



School Leadership Supply and Demand Report

Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee

June 15, 2021

The University of North Carolina System

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

School Leadership Supply and Demand Report

Pursuant to Section 9.3 (b) of S.L. 2010-31, the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina shall study the issue of supply and demand of school administrators to determine the number of school administrators to be trained in the programs in each year of the biennium and report the results of this study to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee.

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide data to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee concerning school administration programs at the constituent University of North Carolina System institutions and the trends that influence supply and demand of school-based administrators in North Carolina. For this study, school administrators are defined as superintendents, principals, and assistant principals.

The data included in this study were collected by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and provided to the UNC System Office by the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina. The data, collected between 2012 and 2020, represent the most recent information available for each indicator.

This report is divided into five sections:

- Demographics of North Carolina School Administrators
- Demand Trends for North Carolina School Administrators
- Supply Trends for North Carolina School Administrators
- Discussion of Findings
- Conclusions

Demographics of North Carolina's School Administrators

Superintendents. Demographic data indicate that 74 percent of school superintendents in North Carolina public schools during the 2019-20 academic year were male, 73 percent were White, 25 percent were African-American, and the average age was 52 years. Superintendents reported an average of 25.2 years of experience in education, with eight percent having achieved a master's degree and 90 percent holding doctorates or other advanced degrees.

Principals. The data also indicate that 62 percent of North Carolina public school principals were female, 72 percent were White and 26 percent were African-American. The average age for principals was 47 with a range of 45-49 across regions. The data indicate that principals had an average of 21.2 years of experience in education with 77 percent having achieved a master's degree, and 22 percent holding doctorates or other advanced degrees.

Assistant Principals. The data show that North Carolina assistant principals are 64 percent female, 64 percent white, and 32 percent African-American. Assistant principals were mostly in their early to mid-40s, with an average of 43 to 45 years of age across regions. Assistant principals averaged 17.5 years of experience in education, with 84 percent having achieved a master's degree and 10.5 percent holding doctorates or other advanced degrees.

The following tables provide detailed demographic data about North Carolina's superintendents, principals, and assistant principals. To further clarify school administrator regional supply-and-demand,

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each table offers data disaggregated by geographic region. The State Board of Education Regions & Districts are described below:

Northeast Region / District 1

Beaufort, Bertie, Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Halifax, Hertford, Hyde, Martin, Northampton, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Pitt, Roanoke Rapids, Tyrrell, Washington, Weldon

Southeast Region / District 2

Brunswick, Carteret, Craven, Duplin, Greene, Jones, Lenoir, New Hanover, Onslow, Pamlico, Pender, Wayne

North Central Region / District 3

Chapel Hill-Carrboro, Chatham, Durham, Edgecombe, Franklin, Granville, Harnett, Johnston, Lee, Nash, Orange, Person, Vance, Wake, Warren, Wilson

Sandhills Region / District 4

Bladen, Clinton, Columbus, Cumberland, Hoke, Montgomery, Moore, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson, Scotland, Whiteville

Piedmont Triad Region / District 5

Alamance, Asheboro, Caswell, Davidson, Davie, Elkin, Forsyth, Guilford, Lexington, Mount Airy, Randolph, Rockingham, Stokes, Thomasville, Surry, Yadkin

Southwest Region / District 6

Anson, Cabarrus, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Kannapolis, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Mooresville, Rowan, Stanly, Union

Northwest Region / District 7

Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Hickory, McDowell, Mitchell, Newton-Conover, Watauga, Wilkes, Yancey

Western Region / District 8

Asheville, Buncombe, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania

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Tables 1, 2, and 3 provide the number of school administrators within an age range.

Table 1: Superintendent Age (2019-20)

	Avg Age	<40	40-44	45-49	50-54	55+
Statewide	52.11	1	11	27	38	40
Northeast	51.35	1	2	4	8	5
Southeast	52.85	0	0	4	4	5
North Central	51.88	0	3	4	5	5
Sandhills	51.58	0	3	2	2	5
Piedmont Triad	51.81	0	1	4	6	5
Southwest	53.50	0	1	2	3	6
Northwest	50.64	0	1	4	6	3
Western	54.00	0	0	3	4	6

Table 2: Principal Age (2019-20)

	Avg Age	<40	40-44	45-49	50-54	55+
Statewide	46.69	449	552	693	475	364
Northeast	46.55	32	39	40	29	31
Southeast	48.56	27	51	60	55	52
North Central	46.35	108	112	147	93	72
Sandhills	48.75	24	50	85	55	57
Piedmont Triad	46.49	79	92	126	78	59
Southwest	45.26	119	129	131	92	42
Northwest	45.70	43	38	51	33	23
Western	47.77	17	41	53	40	28

Table 3: Assistant Principal Age (2019-20)

	Avg Age	<40	40-44	45-49	50-54	55+
Statewide	43.90	1066	652	640	431	367
Northeast	45.14	42	36	39	28	24
Southeast	44.42	96	58	57	43	43
North Central	42.98	322	168	161	99	86
Sandhills	44.88	99	52	67	40	47
Piedmont Triad	44.18	162	110	114	67	54
Southwest	43.83	232	158	150	107	68
Northwest	43.92	47	31	26	18	21
Western	43.91	66	39	26	29	24

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Tables 4, 5, and 6 provide data about the years of education experience of current North Carolina school administrators.

Table 4: Superintendents' Years of Education Experience (2019-20)

	Avg Years	<10	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30+
Statewide	25.24	7	3	5	31	38	34
Northeast	25.55	0	2	0	5	8	5
Southeast	27.69	0	0	0	3	6	4
North Central	22.76	2	0	2	6	1	6
Sandhills	26.00	0	0	1	5	2	4
Piedmont Triad	22.06	2	1	0	4	7	2
Southwest	26.00	2	0	1	1	3	5
Northwest	23.93	1	0	1	5	6	2
Western	29.54	0	0	0	2	5	6

Table 5: Principals' Years of Education Experience (2019-20)

	Avg Years	<10	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30+
Statewide	21.23	75	315	632	763	503	245
Northeast	20.04	12	21	53	38	30	17
Southeast	22.69	5	24	54	64	66	32
North Central	21.18	12	78	139	154	97	52
Sandhills	22.48	4	23	52	99	64	29
Piedmont Triad	21.35	8	57	106	135	87	41
Southwest	20.29	21	67	136	159	96	34
Northwest	20.19	8	31	46	56	32	15
Western	22.16	5	14	46	58	31	25

Table 6: Assistant Principals' Years of Education Experience (2019-20)

	Avg Years	<10	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30+
Statewide	17.47	441	707	833	665	358	158
Northeast	17.36	26	35	45	34	29	5
Southeast	17.53	40	70	72	64	42	9
North Central	16.73	138	202	215	167	72	42
Sandhills	17.67	38	70	84	62	35	16
Piedmont Triad	18.18	54	110	138	116	57	32
Southwest	17.72	84	159	203	156	82	32
Northwest	17.12	21	32	41	27	17	5
Western	17.92	40	29	35	39	24	17

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Tables 7, 8 and 9 display data around the degrees earned by superintendents, principals and assistant principals

Table 7: Superintendents' Highest Degree Earned (2019-20)

	Bachelor's	Master's	Sixth Year Advanced	Doctoral
Statewide	2	9	19	87
Northeast	0	3	5	12
Southeast	0	2	2	9
North Central	0	0	1	17
Sandhills	0	0	0	12
Piedmont Triad	0	1	0	15
Southwest	2	1	1	8
Northwest	0	2	4	8
Western	0	0	6	7

Table 8: Principals' Highest Degree Earned (2019-20)

	Bachelor's	Master's	Sixth Year Advanced	Doctoral
Statewide	32	1944	247	310
Northeast	2	138	19	12
Southeast	2	196	16	31
North Central	2	419	39	72
Sandhills	9	212	17	33
Piedmont Triad	2	301	71	60
Southwest	8	403	40	62
Northwest	4	139	22	23
Western	3	136	23	17

Table 9: Assistant Principals' Highest Degree Earned (2019-20)

	Bachelor's	Master's	Sixth Year Advanced	Doctoral
Statewide	162	2662	177	155
Northeast	6	142	15	6
Southeast	18	260	9	10
North Central	50	714	40	32
Sandhills	17	253	11	24
Piedmont Triad	25	426	37	19
Southwest	32	595	42	46
Northwest	6	121	5	11
Western	8	151	18	7

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Tables 10, 11, and 12 provide data on the gender and ethnicity of North Carolina superintendents, principals and assistant principals.

Table 10: Race and Gender of Superintendents (2019-20)

	Female	Male	Asian	African-American	Hispanic	American Indian	Other	White
Statewide	31	86	0	29	1	1	0	85
Northeast	5	15	0	9	0	0	0	11
Southeast	2	11	0	2	0	0	0	11
North Central	7	10	0	7	1	0	0	9
Sandhills	2	10	0	6	0	0	0	6
Piedmont Triad	8	8	0	3	0	0	0	13
Southwest	2	10	0	1	0	0	0	10
Northwest	2	12	0	1	0	1	0	12
Western	3	10	0	0	0	0	0	13

Table 11: Race and Gender of Principals (2019-20)

	Female	Male	Asian	African-American	Hispanic	American Indian	Other	White
Statewide	1573	951	7	637	21	26	0	1794
Northeast	102	69	0	64	1	1	0	102
Southeast	154	91	0	48	2	1	0	188
North Central	340	191	1	185	8	0	0	331
Sandhills	173	96	1	93	2	21	0	149
Piedmont Triad	270	161	2	108	2	1	0	311
Southwest	326	184	3	117	5	1	0	374
Northwest	107	81	0	14	1	1	0	170
Western	101	78	0	8	0	0	0	169

Table 12: Race and Gender of Assistant Principals (2019-20)

	Female	Male	Asian	African-American	Hispanic	American Indian	Other	White
Statewide	1998	1145	11	997	50	37	0	1981
Northeast	119	47	2	70	3	0	0	87
Southeast	206	91	0	70	2	3	0	215
North Central	521	312	2	327	18	5	0	464
Sandhills	201	102	3	132	5	24	0	134
Piedmont Triad	309	197	1	184	6	1	0	302
Southwest	455	257	2	194	13	3	0	482
Northwest	83	59	1	7	1	0	0	131
Western	104	80	0	13	2	1	0	166

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Demand Trends for North Carolina School Administrators

Table 13 outlines retention rates for North Carolina’s principals in the 2012-13 through 2018-19 academic years. Across these seven years, approximately 85 to 88 percent of principals returned to the principalship in North Carolina in the following year. Five years out, approximately half of North Carolina’s principals were no longer in that position.

Table 13: Principal Retention Rates

Cohort Year and Size	Principal One Year Later	Principal Two Years Later	Principal Three Years Later	Principal Four Years Later	Principal Five Years Later
2012-13 N=2499	2152 (86.1%)	1875 (75%)	1592 (63.7%)	1389 (55.6%)	1198 (47.9%)
2013-14 N=2502	2156 (86.2%)	1847 (73.8%)	1598 (63.9%)	1381 (55.2%)	1194 (47.7%)
2014-15 N=2527	2159 (85.4%)	1868 (73.9%)	1618 (64%)	1410 (55.8%)	1270 (50.3%)
2015-16 N=2509	2160 (86.1%)	1876 (74.8%)	1644 (65.5%)	1485 (59.2%)	---
2016-17 N=2522	2168 (86%)	1893 (75.1%)	1702 (67.5%)	---	---
2017-18 N=2530	2183 (86.3%)	1955 (77.3%)	---	---	---
2018-19 N=2451	2154 (87.9%)	---	---	---	---

Table 14 presents data on the number of newly hired assistant principals holding provisional licenses. A one-year provisional license may be issued by a local board of education to an individual selected for employment as an assistant principal if:

- The local board has determined there is a shortage of persons who hold or are qualified to hold a principal’s license and the employee enrolls in an approved program leading to a master’s degree in school administration before the provisional license expires; or
- The employee is enrolled in an approved Master of School Administration (MSA) program and is participating in that program’s required internship.

During the 2019-20 academic school year, 5.9 percent of all newly hired assistant principals held provisional licenses. This number varies greatly by region, with 21.2 percent of newly hired assistant principals holding a provisional license in the Southeast region and less than three percent holding a provisional license in the Northeast region.

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Table 14: Newly Hired Assistant Principals (2019-20) Who Hold a Provisional License

Region	Number (Percentage) of Provisional Licenses
<i>Statewide (N = 470)</i>	<i>28 (5.9 percent)</i>
Northeast (N = 42)	1 (2.4 percent)
Southeast (N = 33)	7 (21.2 percent)
North Central (N = 122)	4 (3.3 percent)
Sandhills (N = 52)	2 (3.8 percent)
Piedmont Triad (N = 67)	2 (3.0 percent)
Southwest (N = 91)	5 (5.5 percent)
Northwest (N = 24)	3 (12.5 percent)
Western (N = 39)	4 (10.3 percent)

Tables 15, 16 and 17 display the number of new school administrators statewide, and by region in the 2019-20 academic year.

Table 15: Number of New Superintendents by Region (2019-20)

Region	Number of New Superintendents
<i>Statewide</i>	<i>15</i>
Northeast	2
Southeast	1
North Central	3
Sandhills	2
Piedmont Triad	2
Southwest	1
Northwest	2
Western	2

Table 16: Number of New Principals by Region (2019-20)

Region	Number of New Principals
<i>Statewide</i>	<i>232</i>
Northeast	27
Southeast	14
North Central	44
Sandhills	21
Piedmont Triad	39
Southwest	48
Northwest	27
Western	12

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Table 17: Number of New Assistant Principals by Region (2019-20)

Region	Number of New Assistant Principals
<i>Statewide</i>	<i>470</i>
Northeast	42
Southeast	33
North Central	122
Sandhills	52
Piedmont Triad	67
Southwest	91
Northwest	24
Western	39

Supply Trends for North Carolina School Administrators

Table 18 provides data collected by the Department of Public Instruction related to the annual supply for principals and assistant principals. In 2019-20, 85.3 percent of newly hired principals had served as assistant principals in 2018-19. Of the newly hired assistant principals in 2019-20, fewer than half, or 49.8 percent, were classroom teachers in the previous year. Additionally, 12.6 percent of newly hired assistant principals were employed as assistant principal interns in 2018-19.

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Table 18: Sources of New Principals and Assistant Principals

	New Principals (2019-20) Who Were Asst. Principals in 2018-19	New APs (2019-20) Who Were Teachers in 2018-19	New APs (2019-20) Who Served as Interns in 2018-19
Statewide (P N=232) (AP N=470)	198 (85.3%)	234 (49.8%)	59 (12.6%)
Northeast (P N=27) (AP N=42)	19 (70.4%)	20 (47.6%)	4 (9.5%)
Southeast (P N=14) (AP N=33)	11 (78.6%)	20 (60.6%)	4 (12.1%)
North Central (P N=44) (AP N=122)	42 (95.5%)	53 (43.4%)	25 (20.5%)
Sandhills (P N=21) (AP N=52)	19 (90.5%)	28 (53.8%)	8 (15.4%)
Piedmont Triad (P N=39) (AP N=67)	35 (89.7%)	36 (53.7%)	7 (10.4%)
Southwest (P N=48) (AP N=91)	39 (81.3%)	41 (45.1%)	6 (6.6%)
Northwest (P N=27) (AP N=24)	22 (81.5%)	15 (62.5%)	1 (4.2%)
Western (P N=12) (AP N=39)	11 (91.7%)	21 (53.8%)	4 (10.3%)

Table 19 provides the number of graduates of North Carolina's Master of School Administration (MSA) programs. Since the 2015-16 academic year, UNC System principal preparation programs have produced nearly 1,400 school leaders.

Table 19: MSA Degrees Conferred at UNC System Institutions

Institution	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
ASU	26	19	24	17	19
ECU	50	41	61	48	53
ECSU	15	8	8	9	5
FSU	22	10	13	14	13
NCA&T	2	10	8	6	17
NCCU	14	26	14	19	16
NCSU	0	35	66	14	33
UNCA	---	---	---	---	---
UNCCH	26	32	27	30	15
UNCC	22	19	36	28	23
UNCG	0	10	15	31	31
UNCP	25	19	12	27	33
UNCW	9	19	7	16	15
WCU	24	15	29	18	28
WSSU	---	---	---	---	---
Total	235	263	320	277	301

Discussion of Findings

A 2016 study by the National Center for Education Statistics provides an analysis of national demographic trends in school leadership using data from the 1987-88 through 2011-12 administrations of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). During this 25-year timeframe, the number of female principals in public schools increased from 25 percent to 52 percent. With regard to race and ethnicity, minimal change occurred, with African-American principals increasing from nine percent to ten percent, Hispanic principals increasing from three percent to seven percent, and White principals decreasing from 87 percent to 80 percent. The average age of principals also remained fairly consistent, increasing from 46.8 to 48.0 years of age. A greater number of public school principals reported having received master's degrees (53 percent to 62 percent); however, there was a decline in the number of principals having achieved doctorates or other advanced degrees (44 percent to 36 percent).¹

Demographic Trends. Based on the 2019-20 data for North Carolina school administrators, superintendents were well educated, with 91 percent holding doctorate or other advanced degrees. Superintendents also had significant experience in education, with an average of 25 years in the field; however, with an average of 52 years of age, many are also nearing retirement (i.e., full retirement is possible after 30 years of service). There was a lack of racial diversity among North Carolina's superintendents, with whites comprising 73 percent of those in this advanced leadership role. There was also a gender imbalance among North Carolina superintendents, although more than half of all assistant principals and principals were women.

North Carolina principals were younger and had less education experience than superintendents. Principals were also further from retirement with only 30 percent having 25 or more years of experience.

¹Hill, J., Ottem, R., DeRoche, J., Owens, C. (2016). Trends in public and private school principal demographics and qualifications: 1987-88 to 2011-12. Stats in Brief. NCES 2016-189.

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Also, 22 percent of principals held doctorate and other advanced degrees. More than one in four principals belonged to an ethnic minority group and almost two-thirds of all principals were women.

More than half of assistant principals were younger than 45 years of age, and 36 percent had fewer than fifteen years of education experience. Also, 84 percent of assistant principals had a master's degree and ten percent had a doctorate or other advanced degree. More than one-third (36 percent) of assistant principals were ethnic minorities, and women represented greater numbers (64 percent) in the assistant principalship than any other level of school leadership.

Demand Trends

In 2019-20, 232 new principals were hired, with the largest number of new principals employed in the Southwest region. Assistant principals were also in high demand, with 470 new hires, almost 30 percent, hired in the North Central region. Only 15 superintendents were hired state-wide.

Data regarding principal retention demonstrate that over 40 percent of North Carolina's principals were no longer employed in the state's public schools after 4 years on the job, and that more than half left their positions after five years. Age data indicated that administrator turnover rates over the next several years will increase due to retirement, particularly among superintendents. Considering the number of new MSA graduates in 2019-20 (301) and the number of assistant principals who are under the age of 40, the data indicates that a large pool of potential principals and superintendents currently exists to fill these gaps.

Supply Trends

A total of 717 school administrators were hired in North Carolina in 2019-20 (15 superintendents, 232 principals, and 470 assistant principals). Of the new principals, 85 percent were employed as assistant principals during 2018-19. In addition, 49.8 percent of new assistant principals were employed as teachers the previous year. These numbers, in addition to the number of new MSA graduates (301) produced by the UNC System in 2019-20, suggest that there would be a minimal shortfall in the supply of school administrators needed to meet the state demand. There are also many educators who hold licenses in school administration who do not yet serve as school administrators—lending even greater complexity to the estimation of school administrator supply-and- demand trends.

Conclusion

Principal turnover continues to be issue in North Carolina, with more than half of the state's principals no longer holding that position five years later. Levin & Bradley (2019) note that principal turnover can disrupt school improvement, increase teacher turnover, and lower gains in student achievement—these declines in student outcomes are even stronger in high-poverty, low achieving schools.² As principals often leave their jobs due to inadequate preparation and limited professional development opportunities, program improvements in principal preparation are key to increasing principal retention.

² Levin, S. & Bradley, K. (2019). Understanding and addressing principal turnover: A review of the research. Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals and The Learning Policy Institute.

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A closer look at the supply and demand of educational leaders in North Carolina reveals an issue with both the numbers of leaders being produced and the lack of racial diversity in the leadership pipeline. Research clearly indicates the positive impact of increased diversity in school leadership for both teachers and students, such as higher rates of teacher job satisfaction, greater administrative support and recognition, and more access to the resources necessary to teach. Additionally, diverse leadership in schools has been shown to reduce the disciplinary action gap between African-American and White students and improve the number of African-American students identified as academically gifted.³ Beyond the fact that there is a need for program growth and greater access to high-quality principal preparation programs, there should be more attention given to the low levels of racial diversity amongst educational leaders in North Carolina. According to the 2019-20 data, 73 percent of superintendents are white, 72 percent of principals are white, and 64 percent of assistant principals are white in North Carolina.

In response to the need for greater access to quality preparation for school leaders, the Transforming Principal Preparation Program (TP3) began its consolidation with the North Carolina Principal Fellows Program (NCPFP) in 2019, creating a more strategic and unified funding source for the principal preparation programs in North Carolina. The new NCPFP/TP3 combines TP3's competitive grants-based model with the Principal Fellows' Commission-based governance to ensure North Carolina's aspiring leaders are well-trained and retained in North Carolina's high-needs schools. The consolidation of the two principal preparation programs allows for a competitive model amongst the providers as resources are assigned to recruit high-quality candidates to the most rigorous, evidence-based preparation programs. The consolidated program is currently producing approximately 40 percent of the state's educational leadership demand.

The consolidated NCPFP/TP3 is open to traditional public and independent institutions of higher education, as well as non-traditional, non-profit routes of entry. Through the incentive of state funds, the program integrates the key research-based components of successful principal preparation nationwide, including:

- Proactive, intentional recruitment efforts;
- A high bar for entry;
- Rigorous and relevant coursework;
- Strategic and sustained investments in teacher and principal salaries;
- Teacher recruitment scholarships for hard-to-staff schools and subjects;
- Teacher leadership and alternative compensation pilots;
- Targeted investments in high-quality recruitment and principal preparation;
- A full-time, paid residency; and
- A focus on authentic partnerships with and preparation for service in high-need schools and districts

North Carolina has demonstrated a commitment to improve the supply and capacity of educational leaders through a consolidation of state funds. However, educational leadership for public school instruction should portray representative diversity. Developing flexible, competency-based models that allow for virtual, self-paced adult professional learning in the training of K12 leadership could assist with this goal. Moreover, the creation of a coaching/mentoring model by former graduates of the NCPFP/TP3 program would build the capacity of educational leaders utilizing a prescriptive approach. With the state's ongoing commitment to educational leadership, a diverse pool of leaders can change the outcomes and experiences of our K12 students.

³Viano, S. L., & B. Hunter, S. (2017). Teacher-principal race and teacher satisfaction over time, region. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 55(6), 624-639. doi:10.1108/JEA-10-2016-0122. See also Roch, C. H., & Elsayed, M. A. (2020). Race, school discipline, and administrative representation. *International Public Management Journal*,

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23(2), 161-185. doi:10.1080/10967494.2019.1659196; Grissom, J. A., Rodriguez, L. A., & Kern, E. C. (2017). Teacher and principal diversity and the representation of students of color in gifted programs: Evidence from national data. *The Elementary School Journal*, 117(3), 396-422. doi:10.1086/690274