size of this sample, I compared my results with the results from other established studies and research to check the validity of my claims.

As a 23-year veteran educator of color who grew up in White public school systems, I have a particular perspective and history that I bring to this research study. I am also a district administrator who is deeply invested in recruiting and retaining teachers, especially BIPOC educators. My personal and professional connections to this work have provided me with insights to be in community with the participants in this study. My goal in this study is to elevate the voices and experiences of the participants in this study so the conditions in which they work in public schools will nurture their identities and make space for them to thrive. Despite my lofty aims, I also recognize that I sit in a position of authority within school systems and am known among other educators, especially BIPOC educators. However, the data used for this study are collected as a part of regular practices of the school district and reviewed with staff, administrators, association partners, other districts, and community partners.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

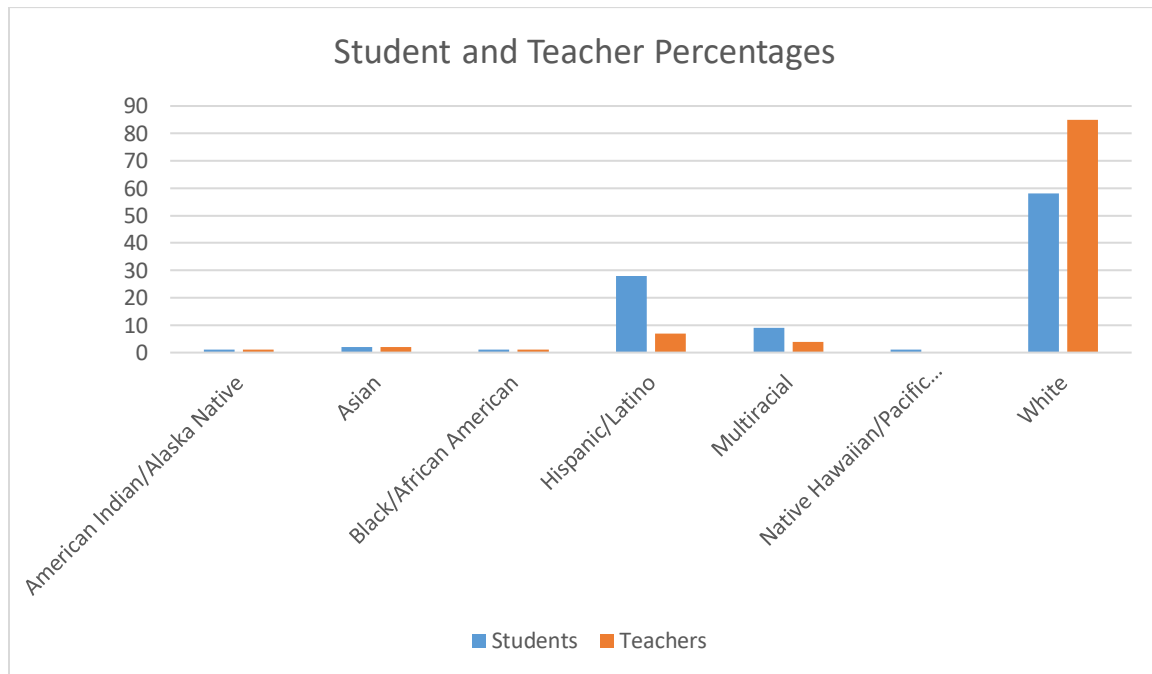
In this chapter, I present the results of my study and will provide a rationale for the survey questions I chose to analyze, the results of the statistical analysis of the survey, and presentation of qualitative data gleaned from leader rounding.

Teacher and Student Demographics

Figure 1 provides a visual depiction of the gap between the percentages of students of color and BIPOC educators in this school district. Although this region is served by five teacher preparation programs that provide a steady stream of recruits for school districts, as Figure 1 indicates, White-identifying teachers outnumber all other demographic groups.

Figure 2

Racial and Ethnic Demographics for Students and Teachers for Study School District



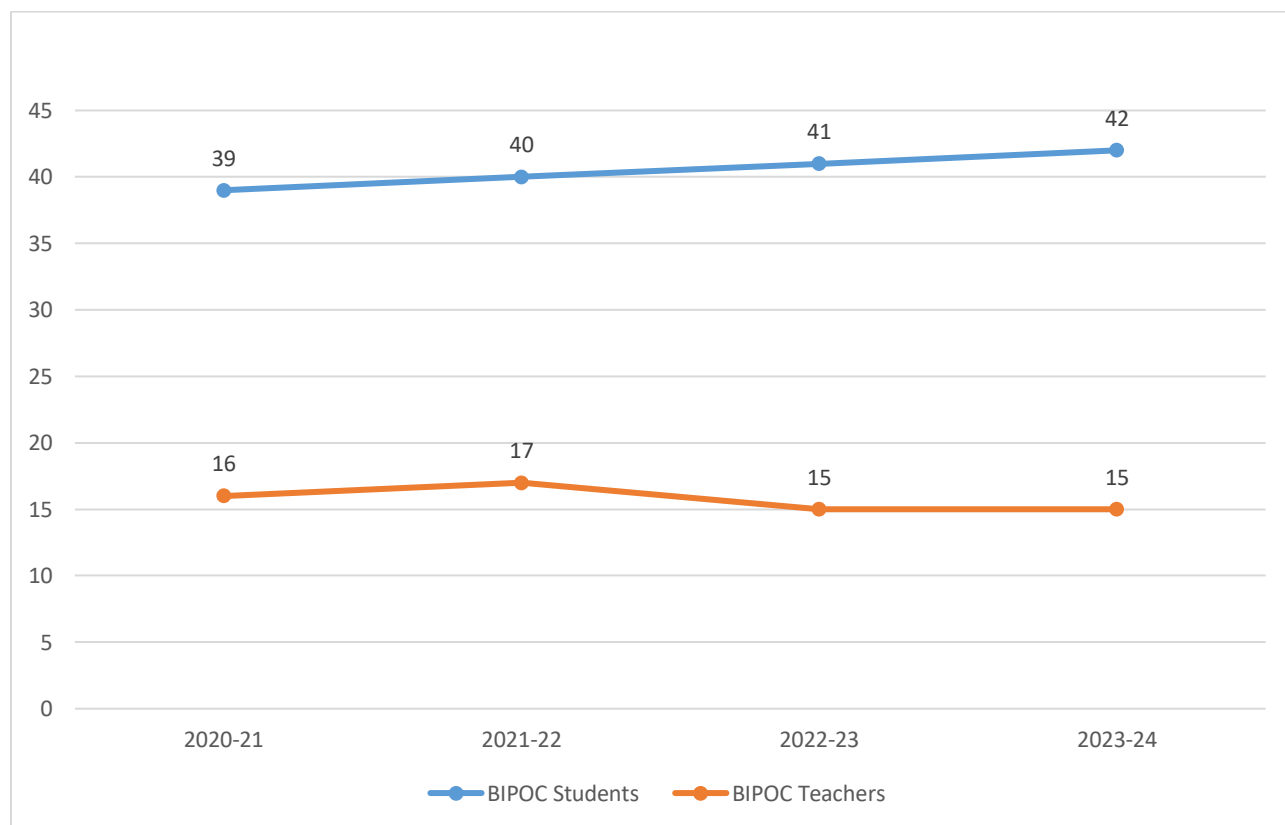
The disparity between students and teachers is even more evident when comparing percentages for BIPOC students and teachers. Figure 2 illustrates the change over time, from

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

2017-18 to 2021-22 school years. Although districts are making some gains in teacher diversity due to policy and funding efforts (Ingersoll et al., 2018), student diversity continues to increase at a greater rate. Without additional efforts or changes in approaches to recruitment and retention, the graph below suggests the diversity of teachers will not ever match that of students.

Figure 3

Racial and Ethnic Demographics for Students and Teachers for the District



Oregon Department of Education

National Center for Education Statistics

National data on the teacher workforce illustrates persistent gaps in racial and ethnic representation among educators. Despite increasing racial and ethnic diversity among U.S. public school students, the teaching workforce has remained disproportionately White. According to the *Condition of Education 2024*, White students made up 45% of public school enrollment in fall

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

2022, down from 52% in 2011. Over the same period, the percentage of Hispanic students increased from 24% to 29%, and the share of multiracial students also grew. In contrast, teacher demographics changed very little over the same period. In 2011–12, 82% of public school teachers were White and by 2020–21, that number had decreased to 79% (NCES, 2024).

Meanwhile, teacher turnover continues to affect retention efforts, with 8% of teachers leaving the profession and 8% transferring schools during the 2021–22 school year (NCES, 2024). Table 6 illustrates the demographic shifts in both student and teacher populations, revealing a persistent cultural mismatch.

Table 6

Racial/Ethnic Demographics of Students and Teachers, Nationally

Race/Ethnicity	Students 2011 (%)	Students 2022 (%)	Teachers 2011–12 (%)	Teachers 2020–21 (%)
White	52	45	82	79
Hispanic	24	29	8	9
Black	16	15	7	7
Asian	5	5	2	2
Two or more races	3	4	<1	2
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	1	<1	<1
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	<1	1	<1	<1

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

This demographic mismatch contrasts sharply with the growing diversity of the U.S. student population.

Figure 1 illustrates the racial/ethnic composition of public school teachers compared to students based on student body racial and ethnic identities.

Figure 4

Percentage Distribution of teachers, by race/ethnicity and the race/ethnicity of students, 2017-18 (NCES, 2020)

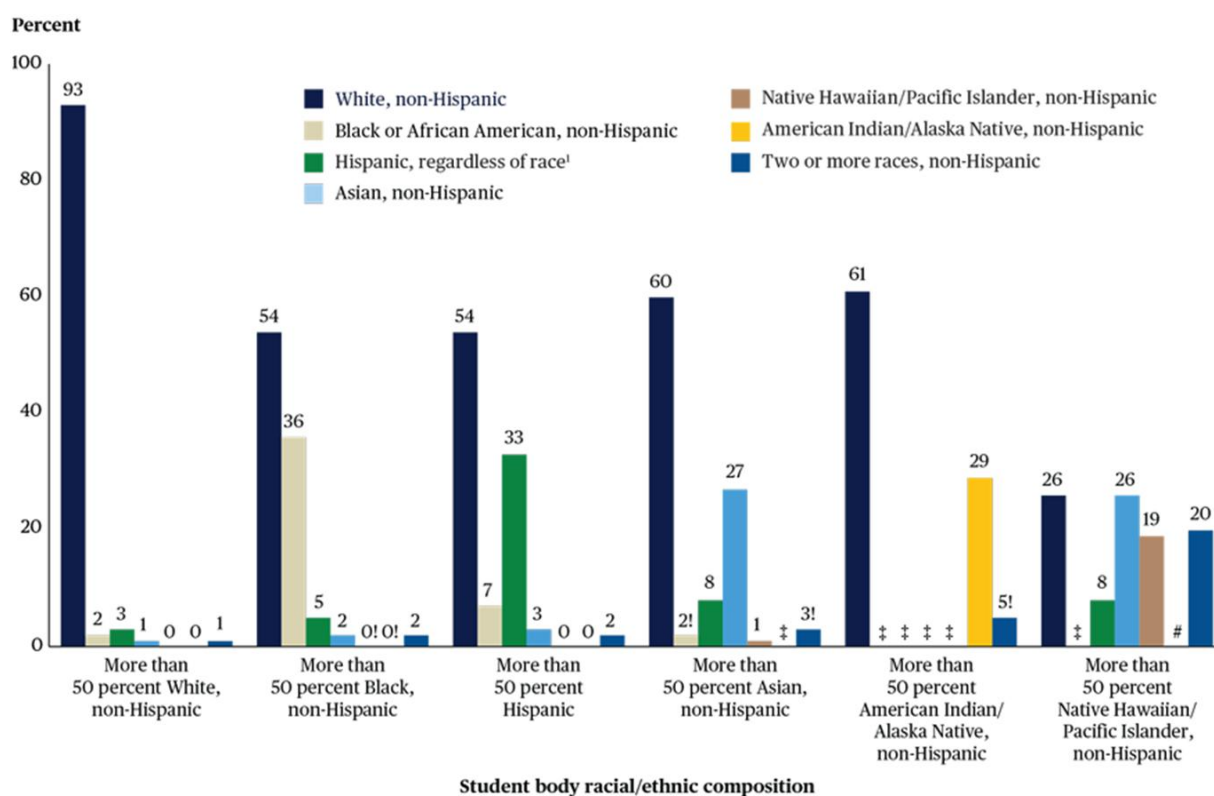


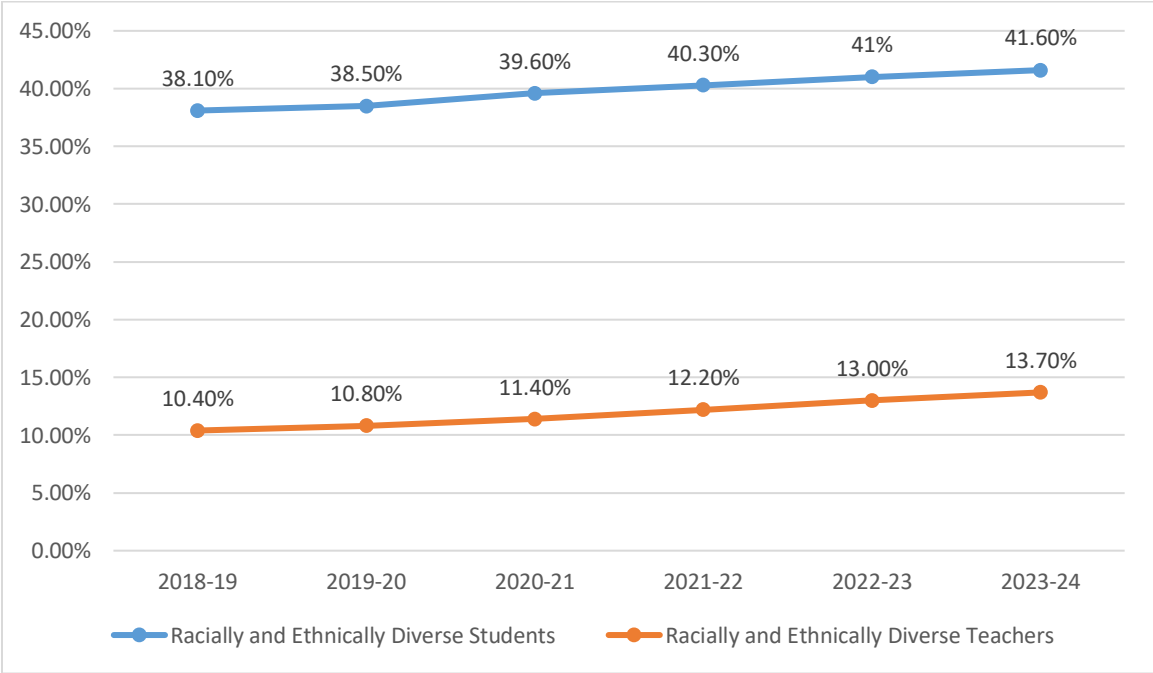
Figure 4 suggests there may not be as much cultural mismatch BIPOC students who attend schools where their demographic group makes up more than 50 percent of the student population. This appears to be evident for students who identify as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. However, the national data indicate the U.S. student population continues to become racially and ethnically diverse, yet the pace of diversity among teachers lags. Thus, White, non-Latino teachers still represent most of the teacher workforce. As I examine Oregon data, these trends persist.

Oregon Demographics

As national data illustrates a persistent gap between percentages of BIPOC students and teachers in public schools, Oregon’s data reveal similar trends. Despite modest gains in hiring practices, Oregon continues to face a more pronounced gap because BIPOC students represent 41% of the student population, yet 13.7% of teachers identify as BIPOC (ODE, 2024). Again, both students and teacher groups are becoming increasingly more ethnically and racially diverse, however, the gap between the two groups persists. In comparison, the study district is reflective of the state, though the district’s teacher workforce is slightly more diverse.

Figure 5

Percentage of Oregon Students and Teachers Who Identify as Ethnically and Racially Diverse, 2018-19 to 2023 - 24



Teacher Turnover

According to the most recent Oregon Educator Equity Report, the average teacher turnover rate from 2007 to 2022 is 17.6% (EAC, 2024), while the national average is 16%

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

(NCES, 2024). Within both of those percentages are educators who move to a different building (movers) and those who leave public schools completely (leavers). For the district, the percentage of teachers who leave is not as high as the state or the nation. Overall, the district retains approximately 94% of all teachers. However, the bulk of teachers who leave are disproportionately probationary teachers as seen in Table 7.

Table 7

Percentage of Teachers who Stayed and Received a Probationary Contract

	P1 move to P2	P2 teachers move to P3
21/22 SY to 22/23 SY	90%	100%
22/23 SY to 23/24 SY	79%	81%
23/24 SY to 24/25 SY	81%	76%

Survey Analysis

The district administered the third-party survey in the fall and spring of three successive school years, beginning in spring 2023. This third-party survey is administered across the nation, with survey items revised or removed from year to year based on customer feedback. Therefore, I analyzed a set of questions that were the same or similar enough to be analyzed across the four administrations. Additionally, I only focused on questions that were aligned to my research questions. I attempted to address the following research questions by analyzing the 1080 responses over four administrations.

Research Question 1

1. Do BIPOC educators report feeling less connected to their colleagues, principals and school than White educators, as the research might suggest?

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

To address this question, I analyzed the data using descriptive statistics and *t*-tests to compare the responses of BIPOC teachers to those of White teachers and for all participants as a group (Table 6). I analyzed the data for each of the 15 survey items previously identified as having the closest relationship with the literature and Yosso's (2005) CCW. In general, the mean scores were similar for BIPOC and White teachers, indicating relatively consistent responses across groups.

While there were no statistically significant differences between BIPOC and White educators on many items such as trust, relationships, and belonging, small differences emerged for items related to equity, inclusion, and diversity. BIPOC educators ($M=2.99$, $SD=.73$) reported lower agreement with the survey item about having access to opportunities regardless of race, ethnicity, and culture than White teachers ($M=3.21$, $SD=.68$), $t(195.4) = -3.40$, $p<.001$, $d=.68$. Similarly, on the item about principals valuing racially, culturally, and ethnically diverse perspectives, White teachers ($M=3.29$, $SD=.64$) responded more favorably than BIPOC educators ($M=3.09$, $SD=.80$), $t(1078)=-3.48$, $p<.001$, $d=.66$. These differences reflect medium size effects and suggest that BIPOC educators may perceive disparities in equity, inclusion, and diversity efforts.

Two other areas that are somewhat related that showed small differences in responses were feelings of success and ability to manage the workload. For both composite variables BIPOC educators scored the items more favorably. Though the effect size was small, $t(1078)=2.54$, $p=.01$, $d=.71$, BIPOC teachers reported feeling more successful in their work ($M=3.06$, $SD=.78$) than White teachers ($M=2.90$, $SD=.70$). Feeling successful may also be related to one's ability to manage the workload of teaching and, again, BIPOC educators reported feeling more able to manage the workload and stress of teaching ($M=2.56$, $SD=.86$) than White

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

colleagues ($M=2.37$, $SD=.84$), $t(1078)=2.5$, $p=.01$, $d=.84$. However, it is important to note that the ability to manage the workload was scored the lowest for both groups among all of the composite variables and the effect size was quite small.

Returning to the survey items, I analyzed the data using new composite variables that aggregated survey items under areas that are reflected in the research about teacher retention. These new composite variables represent factors that play into educator's decisions about staying or leaving in their school or the profession (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Dixon et al., 2019; Holmes et al., 2019; Ingersoll et al.).

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics and t-Test Results for Select Survey Items

Survey Item	BIPOC educators (<i>n</i> = 152)		White educators (<i>n</i> = 928)		<i>t-Test</i> results			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
Colleague trust	3.13	.55	3.14	.58	-.084	1078	.93	.02
Colleague support	3.39	.68	3.35	.66	.77	1078	.44	.06
Colleague care	3.28	.58	3.24	.60	.61	1078	.54	.07
Principal support	3.17	.84	3.11	.81	.81	1078	.42	.07
Sense of belonging	3.18	.78	3.17	.69	.12	1078	.90	.01
Trust with leaders	3.28	.82	3.17	.86	1.48	1078	.14	.13
Principals create an inclusive and welcoming school	3.18	.76	3.26	.68	-1.18	1078	.24	.11
Feelings of success in their jobs	3.06	.78	2.90	.70	2.54	1078	.01	.22
Principals show appreciation	2.86	.86	2.77	.86	1.18	1078	.24	.10
Sense of purpose in work	3.33	.67	3.21	.63	1.99*	197.4	.05	.18
Ability to balance workload	2.56	.86	2.37	.84	2.51	1078	.01	.22
Opportunities to advance and explore	2.78	.71	2.74	.65	.66	1078	.51	.06

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Survey Item	BIPOC educators (<i>n</i> = 152)		White educators (<i>n</i> = 928)		<i>t</i> -Test results			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
Opportunities are accessible regardless of race, ethnicity, or culture	2.99	.73	3.21	.68	-3.40*	195.4	<.001	.33
Principals value racially, culturally, or ethnically diverse perspectives	3.09	.80	3.29	.64	-3.48	1078	<.001	.28
Principals consistently work to prevent and respond to discriminatory behaviors	2.67	.82	2.91	.80	-1.61	267	.11	.29
Continuing to teach in same school	3.00	.94	3.24	.82	-1.53	267	.13	.27

*Assumption of equal variances was violated

Note: results with statistically significant differences between BIPOC and White educators are bolded in the table.

Research-Guided Composite Variables

Table 8 contains the results of the *t*-test analysis of the new composite means and revealed there was no statistical significance between the two groups for all variables except for efficacy and resources. BIPOC educators reported feeling more autonomy regarding their classroom decisions ($M=3.08, SD=0.70$), than White teachers ($M=2.98, SD=0.68$), $t(1078)=1.665, p=.09, d=0.15$, but this was not statistically significant.

A significant difference emerged in the efficacy composite variable (Table 9). BIPOC educators ($M=2.92, SD = 0.54$) reported higher levels of perceived teaching efficacy than White educators ($M=2.79, SD = 0.52$), $t(1078) = 2.97, p = .003, d = 0.26$. The effect size was small to medium, suggesting that BIPOC educators may feel more confident or successful in their roles. There was a statistically significant difference in perceptions of access to resources, with BIPOC educators ($M=2.81, SD = 0.56$) reporting higher levels than White educators ($M=2.72, SD = 0.58$), $t(1078) = 1.92, p = .049, d = 0.17$. The small effect size indicates a modest, but statistically significant difference in perceived access to resources necessary for their work.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics and t-Test Results: Survey Items Composite Variables

Composite Variable	BIPOC educators (<i>n</i> = 152)		White Educators <i>n</i> = 928)		<i>t</i> -Test Results			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Autonomy	3.08	.70	2.98	.68	1.66	1078	.09	.15
Colleague support, care, & relationships	3.27	.47	3.22	.46	1.31	1078	.19	.12
Work culture	2.97	.44	3.03	.41	-1.46	1078	.15	-.13
Efficacy	2.92	.54	2.79	.52	1.97	1078	.003	.26
Professional growth & support	2.96	.49	2.95	.47	.25	1078	.80	.02

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Composite Variable	BIPOC educators (<i>n</i> = 152)		White Educators <i>n</i> = 928)		<i>t</i> -Test Results			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
Principal relationship & support	3.01	.64	3.01	.60	-.20	1078	.84	-.02
Resources	2.81	.56	2.72	.58	1.92	1078	.049	.17

Note: results with statistically significant differences between BIPOC and White educators are bolded in the table.

Composite Variables: Community Cultural Wealth

Additionally, I employed Framework Analysis using the pre-defined codes to classify responses within one of the CCW concepts to create different composite variables. Independent sample *t*-tests were conducted to examine the differences in the CCW composite variables between BIPOC and White staff (Table 10). Statistically significant differences were found within two areas, *navigational* and *resistant* capital. BIPOC educators responded more affirmatively that they could navigate district systems ($M=2.88, SD=.54$) than their White colleagues ($M=2.76, SD=.51$), $t(1078)=2.57, p=.01, d=.23$. In contrast, perceptions about survey items that fit within resistant capital, White educators ($M=3.17, SD=.56$) reported more positively than BIPOC staff ($M=3.05, SD=.62$), $t(1078)=-2.55, p=.01, d=-.22$. For the other CCW composite variables, I did not find any statistical significance, though *aspirational* capital approached significance with BIPOC educators ($M=3.10, SD=.54$), $t(1078)=1.84, p=.07, d=.16$, expressing they activate aspirational capital a little more than White teachers ($M=3.00, SD=.48$). Overall, these findings suggest BIPOC and White educators access forms of CCW capital in a similar manner.

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics and t-Test Results: Composite Variables for Community Cultural Wealth

Composite Variable	BIPOC educators (<i>n</i> = 152)		White educators (<i>n</i> = 928)		<i>t-Test</i> results			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
Aspirational	3.10	.54	3.00	.48	1.84	1078	.07	.16
Familial	3.17	.40	3.18	.39	-.39	1078	.69	-.04
Linguistic	2.87	.57	2.93	.57	-1.25	1078	.21	-.11
Navigational	2.88	.54	2.76	.51	2.57	1078	.01	.23
Resistant	3.05	.62	3.17	.56	-2.55	1078	.01	-.22
Social	3.11	.49	3.09	.51	.26	1078	.79	.02

In general, the quantitative analysis of survey items, individually and part of a composite variable, revealed minimal statistical differences in the responses of BIPOC educators and their White colleagues. Even where there were some statistically significant differences, the effect size suggested a small practical difference in their responses. To deepen understanding and explore context, my next phase of analysis drew on qualitative responses from BIPOC educators collected during leader rounding conversations.

Rounding Data

Research Questions

2. Why do BIPOC educators stay in the district?
3. What types of Community Cultural Wealth (aspirational, navigational, familial, social, linguistic, or resistance) are BIPOC educators accessing in their profession?

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

To address these two research questions, I will use the qualitative data collected through leader rounding. Using Framework Analysis, I organized the participants’ responses into thematic categories guided by Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model. This approach allowed for deductive coding and inductive refinement based on participant experiences. Table 11 offers a sample of participant responses and coding applied. A general practice in this district is to remove any identifiable information from rounding data and use generative AI to identify initial themes. However, those themes are generally based on the frequency of words or phrases, whereas for the purposes of this study, I applied research-informed categories and the CCW framework to code the qualitative responses. I trained the district staff on the coding scheme and two other staff assisted with the coding and analysis.

Table 11

Leader Rounding Data: Sample of staff Response

CCW	Subthemes/descriptive codes	Representative quotes
Aspirational	Opportunities to grow	<p>“I enjoyed leading a workshop”</p> <p>“I have opportunities to lead a student affinity group”</p> <p>“I asked to teach a new grade and I will next year”</p> <p>“My principal is supportive of me”</p>
Familial	<p>Sense of belonging</p> <p>Trust with colleagues and principal</p> <p>Welcomed and included</p>	<p>“I stay because of the people who work here.”</p> <p>“Leadership is accessible”</p> <p>“My team and staff welcomed me”</p>
Linguistic	Ability to teach culture	<p>“I appreciate that I can teach my tribal history.”</p> <p>“I like that the superintendent invites others to share their perspectives”</p>

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

CCW	Subthemes/descriptive codes	Representative quotes
Navigational	Tapped for leadership Feeling successful Knowing how to get support	“You encouraged me” “This was the first year I had a student teacher and it was awesome” “I like the smallness of the district” “It’s not a big deal for me to talk to my principal, you, or the superintendent”
Social	Collegial support	“I have a good team of people”
Resistant	Strong stand on diversity, equity, and inclusion Diversity of students and staff is supported and celebrated	“I chose Bethel because of your approach to equity and inclusion.” “I didn’t see eye to eye with the principal” “I love the affinity groups for students” “There is no issue with what people being who they are”

Of the 15 staff who rounded with district staff, 11 planned to continue in the district and three intended to leave at the end of the school year. For the 11 teachers who were continuing in the district, all planned to remain in their current buildings, and only one was moving to a different grade or assignment within their building. Unfortunately, the responses were de-identified when I analyzed the data so I could not identify their race, ethnicity, gender, or tenure in the district.

The responses from all BIPOC educators were generally positive and reflected a connection to colleagues and their identities as educators. They all commented on liking their chosen profession, the work with students, and all could identify colleagues who they found to be helpful or supportive. Participants emphasized relational trust, a strong sense of belonging, abilities to incorporate culture, and access to leadership. Although I was concerned about the

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

power differential that existed when district leaders met with staff, some of the staff remarked on the novelty of talking with leaders about their experiences in the district.

While none of the respondents used words like *aspirational*, *familial*, *linguistic*, *navigational*, *resistant*, or *social*, their responses revealed meaningful insights into the forms of Community Cultural Wealth they draw upon and are embedded within the positive experiences and relationships they described.

Two respondents mentioned teacher salaries as an issue of concern in response to the question about why they think the district may not be the right place for them. However, they followed that comment with a reference to commitment to students or the profession and the belief that pay is an overall issue with the profession and not the district.

Aspirational Capital: Opportunities for Growth and Leadership

Eleven educators described feeling supported in their professional growth, opportunities to engage in activities outside of the classroom, or hopeful for their future in education. Comments such as “I enjoyed leading a workshop” and “I have opportunities to lead a student affinity group” reflect a sense of encouragement and investment in their growth. Several educators connected opportunities to develop professionally as the district’s investment in them. The four teachers who intended to leave were leaving the district to take other teaching jobs which I interpreted as a continued commitment to the profession and aspiring to find a better position for them. In general, though, educators shared how they remained committed to students and their growth, expressed excitement for new or different opportunities in the district, and demonstrated a future-oriented mindset, which are all indicators for aspirational capital.

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Familial Capital: Sense of Belonging and Relational Trust

All the educators emphasized the importance of positive relationships and a strong sense of belonging within their schools. Statements like “I stay because of the people who work here,” “My team and staff welcomed me,” and “My team of EAs is amazing” highlight the relational culture that supports retention. These comments reflect the value placed on interpersonal trust with colleagues and is supported by research that suggests that BIPOC educators want to feel belonging and community in the schools they work (Kohli, 2018a; Love, 2019). Four of the teachers talked about how much they “loved” working the district because of the school staff. Three different educators reported they liked the size of the district because the size allowed staff to get to know one another within their buildings and across the district. Three staff reported they were new to their buildings yet felt welcomed by their principals and colleagues.

For all four teachers who planned to leave the district, each of them spoke highly about their school teams and three of the 4 indicated they would have stayed in the district if circumstances were different. Also, two of these staff reported that even when they leave the district they would likely maintain relationships with some of their colleagues.

Linguistic Capital: Cultural Expression and Voice

The ability to bring one’s whole cultural self into the workplace is significant, especially into a profession like teaching which draws on so many interpersonal skills and is so public (Dixon et al., 2019; Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). Although less frequently referenced, some participants spoke about the importance of having the discretion to incorporate their cultural and linguistic backgrounds into their classroom practices. One educator noted, “I appreciate that I can teach my tribal history,” indicating that the district provides some space for cultural expression in the classroom. Another aspect of linguistic capital is the ability to bring multiple

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

narratives or cultural stories forward into a White dominant space like the schools in this district (Yosso, 2005). This aspect of linguistic capital was mentioned by three of the educators who mentioned leading student affinity groups in their schools was a point of celebration.

One teacher spoke specifically about the intersection of their identity and language with being a teacher. They self-identified as bilingual and bicultural educator who is responsible for teaching Spanish. Although they are a native speaker, they reported “It is a lot of work to develop lessons and curriculum.” Despite having the linguistic ability and knowledge, they did not perceive these as an asset in their work.

Navigational Capital: Access to Leadership and Informal Support

All the respondents described their ability to navigate school and district systems to access support from colleagues, mentors, coaches, teacher teams, or administrators. One could also infer that if an educator is finding satisfaction in their job, then they are successfully navigating the district. One educator shared, “It’s not a big deal for me to talk to my principal, you, or the superintendent,” and another reported they received help with their paperwork. These comments suggest that BIPOC educators feel seen and supported in informal but meaningful ways by district and school leadership. Five educators referenced formal structures such as instructional coaches and mentors as key factors that supported their success. Indeed, leader rounding as a practice encourages relationships and leader listening, which are actions that are supported in the literature for improving retention (Dixon et al., 2019; Pilcher, 2023). One teacher reported they had worked in the district and left several years ago, but had eventually “found their way back” which can be aspirational, but we ultimately coded this as navigational because of the systems and processes they had to navigate to be re-hired into an open position.

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Overall, expressions about negotiating district systems, seeking mentorship, and supporting peers reflect their access to navigational capital.

Two teachers who were leaving the district at the end of the year, each from different buildings, shared that while they had strong relationships with their colleagues, they struggled to see eye-to-eye with their principals. One reported that they could not figure out how to communicate with their principal despite seeking out support. The other teacher indicated that after four years in the building, they were convinced the principal did not “have [their] back.” Both talked about their relationships with students and the positive classroom culture they created as something they wanted to celebrate. Their responses were an indication to me that they each struggled with navigating the school system and relationships with their principals, but generally enjoyed positive relationships with students and colleagues.

Resistant Capital: Equity and Inclusion as Anchors

Resistant capital represents the knowledge and skills that staff develop to challenge injustice, social inequities, and marginalization (Yosso, 2005) and reflects a broader commitment to education as a form of social justice. Six of the respondents mentioned equity in their narratives and were some of the strongest statements related to resistant capital were related to the district’s approach to equity. One educator shared, “I chose Bethel because of your approach to equity and inclusion,” while another affirmed, “There is no issue with people being who they are.” These reflections demonstrate an alignment between district and staff values related to how the district serves underserved communities. Additionally, the three staff who described leading affinity groups exemplify how a commitment to equity and social justice can taught or modeled for students so they can also build up their resistant capital.

Social Capital: Collegial Networks

Associated with familial capital, social capital is about the quality of relationships educators maintain in their schools where they are likely to be one of a few BIPOC staff. All the educators, including those who were leaving the district, spoke about the strength of their peer relationships, noting the collaborative and supportive nature of their teams. “I have a good team of people” and “Lots of support from cooperating teacher and all staff” were representative comment, suggesting that social connections among staff contribute to job satisfaction. Additionally, when asked about who has helped them, all the participants named at least two colleagues, though many acknowledged whole grade level or department teams. For six of the respondents, their principals were identified as an important part of their network.

Overall, the qualitative data revealed that BIPOC educators generally experienced supportive work environments characterized by trusting relationships, leadership access, and opportunities for growth. While not all experiences were uniformly positive, the rounding suggests that educators feel respected, welcomed, and valued. The implicit expressions of cultural wealth highlight how BIPOC educators continue to build on, access, and share their assets. These findings align with key retention factors identified in the literature and reinforce the importance of attending to inclusive, culturally responsive, and relationally strong school environments.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter provides an interpretation of the quantitative and qualitative findings presented in my results, with attention to how they align with existing research, theoretical frameworks, and the realities of teacher retention—particularly for BIPOC educators. Using Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) model as a guiding lens, I explored the ways in which BIPOC educators experienced professional relationships, work conditions, and opportunities for growth. I also discuss the implications for district leaders and policymakers, highlight limitations of the study, and offer recommendations for future research.

Interpreting the Findings

Research Questions

1. Do BIPOC educators report feeling less connected to their colleagues, principals and school than White educators, as the research might suggest?
2. Why do BIPOC educators stay in the district?
3. What types of Community Cultural Wealth (aspirational, navigational, familial, social, linguistic, or resistance) are BIPOC educators accessing in their profession?

In general, BIPOC educators reported feeling as connected, supported, and cared for in their schools as White teachers. Therefore, in response to my first research question, based on the survey data, BIPOC educators do not feel less connected than their White colleagues or to their principals. However, based on my review of literature, I anticipated BIPOC educators to score lower than their White counterparts on many of the survey items and for the composite variables. In some instances such as perceptions of administrators’ abilities or skills to engage in conversations about or address racism and discrimination, BIPOC educators rated items lower

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

than their White colleagues. However, the magnitude of these differences, while statistically significant in some cases, reflected a small effect size which suggests limited practical significance in the overall perceptions between the two groups. Yet, despite the smallness of the significance, this is an important difference that reflects the research that BIPOC educators will be more sensitive to and in search of school climates that support and advocate for their racialized experiences and identities (Dixon et al., 2019). Therefore, BIPOC educators may have rated efforts to disrupt racism and discrimination lower due to holding higher expectations for these actions, particularly from their White administrators and colleagues. Such expectations may exceed the perceptions or standards held by White staff in relation to anti-racist and anti-discriminatory work in schools.

In response to my research question about why the educators choose to stay in the district, I will draw on survey responses and qualitative statements gathered during Leader Rounding. The survey data revealed no statistical difference between BIPOC and White educators in areas such as autonomy, colleague support, care and relationships, work culture, professional growth, and principal relationships. This suggests that BIPOC educators generally perceive these foundational aspects of the work environment as comparably supportive and are key indicators of high retention (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Gist et al., 2021; Ingersoll et al., 2017). Statistically significant differences were found in two other composite variables, efficacy and resources, with BIPOC educators rating the items in those composite variables more positively than their White colleagues. These more favorable responses from BIPOC educators in these areas suggest that BIPOC educators feel more confident in their abilities to meet the needs of their students and believe they have the tools and support to do so. Having a sense of professional competence and access to resources can be buffers against common challenges

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

faced by BIPOC educators (Achinstein et al., 2010; Carver-Thomas, 2018; Kohli & Pizarro, 2016).

Though not asked directly about why these educators stay in the district, during Leader Rounding, 13 of the participants reported overwhelmingly that they liked their school, the district, and colleagues. This group also included two of the staff who planned to leave – they each mentioned not wanting to leave the district. These comments were further supported by other statements participants made about being connected to their school communities, feeling supported by colleagues and administrators, having opportunities to grow and develop professionally, and personal and professional alignment between the district and their identities as educators. The alignment of the survey results with Leader Rounding data suggests BIPOC educators are staying because they feel connected to their school communities, effective, and they have the resources to do their jobs.

The third research question shifts focus to the strengths and assets BIPOC educators bring to their roles. To examine this question, I draw on Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework to better understand how educators describe and enact various forms of capital in their daily practice and professional experiences.

Community Cultural Wealth

Although only a small sample of BIPOC educators participated in Leader Rounding, the group included staff across elementary, middle, and high school levels and represented a range of teaching areas. Using CCW as a lens for analyzing their responses proved to be both important and meaningful. The analysis of composite survey variables aligned with the Community Cultural Wealth framework revealed statistically significant differences in two areas, Navigational and Resistant Capital. In addition, qualitative themes provided rich insight into how

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

BIPOC educators enact various forms of cultural capital in their professional practice, relationships, and advocacy. Applying this framework offers a deeper, asset-based understanding of how BIPOC educators sustain their work, navigate challenges, and meaningfully contribute to the broader school community.

Of the fifteen BIPOC educators interviewed, two were leaving the district at the end of the year, and in their interview, they said, “I could burn it down on my way out, but honestly, I liked it here, and I loved the kids and school. I didn’t see eye-to-eye with the principal.” This interview highlighted for me the complexity of teacher retention and the factors that contribute to leaving. There are many factors that can and do support teachers, but there may be one interaction or one relationship that could outweigh other factors. For this educator, they were involved in student affinity groups, the equity teams, and district-wide committees which would indicate they were accessing their social, navigational, and aspirational capital. Yet, they were still leaving the district. Their report of the difficult relationship they had with their principal provides evidence in support of the importance of building administrators in teacher retention efforts.

Several staff shared feelings of being welcomed, included, and supported by colleagues, teacher teams, and their principals. Three of the respondents were new to the district and reported that they knew of the district through previous employment or student teaching. All three indicated they chose to work in the district because they believed the district has a strong equity stance and does the right work. When viewed against the backdrop of CCW, such response encourage consideration that BIPOC educators, as they access their cultural wealth, are seeking school or districts that align with their vision for equity, inclusion, and diversity or will

be open to BIPOC educators incorporating their cultural selves into the fabric of the school community.

Relational Trust and Belonging

One of the most consistent findings in both the quantitative and qualitative data was the strong sense of collegial trust and support reported across both BIPOC and White educators. This affirms the importance of familial capital (Yosso, 2005), wherein teachers, particularly BIPOC teachers, locate strength in communal and kinship-like relationships within the workplace. These findings echo prior studies (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Ingersoll & May, 2011) that suggest peer relationships can be a stabilizing force for BIPOC teachers, even in the face of other workplace challenges.

However, the rounding interviews add dimension to this finding. While most BIPOC educators described collegial relationships positively, one participant who was leaving the district explicitly referenced a strained principal relationship as a key factor in their decision to exit. This emphasizes that relational trust with administrators - distinct from peer trust - may be more decisive for some educators. The role of the principal cannot be understated; this aligns with other literature pointing to the principal as a critical node of influence for retention, especially for educators of color (Grissom, Rodriguez, & Kern, 2017).

Principal Influence and Equity Commitments

Quantitative results showed few statistically significant differences between BIPOC and White educators in perceptions of principal support. However, items related to equity commitments (e.g., valuing diverse perspectives, accessibility of opportunities) showed larger gaps. Notably, BIPOC educators rated principals lower on valuing diverse perspectives and ensuring equal access to advancement opportunities. These findings reflect the activation of

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

resistant capital and navigational capital—forms of CCW that suggest BIPOC educators draw on critical consciousness and resilience to navigate and sometimes challenge inequitable institutional norms that they find oppressive or discriminatory. Indeed, Kohli (2021) has written at length about the “racial battle fatigue” that BIPOC educators experience when they are the only ones who choose or are expected to challenge school inequities.

This nuance is further supported by qualitative data. Several staff noted the importance of the district’s equity stance as a reason for joining or remaining in the district. This notion of *education is equity in action* is something openly discussed in the district and is also something that researchers suggest draws BIPOC educators to the profession. Indeed, when BIPOC educators have options, they are likely to look for a district that closely aligns with their belief systems about equity, inclusion, and diversity.

At the same time, there were indications of uneven implementation of inclusive practices, suggesting a gap between district-level equity aspirations and site-level realities. This gap reinforces the need for not only district-wide equity messaging but also principal preparation and accountability in translating that messaging into daily practice.

Work Conditions, Efficacy, and Autonomy

Although mean responses on items related to workload balance and professional efficacy were relatively low overall, BIPOC educators reported slightly higher ratings than their White colleagues on items such as “feeling successful at work” and “sense of purpose.” The statistically significant difference in the efficacy composite score may reflect the aspirational capital that BIPOC educators bring - the ability to maintain hope and commitment despite systemic challenges (Yosso, 2005). This finding also aligns with existing literature that describes how

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

BIPOC educators often bring a strong sense of mission and social justice commitment to their work (Milner, 2010).

That said, autonomy and workload challenges persist. Educators in leader rounding shared a desire for leadership opportunities and appreciation, but responses also hinted at inconsistencies in how such opportunities were distributed or acknowledged. These findings suggest districts must go beyond providing opportunities and invite or encourage access to opportunities and advancement for BIPOC staff. Although limited in scope, this study does provide some important implications for practice.

Implications for Practice

Support Principals as Equity Leaders

Principals play an outsized role in shaping school culture and supporting (or hindering) educator retention. Districts should provide explicit training and coaching for principals on how to create inclusive, trust-rich environments, especially for BIPOC staff. A key finding from this study was finding opportunities for staff to grow and develop as teachers and as leaders. This sentiment was reflected in the composite variable analysis, as well as from the qualitative responses. Additionally, some of the responses to the leader rounding reflected BIPOC educators engaged in opportunities to lead in areas that activated their racial, ethnic, or cultural identities such as incorporating aspects of their culture into curricula or leading affinity groups or conversations with BIPOC students.

Sustain and Expand Culturally Responsive Structures

Affinity groups, equity teams, and culturally relevant teaching opportunities matter to BIPOC educators. These structures reflect their CCW and contribute to a sense of belonging and leadership. Maintaining and expanding these practices can support retention. Additionally, many

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

BIPOC educators enter the education field because of a commitment to social justice and often because of personal experiences within their own K-12 educational journey. Thus, offering opportunities with intention and within the scope of their work can activate a BIPOC educators desire to improve experiences for BIPOC students.

Address Perceptions of Equity Gaps

Although the district positions itself as equity-focused, BIPOC educators perceived disparities in how equity commitments were enacted. Conducting deeper site-level equity audits, involving BIPOC educators in leadership decisions, and increasing transparency around professional advancement could help bridge this gap. Often, professional development is focused on an entire group without offering differentiated or scaffolded learning for educators. When examining equity gaps within student data or within the experiences of educators, it might make sense to create a different kind of professional development or experience for BIPOC educators who may view their data differently than their White colleagues. This is not to suggest a separate, but equal track for training. However, it is worth exploring with BIPOC educators about how to elevate their voices and perspectives in a manner that does not place the burden of being the “equity police” when examining data for achievement or opportunity gaps based on race, culture, or ethnicity.

Use Rounding as a Reflective Practice

Rounding conversations proved to be a rich data source and, more importantly, a way to engage educators in continuous dialogue. Districts might consider embedding rounding protocols into leadership routines with clear feedback loops and follow-up actions. Ultimately, rounding is about connecting with staff and having a short conversation where they feel valued, heard, and seen. This can be an especially powerful practice when there is follow-up. Not only do leaders

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

get a quick dipstick of educators' experiences, it also provides an opportunity to address any issues in a timely manner and before a small issue becomes a distraction.

Policy Implications

At the state level, Oregon's Educator Equity Act (House Bill 3375) and the annual Oregon Educator Equity Report demonstrate a continued commitment to workforce diversity (EAC, 2024). The 2024 Equity Report (EAC, 2024) notes that despite an increase in the percentage of first-year BIPOC educators, persistent challenges remain, in retention and completion of teacher preparation programs (TPP). Ingersoll (2001) noted in his early research that increasing the supply of educators is not enough because "recruiting more teachers will not solve staffing inadequacies if large numbers of such teachers then leave" (p.525). The findings from this study affirm that retention is just as critical as recruitment and BIPOC educators will likely stay in the profession when they feel effective, supported, connected to their school communities, and have trust with their colleagues and administrators. State policy should go beyond pipeline expansion to include sustained investment in the conditions that help BIPOC educators thrive.

Oregon currently provides one-time yearlong funding for mentor programs geared toward supporting early career educators who are within three years of graduating from a TPP, BIPOC educators, and educators in hard to fill positions like Special Education or Reading Intervention. Although these funds include BIPOC educators, the funding is expected to be used broadly to cover all qualifying educator groups. One-time funding does not support long-term investment which is needed to develop culturally responsive mentoring that "empower People of Color to utilize assets already abundant in their communities" (Yosso, 2005, p. 82). Additionally, starting mentor programs that begin during educators' preservice programs recognizes the aspirational

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

and navigational capital students bring with them because they validate lived experiences, foster identity-affirming relationships, and help BIPOC educators learn to navigate dominant culture systems. Sustained, culturally-affirming mentoring can serve as a retention strategy and as a signal for a commitment to equity and social justice.

At the district level, building administrators play a critical role in hiring, developing, and coaching teachers (Dixon et al., 2019; Ingersoll & May, 2011). Therefore, investing in the knowledge, will, and skill of principals is a key strategy districts can use to improve retention of BIPOC educators. This includes providing sustained, equity-focused professional development that offers structured opportunities for administrators to examine how CCW of both students and staff shows up in their schools. Administrators need opportunities to practice actively recognizing, affirming, and integrating these assets into staff relationships, instructional leadership, and school culture. For example, three educators in this study shared that they felt supported by their principals in incorporating elements of their culture into classroom instruction, reinforcing their sense of identity and belonging within the school community.

By adopting a formal leadership development policy that requires equity-centered professional development grounded in Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth, districts can better equip administrators to support BIPOC educators. Linking this professional development to professional practice goals, leadership evaluation, and coaching sets clear expectations for principals to enact practices that affirm the cultural assets of BIPOC educators and cultivate inclusive, welcoming, and identity-affirming school environments so they may thrive.

Limitations

This study used extant survey and rounding data from a single, mid-sized school district in a predominantly White state. Although the localized focus provided valuable insights into

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

specific strategies and experiences within the district, it limits generalizability of the findings to other contexts, particularly those with different demographic, cultural, or structural characteristics. Educator retention is influenced by multiple intersecting variables such as local policies, district resources, and general educator support and likely vary widely among different districts, regions, or states. Also, the sampling for this study was based on convenience and many of the participants in the survey and in the leader rounding were staff with whom I have a relationship. Thus, the potential for bias in the responses and or interpretation exists, regardless of the steps and boundaries put into place to protect against bias.

Additionally, the numbers of BIPOC educators who participated in the leader rounding and who completed the staff engagement survey were relatively small. This limited samples size constrained my ability to conduct more granular analyses across difference racial or ethnic groups within the BIPOC category. Aggregating responses into a single BIPOC category, while methodologically necessary, likely obscured important nuances in experiences and perceptions across racial and ethnic groups.

Though composite variables increased the robustness of analysis, the statistical power remained limited. My small sample size of BIPOC educators can reduce the probability of detecting meaningful differences and increases the risk of Type II errors. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution and framed as exploratory rather than definitive.

Furthermore, while generative AI tools were used to support initial theme identification and is a regular part of the district's efforts to find meaning in rounding data, human coding was necessary to identify, refine, and confirm the survey items and composite variables to analyze. While the practice of engaging with generative AI reflects a common practice in the leader rounding protocol, such a practice introduces questions of replicability and consistency across researchers. Additional qualitative studies

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

should employ more rigorous coding approaches such as a deeper triangulation method to enhance credibility of thematic findings.

Recommendations for Future Research

Disaggregate BIPOC Educator Experiences

When sample sizes allow, future studies should explore within-group variation across racial and cultural lines to better understand the nuances between different communities of color. Future research should disaggregate BIPOC educator experiences to better understand the unique strengths and challenges for different racial and ethnic groups. Although retention practices may be similar for all teachers or across different racial or ethnic groups, creating an all-encompassing BIPOC group overgeneralizes the experiences of specific identity groups. For example, there were very few survey items that specifically addressed bilingual language abilities as a form of *linguistic capital*. Yet, this can be a significant part of one's identity when navigating monolingual English systems, as well as the importance of cultural matching for emerging bilingual students (Gershenson et al., 2021).

Longitudinal Study

Although the staff engagement survey data incorporated multiple administrations over three school years, this study only provided a snapshot of educator experiences, and the small sample size of BIPOC educators sometimes resulted in the suppression of responses. A longitudinal study that can track individual educators over time would provide a more comprehensive view of retention efforts. Such a study allows for the complex decision-making process about staying, leaving, shifting, or moving to be evaluated over time. Such studies can examine how BIPOC teachers' perceptions evolve in response to changes in leadership, district policies, or state-level reforms, and can be helpful in identifying critical moments in an

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

educators' career and in their thought processes about continuing in their current role. One only needs to review post-COVID teacher turnover to understand how policies or societal conditions can dramatically affect educators' decisions about staying, leaving, shifting, or moving (EAC, 2024; Hanson & Kraft, 2024).

Explore Principal – Teacher Dynamics

Given the pivotal role that principals play in shaping school culture and teacher experiences leaving (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Dixon et al., 2019; Ingersoll & May, 2011), future research should explore specific practices, mindset, strategies, and relational dynamics that support BIPOC educators. Although BIPOC staff may have talked about their principal during the leader rounding interview, this study did not ask them specific questions about the steps or actions their principals undertook that were perceived as supportive, helpful or culturally affirming. Qualitative case studies or focus groups that probe ways principals support, acknowledge, or intentionally affirm the cultural wealth of BIPOC educators could help surface what equity-centered retention practices look like in action. Additionally, the responses provided in a more robust qualitative study can highlight specific actions that influence specific factors related to teacher retention, such as belonging, autonomy, professional growth, and efficacy.

Investigate Districts with High BIPOC Teacher Retention

Future research should also examine districts that demonstrate consistent success in recruiting and retaining BIPOC educators - as a collective group and disaggregated by specific racial and ethnic identities. While much of the existing research focuses on systemic barriers, challenges, and factors contributing to teacher turnover, there is a growing need to shift the research lens toward identifying and understanding what is working for educators. By studying

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

high-retention districts or schools, researchers can uncover promising practices, organizational conditions, leadership approaches, or strategies that support BIPOC educators to thrive.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, districts should provide ongoing professional learning for school leaders focused on culturally responsive leadership and equity-centered communication. Creating and sustaining opportunities for BIPOC educators to engage their cultural selves, such as leading affinity groups or equity teams, incorporating aspects of their culture into the school or classroom, or attending culturally specific conferences, can support BIPOC educators' sense of purpose, belonging, and professional growth. Efforts to recruit and retain BIPOC staff should also include transparent pathways for advancement and accessible decision-making processes that incorporate diverse perspectives, e.g., an equity decision making tool or lens.

Given the strong influence of principal-teacher relationships on retention, districts should prioritize hiring and developing principals who build trust, affirm diverse identities, and consistently demonstrate behaviors that interrupt racism or discrimination. Additionally, regularly engaging with staff and incorporating a practice of regularly gathering input, through surveys and leader rounding, provide administrators with consistent opportunities to identify and respond to inequities in real time. Such engagement and responsiveness can support several aspects of BIPOC educators' cultural capital, strengthen systems of support, and ultimately lead to a school culture that is built on strong networks of care, connection, and commitment.

Closing Reflection

Conducting this study deepened my understanding of the complex factors that influence retention of BIPOC educators. As a district leader and researcher, I entered this work with a

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

commitment to equity, but through the voices and experiences of staff, I gained a more grounded awareness of how authentic relationships, cultural affirmation, principal support, experiences of belonging, and trust can shape workplace experiences. While the statistical findings showed minimal differences between BIPOC and White educators, the evaluation of the data helped me to challenge my assumptions about what BIPOC staff may be experiencing in the district. Additionally, the leader rounding data revealed some nuance tensions and affirmations that require further exploration. These insights remind me that educator retention can not be addressed with isolated policy fixes, but require sustained and intentional fixes that center belonging, respect, and opportunity because of and despite how educators may identify. It is my hope that his study contributes to the growing body of research focused not only on the challenges and barriers that BIPOC educators experience, but also on the strengths and wealth they bring to students and the public education system.

This research journey has been both professionally and personally enlightening and reinforces my belief that listening deeply to educators, especially those whose voices have been systematically or historically underrepresented, is essential for meaningful change. The findings of this study underscore the importance of culturally responsive leadership, equitable access to growth opportunities, and the power of collective efficacy to positively affect the life trajectory for students, and for shaping the experiences of educators and BIPOC educators specifically. Leader rounding pointed to critical dynamics within school systems, particularly the role of the building principal, that influence whether educators feel valued, heard, seen, or supported. These insights carry the weight of urgency during a time when Oregon teacher preparation programs are enrolling few students (EAC, 2024), public education faces increasing scrutiny, and work within equity, inclusion, and diversity is often misunderstood or politicized. Moving forward, I

TEACHER RETENTION INSIGHTS AND CULTURAL WEALTH

will commit to ongoing reflection, transparent practices, and creating spaces where BIPOC educators are not only welcomed and valued, but meaningfully engaged as partners and leaders.

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