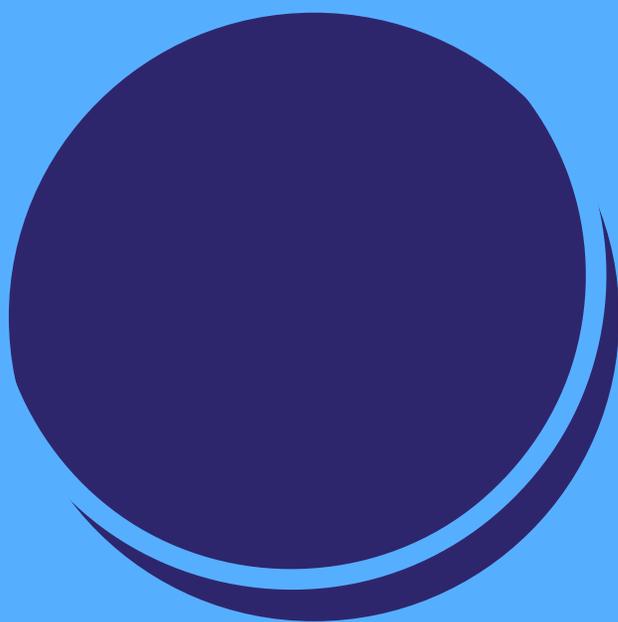


***Spring 2022 Colorado Department of Education  
Schools of Choice Unit  
Equity Convening***



**Staff Retention:  
Using People-Centric Strategies  
to Build a Culture of  
Equity and Inclusion**

August 2022

*White Paper prepared in collaboration with The Colorado League of Charter Schools*

# Acknowledgements

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## Organizations

Colorado Department of Education Schools of Choice Unit (CDE SOC), Denver, CO.

Colorado League of Charter Schools (CLCS), Denver, CO.

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Colorado Association of Charter School Authorizers (CACSA), Denver, CO.

Omar D. Blair Charter School (ODB), Denver, CO.

D.C. Bilingual Charter School (DCB), Washington, D.C.

## Equity Convening Advisory Panel

Dan Schaller, CLCS

Alex Medler, CACSA

Kelsey Leachko, Denver Public Schools

Brittney Stroh, Atlas Preparatory Schools

Dr. Aaron Griffen, Denver School of Science and Technology  
(DSST) Public Schools

Cassandra "CJ" Berry, Eastlake High School

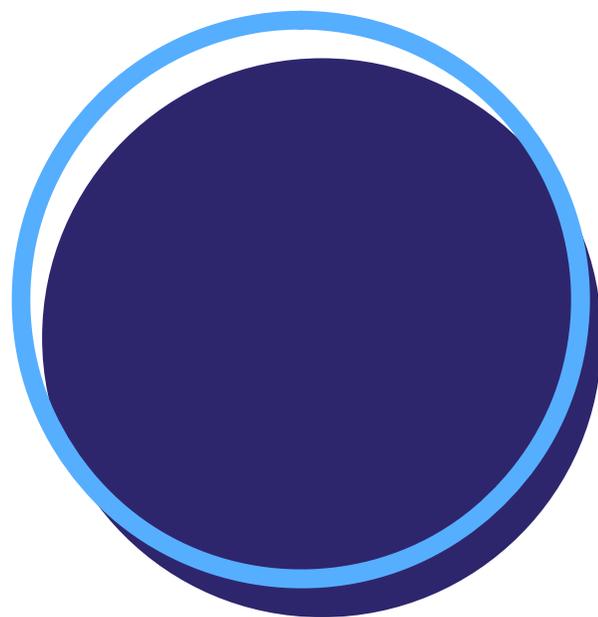
Tom McMillen, Jefferson County Public Schools

Clare Vickland, Special Education Consultant

Amelia Meunier, Aurora Public Schools

Toby King, Outcomes 4 All, LLC

Amy Jablonski, SWIFT Education Center



## Convening Panelists and Presenters

Antonio Vigil, Keynote Speaker, Principal on Special Assignment: Promise54, Aurora Public Schools

Trina Maull, CEO/Founder, No Limits Career & Consulting, LLC., Denver, CO.

Daniella Anello, Principal, D.C Bilingual Charter School, Washington, D.C.

Kristen Williams, Interim Executive Director, Omar D. Blair Charter School, Denver, CO.

Melani Harrell, Principal, Omar D. Blair Charter School, Denver, CO.

Angela Bond, Partner, Unified Impact, Atlanta, GA.

Courtney Bell, Partner, Unified Impact, Atlanta, GA.

Dr. Rosanne Fulton, Director, Center for Urban Education @ the University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO.

Dr. Robert Fulton, State Coordinator, Center for Rural Education @ UNC, Greeley, CO.

Dr. Morgan Beidleman, Founder and CEO, Reach Learning Services, Denver, CO.

Ashley Keltner, Human Resources and Communications Manager, Pinnacle Charter School, Thornton, CO.

Alex Medler, Executive Director, CACSA, Denver, CO.

Tina Vidovich, Authorizer, District 49, Falcon, CO.

# Table of Contents

**04** Abstract

**06** Problem of Practice

**07** Equity Convening Findings

**08** Mindset Shift

**10** Culture Shift

**13** Human Resources Shift

**16** Talent Development Shift

**18** Implications for Practice

**22** References

# Abstract

The COVID19 pandemic is a landmark crisis that caused considerable disruption and harm to Colorado charter schools and their students, staff, families, and community members. Existing problems of practice were compounded, such as the equitable recruitment and retention of students and educators. For example, the Colorado League of Charter Schools (CLCS) and Apex Education conducted a 2022 mid-year staffing survey and reported that 49% of Colorado charter schools experienced more turnover this year than usual.

Respondents indicated that teachers, special education services providers, and instructional assistants had the highest turnover rates (Maull, 2022). National research suggests that up to 54% of teachers are considering leaving the classroom (EdWeek Research Center, 2021). Research also indicates that teacher turnover rates are generally higher for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other teachers of color (Hinkley and McCorkell, 2019).

According to the school year 2021–2022 Educator Shortage Survey administered by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), the state is experiencing an overall 8% school vacancy rate, which is half the national vacancy rate of 16% (CDE, 2021).

## 54%

of teachers (nationally) indicated they are likely to leave the profession (EdWeek Research Survey, 2021).

## 49%

of Colorado charter schools reported higher levels of mid-year turnover than before (CLCS & Apex Education, 2022).

## 50%

of students (nationally) identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, or another person of color (Pew Research Center, 2021).

## 20%

of teachers (nationally) identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, or another person of color (Pew Research Center, 2021).

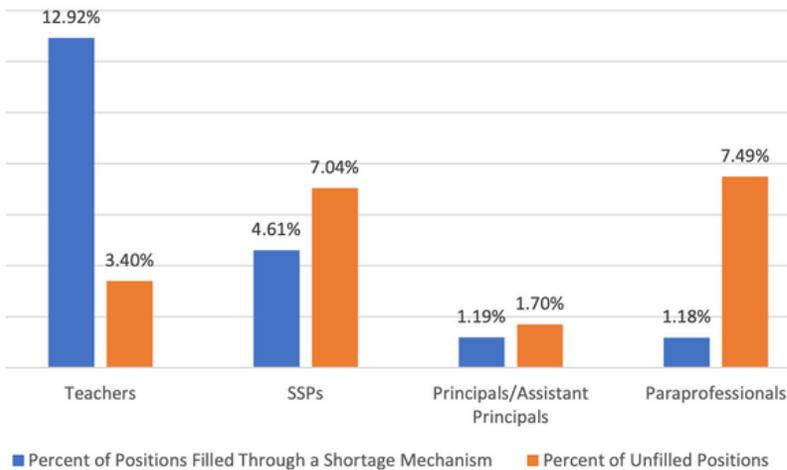
## 16%

of teachers (nationally) leave their jobs each year (Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, 2019).

## 20%

of teachers of color (nationally) leave their jobs each year (Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, 2019).

Percentage of Positions to Hire Filled Through a Shortage Mechanism or Remained Unfilled



While Colorado's educator shortage is under the national average, disaggregated survey data reveals that recruitment and retention of high-quality, diverse staff have never been more critical. The vacancy rates for teachers and special services providers are reported at 12% and 15%, respectively (CDE, 2021). Retention of a diverse staff is inextricably tied to successful student outcomes and retention; this fact is even more poignant for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other students of color. A significant body of evidence illuminates the positive effects of students of color having access to teachers of color (Milner, 2006; Brookings Report, 2017; Gershenson et al., 2020).

Colorado Department of Education. (2021). *Statewide Educator Shortage Survey Results*.

The Equity Advisory Committee identified the problem of retaining diverse teachers and leaders for the 2022 CDE SOC annual equity convening on promising practices from the field. The CDE SOC 2022 equity convening *Retaining Staff: Using People-Centric Strategies to Build a Culture of Equity and Inclusion* assembled research, experts, and practitioners from across the country to highlight promising practices in staff retention. Pre-convening research included two case studies on schools with success in retaining Black, Indigenous, and Latinx teachers. These case studies provide a local perspective (Omar D. Blair Charter School, Denver, CO.) and a national perspective (D.C. Bilingual Charter School, Washington, D.C.).

The convening findings are organized into four key shifts in educator mindset, culture and climate, human resources, and talent development. These shifts work together to create the conditions necessary for retaining a diverse staff. The white paper provides implications for practice aligned to each key shift; tools and resources for implementation can be accessed on the [Spring 2022 CDE SOC equity convening webpage](#).

### Mindset Shift

- Adopt a "regeneration" mental model.
- Achieve change through organizational congruence between mission, goals, values, & practices.
- Engage all stakeholders.
- Utilize a four-step process for regeneration: diagnosis, interpretation, intervention, & evaluation.

### Culture Shift

- Build a culturally affirming environment through increasing teacher diversity & hiring leaders of color.
- Cultivate inclusion & belonging through a people-centric leadership approach.
- Define & communicate a shared purpose that honors the whole child.

### HR Shift

- Create a comprehensive & people-centric HR strategy.
- Complete an equity audit of all parts of the employee life-cycle.
- Conduct a disaggregated dive into all HR data sources.
- Design policies that promote & safeguard diversity, equity, & inclusion.

### TD Shift

- Sponsor the development of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other leaders of color.
- Provide teachers with robust opportunities for job-embedded professional learning and support.
- Grow your own teacher pipeline through paraprofessional-to-teacher programs and residencies.

## Four Key Shifts for Retaining a Diverse Staff



### Mindset

Establish congruence between the learning organization's mission, values, and practices through a mental model of "regeneration."



### Culture and Climate

Establish collective efficacy through building a culturally affirming environment and a shared purpose among all stakeholders.



### Human Resources

Establish a comprehensive HR strategy and align policies that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and staff retention.



### Talent Development

Establish diverse leader and teacher pipelines through robust investment in your talent.

# Problem of Practice

Responding to teacher turnover rates is one of the most urgent needs for the K12 school system emerging from the COVID19 pandemic. Schools are a microcosm of a more significant cultural phenomenon in the United States, referred to as “The Great Resignation,” in which large-scale numbers of people voluntarily leave their jobs and seek different positions or career paths. An EdWeek Research Center survey (2021) reported that 54% of teachers were likely to leave the profession. Retention is a concern facing charter and non-charter schools alike. For several reasons, teacher attrition is historically higher in charter schools than non-charter schools. Research indicates this is due to smaller staff, lower salaries, fewer resources, and less institutionalized capacity (Stuit, National Center on School Choice, 2010). Colorado reports an 8% vacancy rate which is half of the reported national average of 16% (CDE, 2021); however, the Colorado League of Charter Schools (CLCS) and Apex Education conducted a 2022 staffing survey and reported that 49% of Colorado charter schools experienced more turnover this year than usual. Respondents indicated that teachers, special education services providers, and instructional assistants had the highest turnover (Maull, 2022).

National research indicates that teacher turnover rates are generally higher for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other teachers of color. According to the Pew Research Center (2021), only 20% of the United States teaching force are people of color compared to over 50% of its students. Pre-pandemic statistics indicated an annual 19–20% turnover rate for teachers of color compared to a 15–16% turnover rate for all teachers (Hinkley and McCorkell, 2019). The racial and ethnic demographic gap between students and faculty is a growing concern for many charter schools. The demand to close this demographic gap is becoming more urgent as research continues to illuminate the positive relationship between teacher diversity and student achievement (Milner, 2006; Brookings Report, 2017). For example, one study titled *The Long-Term Impacts of Same-Race Teachers* (2020) reported that having just one Black teacher in a Black student's K12 career decreased the likelihood of dropping out by 39% (Gershenson et al., 2020).

A 2021 RAND Corporation research report indicated that job-related stress and work conditions as the most significant antecedents of teacher turnover. The CLCS and Apex Education 2022 staffing survey revealed that increased workload, job satisfaction, and salary contributed to mid-year staff departures in Colorado charter schools (Maull, 2022). Research indicates that racial-related stress significantly contributes to the lower retention rates of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other teachers of color. In the study *If You Listen, We Will Stay: Why Teachers of Color Leave* (2019), the authors reported that unfavorable and antagonistic work cultures are important reasons Black and other teachers of color leave (Davis et al., 2019). In these spaces, educators of color reported experiencing racial bias and a lack of agency. In *To Be Who We Are: Black Teachers On Creating Culturally Affirming Schools* (2021), the researchers indicated that when teachers and leaders of color do not feel seen, heard, or valued, it results in isolation and marginalization, which fuels educator burnout and attrition (Mason et al., 2021). Overall, voices from the field indicate that the school system lacks diverse and affirming cultures that promote inclusion and belonging for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other educators of color.

Retention of a diverse staff is inextricably tied to successful student outcomes and retention. A crisis in teacher retention is ultimately a crisis in student retention. Resultantly, the Equity Convening Advisory Committee identified the problem of retaining diverse teachers and leaders as the focus of the Spring 2022 Colorado Department of Education, Schools of Choice Annual Equity Convening, highlighting promising practices from the field.

# Convening Findings

The Spring 2022 Equity Convening *Retaining Staff: Using People-Centric Strategies to Build a Culture of Equity and Inclusion* assembled research, experts, and practitioners from across the country to highlight promising practices in teacher retention. The findings and implications for practice are organized into four key shifts in mindset, culture and climate, human resources, and talent development.

## Four Key Shifts for Retaining a Diverse Staff



### Mindset

Establish congruence between the learning organization's mission, values, and practices through a mental model of "*regeneration*."



### Culture and Climate

Establish collective efficacy through building a culturally affirming environment and a shared purpose among all stakeholders.



### Human Resources

Establish a comprehensive HR strategy and align policies that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and staff retention.



### Talent Development

Establish diverse leader and teacher pipelines through robust investment in your talent.

# Mindset Shift

Establish congruence between the learning organization's mission, values, and practices through a mental model of "regeneration."

The transformative change needed to build inclusive and equitable cultures to improve diverse teacher retention in charter schools cannot occur through siloed structural changes or revisions to current practices aimed at sustainability. Instead, the intervention must get at the core of the problem and transform the collective mental model or framework for how change occurs. Keynote speaker Antonio Vigil presented a mental model for building the conditions needed to support and retain Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other teachers of color in his Keynote Address, *The Great ReGeneration: Building the Bridge to Transformative Change & Healing*. The regeneration framework is a mental model for asset-based thinking, inclusion, mutual vulnerability, and belonging. The framework's purpose is to shift the collective mindset of the school into one of shared belonging, ownership, and responsibility. As Vigil poignantly quoted during his keynote speech, "I can give you 20 concrete strategies, but they will not work if we do not do the deeper work with our mental models."

The regeneration framework drives a school to ensure organizational congruence with its community. Taking a regenerative stance causes a school to review its mission, values, goals, and practices to ensure alignment with the community. It is vital to engage all stakeholders in this process, including students, families, and teachers. Additionally, the framework calls for the inclusion of marginalized voices of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other people of color.

In *Leadership for Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Schools*, Scanlan and López (2015) argued, "regenerating the mission and vision emphatically does not begin as an exercise in wordsmithing. Rather, it begins in authentic, critically reflective dialogue among key stakeholders about who we are and where we are committed to going and growing" (p. 53.). Vigil refers to this work as the "diagnosis stage." During this stage, "it is imperative to share mutual vulnerability among all stakeholders to take responsibility for shortcomings, undemocratic and poor decision-making, counter-cultural and ambiguous communication, and unresolved conflict" (Vigil, 2022, slide. 14). Being vulnerable means being willing to examine one's current mental models and the impact they have on colleagues, students, families, and the entire system. Furthermore, it takes considerable vulnerability to challenge one's values and critically examine how they show up to their role in education—engaging in the diagnosis stage roots the congruence work in a safe and humanizing space that promotes inclusion and belonging.



Vigil, A. (2022). *The great regeneration: Building the bridge to transformative change and healing*. Spring 2022 CDE SOC equity convening keynote presentation.

The next step in the regeneration framework is the interpretation stage. In this stage, the team focuses on what is possible, which includes identifying what is already successful and what needs to change. Engaging in mutual vulnerability and revisiting the organization’s mission and values will enable the team to identify implicit bias, oppressive systems, and other elements of the school culture that have caused harm to Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other educators (and students) of color. Vigil encouraged schools to “parse out and prioritize culturally adaptive challenges over technical ones.”

Once the vision for transformative change is clear, the team is encouraged to establish a professional growth plan. This plan should include culturally responsive and sustaining practices for teaching and leading. Next, in the intervention stage, teams develop and implement theories of action for the critical changes identified during the interpretation stage. Finally, teams determine their desired outcomes, how they know when they will achieve them, and how they will hold themselves accountable through implementation. Vigil referred to the intervention stage as “giving the work back to your people.” The last stage of the regeneration framework is evaluation.

Stages	Framework for Regeneration
<i>Diagnosis</i>	Establish mutual vulnerability and examine own and group's values, beliefs and practices for organizational congruence with the community.
<i>Interpretation</i>	Identify successes; set a vision for the changes that are needed to bring the learning organization into congruence.
<i>Intervention</i>	Engage multiple stakeholders in creating a strategic design for change and a professional growth plan; leverage all talent and genius by "giving the work back to your people."
<i>Evaluation</i>	Monitor the inputs and outputs of the strategic design, ensure problem solving and adjustment along the way.

Vigil, A. (2022). *The great regeneration: Building the bridge to transformative change and healing*. Spring 2022 CDE SOC equity convening keynote presentation.

Vigil urged convening participants to utilize the regeneration framework to build an authentic and culturally affirming learning organization that is in congruence with the values and goals of the community. In his words, “if we expect to retain and develop our team and family, we have to give them a greater purpose and reason for staying and growing with us that begins with our vulnerability to admit our shortcomings, build radical clarity for our regeneration together, and to work as a crew to solve both technical and adaptive challenges” (Vigil, 2022, slide. 32).

# Culture Shift

Establish collective efficacy through building a culturally affirming environment and a shared purpose among all stakeholders.

Most educators recognize the positive effect size between collective teacher efficacy and student outcomes; however, collective efficacy also tremendously impacts educator retention. Collective teacher efficacy is “the perceptions of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students” (Goddard et al., 2000, p. 180). Pre-convening research included local (Omar. D Blair, ODB, Denver, CO.) and national (D.C. Bilingual, DCB, Washington D.C.) case studies focused on charter schools with solid recruitment and retention of Black, Indigenous, and Latinx teachers and leaders. The case studies revealed substantial collective efficacy between teachers, leaders, and families. National research indicates that leaders must consider the conditions needed to build collective efficacy (Pierce, 2019). ODB and DCB harness collective efficacy with a culturally affirming environment and shared community purpose.

School leaders Kristen Williams (ODB) and Daniella Anello (DCB), and other panelists and presenters, stressed the importance of building a culturally affirming environment. The culturally affirming environments of ODB and DCB include the following conditions: diversity, belonging, and people-centered leadership. At ODB, there is no racial gap between Black educators and Black students; the same is true for Latinx students and Latinx teachers at DCB. Focus groups and surveys revealed that teachers experience an innate sense of belonging when they share life experiences with their colleagues, especially their leaders. One ODB leader stated, “I started here as a paraprofessional. I have had so many Black women leaders that I look up to; it leaves you with a sense of- if she can do it, I can do it.” The Center for Black Educator Development’s (2021) study *To Be Who We Are: Black Teachers on Creating an Affirming Environment* confirms that working in a school with a diverse faculty and leadership team affirms the identities of educators of color. The interchange of knowing others and being known is inherently liberating.

In *If You Listen, We Will Stay: Why Teachers of Color Leave and How to Disrupt Turnover* (2019), the researchers indicate that “schools should be places that affirm a teacher’s humanity and racial identity allowing teachers of color to feel free to be their authentic selves” (Dixon et al., 2019, pg.2). Anello shared that she can be her whole self at DCB because she can fully express her bilingualism and biculturalism. Similarly, Black educators at ODB also stressed the authenticity of the community and the ability to show up as their whole selves without fear of backlash or negative consequences. One ODB teacher said, “because of my [Black] leadership, I am fully being myself, and so my students are also fully being themselves.”

Culturally  
Affirming  
Environment



Shared  
Community  
Purpose



Collective  
Efficacy

Culturally  
Affirming  
Environment



Diversity



Belonging



People-Centric  
Leadership

In addition to diversity and belonging, the importance of people-centric leadership emerged as a significant finding in establishing a culturally affirming environment. The heart of people-centric leadership is human relationships. One ODB teacher stated, “I know my leaders care about me as a person first.” This sentiment was redundant in the input from teachers. In his study on retaining teachers of color, Jason Kim-Seda (2022) surveyed 154 teachers from over 30 independent school districts around Los Angeles, CA. He found that establishing authentic relationships with colleagues and administrators is necessary for cultivating a culture of belonging. Kim-Seda (2022) also writes, “teachers of color want school leaders to understand that not only does race matter, but individualized attention and investment also count. They want their school leaders to understand their experiences better and invest the time and effort to get to know them as individuals with unique skills, interests, and expertise” (para. 19–20).

In addition to establishing authentic relationships, people-centric leaders approach decision-making and change through collaborative and distributive means. People-centric leadership demands stakeholder input and engagement. Critical engagement at times of change and regeneration will lead to collective efficacy and a sense of accountability among all stakeholders. Hanover Research’s brief (2021), *Four Strategies to Increase Teacher Retention*, emphasizes the importance of teacher engagement and providing teachers opportunities to collaborate in meaningful decision-making. The researchers argued, “engaging and retaining teachers requires districts to allow teachers to feel their voices and opinions have value. Districts may positively impact teacher engagement by allowing teacher input on decisions that may impact them at the classroom level” (p. 9).

Last, ODB and DCB implement people-centric leadership by intentionally focusing on educators’ well-being. Teacher wellness was an explicit theme at DCB this school year. Child Trends’ report (2021), *A Comprehensive School Employee Wellness Approach Can Reduce Staff Stress and Attrition*, determined that transforming current work conditions is significantly more impactful than layering in wellness opportunities such as yoga classes and time for meditation. Teachers do not want time to meditate when they do not have sufficient time for instructional planning and intellectual preparation. The first line of protection at DCB is policies that safeguard a work-life balance. For example, teachers are only expected to work during the designated workday. Also, staff members do not take on additional duties or responsibilities without compensation. Additionally, staff member requests for a day off are never denied.

Furthermore, many staff noted the significance of DCB serving staff a healthy daily lunch and free metro parking. One teacher articulated, "I appreciate the focus on work-life balance and the tangible support from admin to make this a reality. There is modeling this by admin, and encouragement towards staff to do the same." DCB allocates time, resources, and opportunities for different stakeholder groups to promote wellness. The process started with dedicated fundraising; leaders specifically raised monies for student and staff wellness on Giving Tuesday 2021. Leadership allocated funds to wellness committees representing staff, students, and parents. The committees, in turn, engaged their stakeholders to determine how to utilize the funds at the behest of wellness. The committees ultimately used the monies to fund team activities, celebrations for staff and students, affinity group activities, and the Sunshine Committee, which cares for community members with illness, grief, and loss.

Along with building culturally affirming environments, having common values and a shared purpose is necessary for achieving collective teacher efficacy. When asked why they work at ODB, a standard answer from leaders and teachers was, "it is all about the kids, like Mr. Blair said." When prompted to share more, leaders and teachers stressed the community's purpose and their connection to it. The community purpose at ODB encompasses the school's mission to educate the whole child and deep reverence of duty toward the legacy of Omar D. Blair, Black excellence, and community service. At DCB, teachers spoke about their connection to the mission and how everyone is working together towards the goal of biliteracy.

ODB and DCB teachers and leaders overwhelmingly talked about the responsibility to care for the whole child. Research demonstrates that focusing on the whole child is a common goal for educators of color. In the study *If You Listen, We Will Stay: Why Teachers of Color Leave* (2019), the researchers stated, "ultimately, we found that one of the most important factors to retaining teachers of color is to create an environment that is intensely focused on the best interests of students" (pg. 14). A culturally affirming environment and a shared community purpose focused on the whole child work together to enable collective efficacy, and in turn, collective efficacy sustains teacher retention.

People-Centric Leadership



Authentic Relationships



Stakeholder Engagement & Input



Meaningful Wellness

# Human Resources Shift

Establish a comprehensive HR strategy and align policies that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and staff retention.

Human Resources (HR) has become vital in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) across public and private sectors. The Spring 2022 CDE SOC equity convening included national and local presentations on utilizing HR strategy and policy to promote a diverse, inclusive, and equitable work environment that cultivates educator retention. Presenters shared promising practices, including conducting an HR equity audit, creating a comprehensive and people-centric HR strategy, and designing policies that promote and safeguard DEI.

## HR Equity Audit

- Review the policies, practices, and outcomes of each step in the employee life cycle: recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion.
- Identify implicit biases that result in inequitable outcomes.
- Make equity a metric and set goals.
- Design policy to promote and safeguard diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Create a data dashboard for progress monitoring metrics.

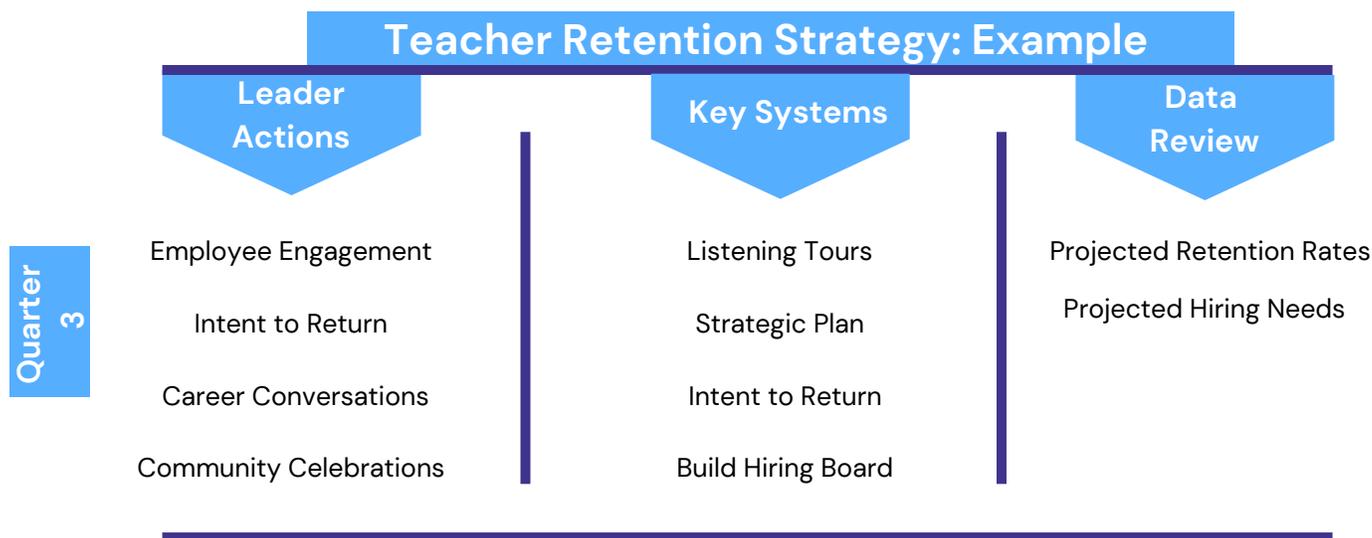
Trina Maull, CEO/Founder at No Limits Career Consulting and Coaching, is an HR expert with extensive experience in the Colorado education sector. In her presentation on the local charter landscape, she stressed the importance of considering equitable practices during every stage of the employee lifecycle. The lifecycle includes attraction, recruitment, hiring and compensation, onboarding, talent development, and performance management (Maull, 2022, slide. 5). She recommended that schools begin with a comprehensive equity audit of the employee lifecycle. Equity audits start with a racially disaggregated review of crucial data, including hiring, compensation, firing, promotion, retention, and attrition. Essentially, schools are to make equity a metric for success. For example, a school can review hiring rates for different demographics with the four-fifths rule in mind. According to this rule, “a selection rate for any race, sex, or ethnic group which is less than four-fifths (or 80%) of the rate for the group with the highest rate will generally be regarded by the Federal enforcement agencies as evidence of adverse impact” (Gassam-Asare, 2020, para.2). Essentially, an equity audit would enable the school to identify bias and employ corrective action.

Maull, T. (2022). *A local perspective: Using school policy and HR practices to increase staff diversity and promote a culture of inclusion and equity*. Spring 2022 CDE SOC Equity Convening Presentation.

An equity audit also includes a review of policies and practices for cultural proficiency and bias. For example, by examining HR practice, a school may determine it necessary to switch from a “cultural fit” to a “cultural add” mental model when approaching hiring, firing, and promotion. The Forbes Human Resources Counsel states, “culture fit describes how well a candidate can conform to the organization, which can lead to bias and homogenous culture. Conversely, culture add is a philosophy that consciously embraces individuals from different backgrounds, communities, and demographics to foster a culture of inclusiveness” (FHRC, 2021, para. 5). A school could also determine that a lack of clear criteria for hiring and promotion results in biased decision-making and disproportionate outcomes for different demographics. In this case, an intervention would be to generate transparent and inclusive measures that alleviate the impact of implicit bias. The goal is to identify inequity and intervene with new policies that bring the school into institutional congruence with DEI values resulting in a diverse and inclusive environment that cultivates staff satisfaction and retention.

Angela Bond and Courtney Bell, partners at Unified Impact, presented promising practices from HR strategy work they led at KIPP Atlanta Charter Schools. An HR strategy moves a learning organization beyond transactional and compliant models to developing talent, culture, and the organization’s capacity to meet its mission and goals. Bond and Bell describe their HR approach as people–centric, fostering a climate that values and attends to the whole person, and inspires, motivates, and supports people. Along with building a solid teacher and leader pipeline, KIPP Atlanta’s HR strategy focuses on DEI. Bond and Bell impressed the importance of designing a talent strategy with no more than two to three goals. Depth over breadth will increase the likelihood of success (Bond and Bell, 2022).

Bond and Bell provided a comprehensive step–by–step HR strategic planning process in their presentation. Several of the steps align with the regeneration process presented by Vigil during the keynote speech, beginning with visioning, analyzing or diagnosing your current status quo, focusing on the direction you want to go, prioritizing change, and making an action plan. KIPP Atlanta’s action plan for teacher retention breaks down into three core components: leader actions, key systems, and data review. For example, a focus area for quarter one is onboarding, and the appointed leader's actions are completing the 30, 60, and 90 onboarding checklists with each staff member. These actions are operationalized and systematized via a talent tracker that leaders utilize to ensure an effective and equitable onboarding process. The plan also uses the number of vacancies, retention percentages, and exit survey data to monitor the efficacy of onboarding.



Bond, A., and Bell, C. (2022). *Retaining a diverse teacher pipeline*. Spring 2022 CDE SOC Equity Convening Presentation.

Bond and Bell highlighted how the retention strategy utilizes empathy; key systems guide leaders to listen, understand, and respond. For example, leaders hold “stay conversations” by the end of quarter two and ask for staff to provide their intent to return in quarter three. The key systems are designed to create the conditions for staff to feel valued, supported, and successful. In addition to holding critical conversations, the HR strategy includes necessary steps for talent development and performance management systems.

Many Spring 2022 CDE SOC equity convening presenters and panelists indicated HR policy as paramount in retaining a diverse staff. Anello from DC Bilingual reported they improved working conditions for teachers through policies such as compensation for any work beyond the school day and the practice of all teachers leaving at the end of the school day. Furthermore, Vigil and Maull noted that HR policy guards against bias and discrimination. For example, Maull shared that several schools that work with her added The Crown Act to their employee policy manual. This act affords Black and other people of color the inherent right to wear their natural and cultural hairstyles without punishment or discrimination. Designing equitable HR policies is where charter governing boards and authorizers can support schools in achieving the conditions necessary to retain a diverse staff.

## *People-Centric Leadership Highlight*

Ashley Keltner, HR and Communications Manager at Pinnacle Charter School, presented her school's responsive practices to improve student and staff retention through the COVID19 pandemic. First, the predominantly White female leadership team identified a dynamic of "toxic positivity" affecting their pandemic response (i.e., "everything is going to be okay"). They decided to pause and dig deeper. This led to the school listening to families, staff listening to each other, leaders listening to staff, and the governing board listening to leaders. Keltner stressed the importance of giving voice to hurt and trauma experienced by community members and naming faults where appropriate. Through the grassroots attempt to engage all stakeholders and listen deeply to families and the community, Pinnacle revisited its values and aligned new practices. Examples of resulting practices are a new Career Technical Education (CTE) pathway and new hiring criteria for ensuring a unique and diverse candidate pool for teachers. Keltner reported that the improved congruence between the community, teachers, and the school has positively impacted school culture and staff retention.

# Talent Development Shift

Establish diverse leader and teacher pipelines through robust investment in your talent.

Teacher preparation and talent development emerged as a critical theme at the Spring 2022 CDE SOC equity convening and in the pre-convening research. Ample research points to teacher and leader development as vital for teacher retention (The New Teacher Project, 2022; Suls et al., 2020; The Learning Policy Institute, 2022). Investing in leadership development for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other leaders of color, providing embedded professional learning to teachers, and “growing your own” teachers from paraprofessionals were presented as promising practices.

Sponsoring the development of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other leaders of color was identified as a critical practice. Both leaders of Omar D. Blair (ODB) and DC Bilingual (DCB) have been at their respective schools for over a decade and have received a significant level of development. DCB sponsored Anello through two levels of The New Leaders fellowship program, and ODB allocated funding for several years of executive coaching for Williams when she was a new principal. Growing your people through intentional development creates a pipeline of deeply committed leaders to the community and mission. Bond and Bell shared that a central goal of the KIPP Atlanta HR strategy is to have two people in a “ready position” for every executive, principal, and principal assistant role; this means that successors are consistently identified and developed. In their report *Addressing Teacher Shortages*, The New Teacher Project (2022) indicated that by “providing career advancement opportunities to high-performing teachers, schools could offer a retention incentive while developing a pipeline of school leaders. For example, systems could offer ‘early contracts’ to their best teachers for leadership positions in 2–3 years, and then coordinate a development plan to support these high performers as they grow into a leadership role” (p. 10). One pathway that supports the leadership pipeline goal at KIPP Atlanta is an in-house principal fellowship program in which fellows develop under current principals as they prepare to lead. Furthermore, this strategy will result in the retention of teachers and leaders. Research demonstrates that diversifying school leadership is key to retaining a diverse teaching staff (Lindsay, 2020; Davis et al., 2019). Teachers at ODB and DCB reported that having leaders of color profoundly impacts their sense of self-efficacy.

In addition to leader preparation, convening presenters and panelists conveyed how important professional development is to teacher retention. At DCB, each teacher has a coach, and each coach is on the instructional leadership team. The instructional leadership team has the layers of two school principals and two assistant principals. Interviews and surveys revealed that coaches are deeply attuned to student data and understand where each student is. One teacher reported, “I work at DC Bilingual because of the myriad of resources the school offers to students. Students are consistently monitored, and their data is routinely analyzed to optimize their success. Students who need specialized support always get what they need, and I actively see the education gap close each year here.” Coaches and teachers at DCB work together to determine and adjust student learning groups based on formative assessments. The ongoing collaboration results in teachers feeling supported doing the work, thus positively impacting their sense of self-efficacy and motivation. One teacher said, “the professional development I receive motivates and encourages me to come back each year.”

At ODB, along with formalized coaching, Black teachers have access to Black mentors to help them flourish. Research indicates that Black educators strongly desire to work with mentors with shared experiences who can guide them. Mason et al. (2021) found that “mentorship provides a space for Black teachers to delve into the issues they face in their classrooms, as they learn to navigate problematic areas, resolve concerns seamlessly, and address challenges” (p. 13). The ongoing support and mentoring at ODB make Black educators feel connected and successful.

Last, the equity convening highlighted the practice of building a teacher pipeline through sponsoring the education and development of paraprofessionals and instructional aids, typically from the community. The Learning Policy Institute (2022) reports that teacher residency programs played a critical role in the pandemic, “in these programs, school districts and teacher preparation programs partner to provide residents with a yearlong apprenticeship under the guidance of an expert mentor teacher while residents complete tightly integrated coursework” (para. 10). Dr. Rosanne Fulton and Dr. Robert Fulton presented their teacher preparation work with the Center for Urban Education and the Center for Rural Education at the University of Northern Colorado. The Center for Urban Education is granted monies from CDE to host a paraprofessional-to-teacher pipeline program focusing on underrepresented communities. The Center for Rural Education offers a similar pathway for non-certified staff through the Colorado Rural Teaching Fellowship. Both preparation programs offer to fund and stipend those that want to become teachers. Dr. Fulton and Dr. Fulton reported that these types of non-certified-to-certified pathways are significantly successful at diversifying the teaching field, particularly in rural charter schools.

# Implications for Practice



## Mindset Shift

*Establish congruence between the learning organization's mission, values, and practices through a mental model of "regeneration."*

- Review the school's mission, values, goals, and practices to ensure organizational and community congruence.
- Engage all stakeholders in congruence work: families, students, staff, leaders, governing board, and community members.
- Center Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, people of color, and other marginalized identities in stakeholder engagement.
- "Give the work back to your people" through utilizing stakeholder groups to generate goals, milestones, criteria for success, action steps, and a schoolwide professional growth plan.
- Utilize the four-step framework for regeneration: diagnosis, interpretation, intervention, and evaluation.
- Build an explicit culture of "mutual vulnerability" and hold discourse on the mindsets, policies, and practices that cause harm to different marginalized groups.
- Create and maintain clear and aligned communication around expectations, understandings, and accountability for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).
- Create and provide guiding principles of cultural proficiency for leaders to use as a foundation.

# Implications for Practice



## Culture Shift

*Establish collective efficacy through building a culturally affirming environment and a shared purpose among all stakeholders.*

- Increase diversity and shared life experiences among staff with a focus on closing the racial and ethnic gap between staff and students.
  - Grant agency and autonomy to teachers of color, notably when advocating for students with similar racial and ethnic backgrounds.
  - Implement a people-centric approach to leadership, beginning with establishing authentic relationships based on personal connections and care.
  - Define, refine, and continually reinforce a community purpose among all stakeholders.
  - Root the community purpose in the values, legacy, and erudition of people of color.
  - Prioritize the whole child and ensure an environment relentlessly focused on student well-being and achievement.
- Create structures for ongoing stakeholder involvement (students, families, teachers, leaders, governing board, etc.) and relationship management that distributes leadership.
  - Establish a committee structure to engage community members in continuous improvement and decision-making.
  - Task committees with specific goals, actions, and decision-making; do not forget to compensate them.
  - Allocate funds and decision-making authority to committees.
  - Prioritize wellness in all aspects of the school system (e.g., calendar, schedule, human resources, and professional learning).
  - Create, review, and revise budgets with a lens for wellness.
- Protect educator time at all costs (e.g., work-day, planning, and preparation, etc.).
  - Institute a policy for decreasing email demand during the week, and save all staff-wide communication for a weekly newsletter.
  - Fundraise for wellness; allocate specific funds to community wellness, and provide them power over utilizing the funds.
  - Provide affinity groupings for different identities to connect, process, and belong.
  - Be a "yes culture"- provide staff with opportunities to contribute and innovate.

# Implications for Practice



## Human Resources Shift

*Establish a comprehensive HR strategy and align policies that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and staff retention.*

- Provide a competitive and equitable total compensation package; compensate for any work beyond the school day.
- Conduct an equity audit of the entire employee cycle: attraction, recruitment, onboarding, talent development, retention, and performance management.
- Employ a deep data dive into identifying racial and other biases and inequities, including the hiring process, compensation, promotion, and perception data.
- Review HR policies and practices for bias and inequity.
- Create and utilize HR policies to promote and safeguard diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Take a people-centric approach (e.g., empathetic) when designing HR strategy and policy.
- Engage multiple stakeholder groups to create a comprehensive HR strategy that includes two-three goals, milestones, leadership actions, key systems, and data sources for evaluation.
- Create a specific goal for teacher retention and align key metrics; use a targeted universal approach and focus strategies on retaining Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other educators of color.
- Identify leader actions for each quarter of the school year; utilize listening tours, celebrations, and stay conversations for staff to feel valued, supported, and successful.
- Include professional growth conversations and career planning in performance management structures (i.e., illustrate clear pathways for advancement).
- Engage an outside partner or consultant in regenerating HR practices.

# Implications for Practice



## Talent Development Shift

*Establish diverse leader and teacher pipelines through robust investment in your talent.*

- Focus on hiring Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other leaders of color.
  - Grow your own leaders; sponsor high levels of professional development for emerging Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other leaders of color.
  - Ensure a detailed and viable school leader succession plan; implement a principal fellow role to prepare emerging leaders to take over schools.
  - Provide teachers with multi-level support, including instructional coaches, behavioral specialists, and an instructional leadership team.
  - Deliver job-embedded professional development through co-planning, model teaching, and formative data meetings.
- Establish a culture where coaches have a deep understanding of where teachers and students are and what they need.
  - Provide ongoing professional development on implicit bias, microaggressions, and other conditions that result in the harm of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other educators of color.
  - Provide new staff of color affinity mentors and coaches.
  - Distribute leadership and decision-making across teams and individuals.
  - Diversify teaching staff through partnering with a paraprofessional-to-teacher program (e.g., Center for Urban Education at the University of Northern Colorado).

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