

NEA Research, June 2019

The National Education Association strongly believes in the importance of an educator workforce that reflects the diversity of the United States. This belief extends not only to classroom teachers and education support professionals, but also to administrators and other school and district staff. To this end, this brief provides information about the representation (or lack thereof) of women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ people in PK-12 administrative positions. A list of sources for further reading is included at the end of this document.

### Gender in PK-12 Education Administration

Women held 54.2% of principal positions during the 2015-16 school year according to the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NPTS), a periodic survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).<sup>i</sup> Although under-represented for decades, women have had a long history as school principals.<sup>ii</sup> However, as shown in Figure 1, it was not until the 2007-08 school year when women (50.3%) first surpassed men (49.7%) in the field.<sup>iii</sup>

Figure 2 shows how the gender distribution differs between public school principals and teachers.<sup>iv</sup> Unsurprisingly, the percent of principals who are female is far lower than that for teachers. However, female principals are more common in elementary schools than secondary schools.<sup>v</sup> During the 2015-16 school year, 67.7% of primary schools had female principals as compared to only 32.7% of high schools. Additionally, female principals are more prevalent in urban (61%) and suburban (57.5%) schools than in towns (48.2%) and rural areas (46.4%).<sup>vi</sup>

Figure 1. Public School Principals by Gender, 1993-94 to 2015-16

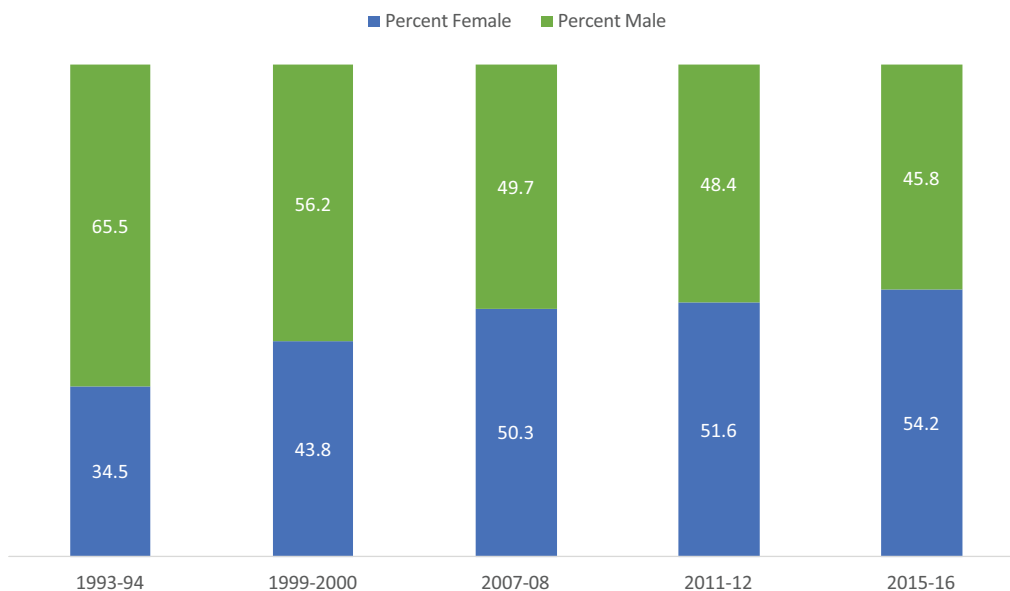
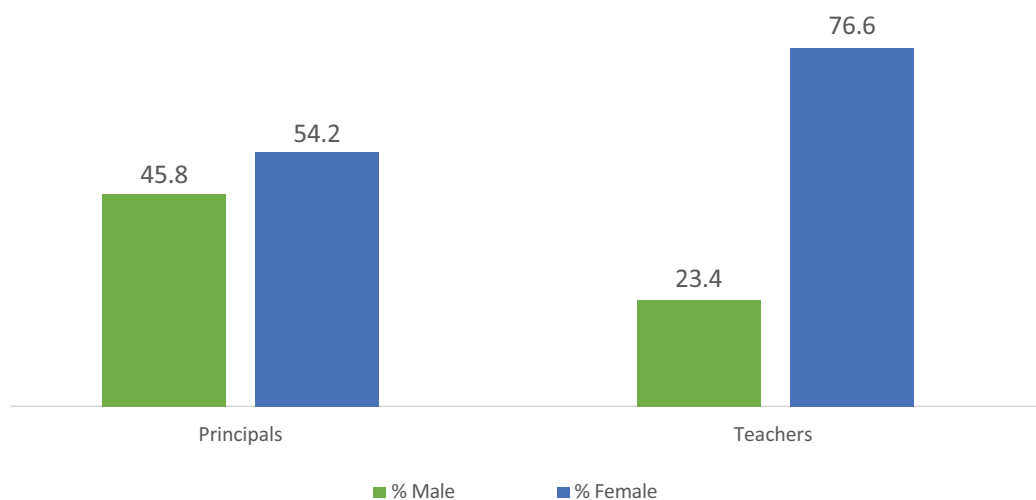


Figure 2. Gender Breakdown for Public School Principals and Teachers, 2015-16

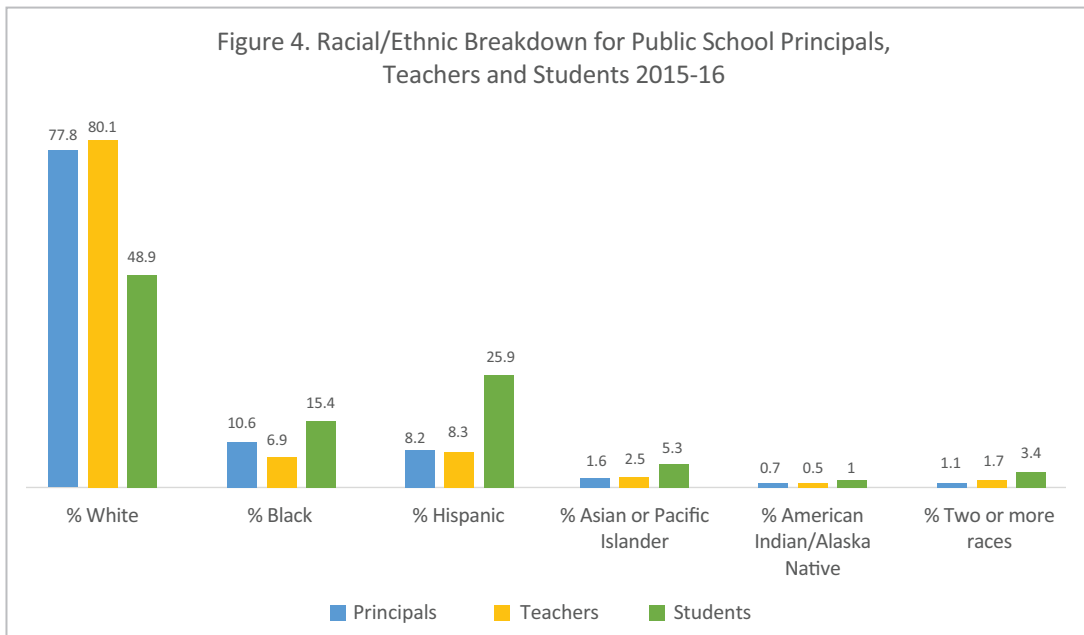
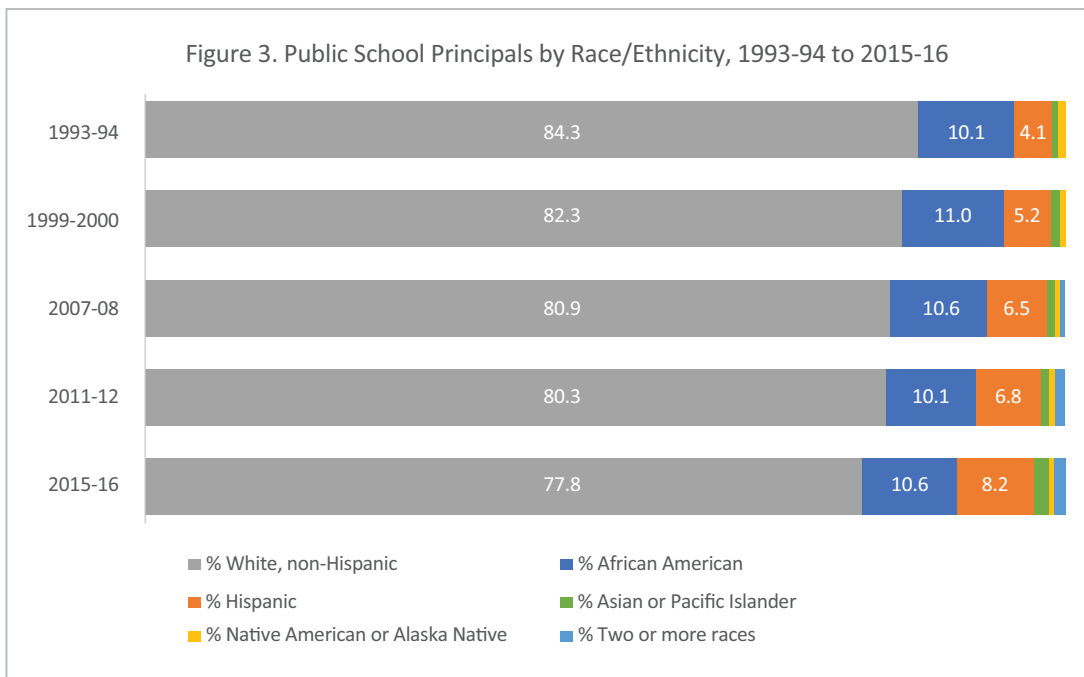


Although a slim majority of principals are female, women remain greatly under-represented as superintendents. A 2017-18 study conducted by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) found that approximately 23% of superintendent respondents were female.<sup>vii viii</sup> AASA noted that the number of female respondents to its voluntary survey has grown over the past five years, suggesting an increase in the number of female superintendents. This movement is promising but, overall, under-representation of women in school leadership and governance roles remains the norm.

### Race and Ethnicity in Public School Administration

Under-representation of people of color in school administration is a persistent problem in American public schools. According to the NTPS and as shown in Figure 3, in 2015-16, 22.2% of public school principal positions were held by people of color, while 77.8% of principal positions were held by White, non-Hispanic people.<sup>ix</sup> In total, 10.6% of principals were African American, non-Hispanic, and 8.2% were Hispanic or Latinx regardless of race.<sup>x</sup> While the percent of principals who are White has steadily decreased since 1993-94, most of the growth in principal diversity has been due to an increase in the proportion of Hispanic/Latinx principals. The percent of African American principals has remained flat, and only minute increases have occurred in terms of Asian or Pacific Islander, Native American/Alaska Native, and multi-racial principals.

Interestingly, principals are slightly more likely to be African American and less likely to be White than teachers are, as shown in Figure 4.<sup>xi</sup> However, racial and ethnic diversity among both principals and teachers still lags far behind that of the public school student population.<sup>xii</sup> Not surprisingly, there is greater representation of African American (19.6%) and Hispanic/Latinx (12.9%) principals in urban areas when compared with non-urban areas. Rural schools have the least representation of African American (5%) and Hispanic/Latinx (2.9%) principals.<sup>xiii</sup>



Under-representation of people of color is even more prevalent among superintendents. According to the AASA, people of color represented 5.7% of respondents while White people represented 93.3% of respondents.<sup>xiv</sup> Breaking the numbers down further, approximately, 2% of respondents were African American, 1.8% were Hispanic/Latinx, 0.5% were Native American, 0.2% were Asian, and 0.1% were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.<sup>xv</sup>

### LGBTQ+ Representation in Administration

Unfortunately, no data exist on the percent of educators or administrators who identify as LGBTQ+. However, there exists a small, but growing body of literature on LGBTQ+ issues in education leadership. The reading list below provides a sample of this literature in addition to resources that address gender and racial/ethnic diversity in administrative positions.

## Additional Resources

- Alston, J. A. (2000). Missing from action: Where are the black female school superintendents. *Urban Education*, 35(5), 525-531.
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<sup>i</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Principal Data File" and "Private School Principal Data File," 1993-94, 1999-2000, 2007-08, and 2011-12; "Charter School Principal Data File," 1999-2000; and National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Principal Data File," 2015-16. Retrieved from: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17\\_212.08.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_212.08.asp)

<sup>ii</sup> Blount, J. (1996). Manly men and womanly women: Deviance, gender role polarization, and the shift in women's school employment, 1900-1976. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(2), 318-339; and Kafka, J. (2009). The principalship in historical perspective. *The New Politics of Educational Leadership*, 84(3), 318-330.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher Data File," "Charter School Teacher Data File," "Public School Data File," and "Charter School Data File," 1999-2000; and National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2015-16. Retrieved from: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17\\_209.22.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_209.22.asp)

<sup>v</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Principal Data File," 2015. Retrieved: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017070.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vii</sup> Finnan, L. A., & McCord, R. S. 2018. *2017-18 AASA superintendent salary & benefits study, non-member version*. Alexandria, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

<sup>viii</sup> It is important to note that this study was dependent on the voluntary response of superintendents. In total, 9,000 surveys were emailed to superintendents in all 50 states, of which only 1,172 were returned. Of that number, 891 respondents indicated male, 264 female, and 17 omitted gender.

<sup>ix</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Principal Data File," 2015-16. Retrieved from: [https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/tables/Table\\_1\\_042717.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/tables/Table_1_042717.asp)

<sup>x</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xi</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher Data File," "Charter School Teacher Data File," "Public School Data File," and "Charter School Data File," 1999-2000; and National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2015-16. Retrieved from: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17\\_209.22.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_209.22.asp)



<sup>xii</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary and Secondary Education," 1995-96 through 2015-16; and National Elementary and Secondary Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity Projection Model, 1972 through 2027. Retrieved from: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17\\_203.50.asp?referrer=raceindicators](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_203.50.asp?referrer=raceindicators)

<sup>xiii</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Principal Data File," 2015-16. Retrieved from: [https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/tables/Table\\_1\\_042717.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/tables/Table_1_042717.asp)

<sup>xiv</sup> Finnan, L. A., & McCord, R. S. 2018. *2017-18 AASA superintendent salary & benefits study, non-member version*. Alexandria, VA: American Association of School Administrators. Note that 0.9% of respondents omitted race from their survey response.

<sup>xv</sup> Ibid.