



WHAT SCHOOLS MUST DO TO RETAIN BLACK EDUCATORS:

Findings from the 2023 California
Black Educator Survey

 **BLACK EDUCATOR**
ADVOCATES NETWORK

JANUARY 2024

Letter from Black educators



In California, there are too few Black educators and schools are falling short in preparing Black students to achieve their full potential. We have seen and experienced this first hand as Black educators working in the public schools.

The findings from our [first annual California Black Educator Survey](#) presents insights and practical takeaways, directly from Black educators, on how to ensure all schools can create the conditions necessary for Black educators to thrive and grow.

As a group of organized Black educators, our purpose is to listen to and share the experiences of Black educators with decision-makers across the state so that our voice is felt and seen in policy changes and accountability. We hope that decision-makers, district staff and leaders do not stop at checking culturally affirming training off the list but instead look deeper at how these recommendations can be deeply embedded into the culture, policies, and practices of all schools and districts.

In the spirit of transformation,

[Black educators and advocates](#)
Black Educator Advocates Network



INTRODUCTION

Black educators are essential to the success of all students, but we don't have enough of them. The research is clear on the positive impact Black educators have on all students' learning. Furthermore, students who have a teacher who looks like them do better in school. Black students who have a Black teacher before fourth grade are more likely to graduate high school and go to college. However, currently Black educators make up only 6% of the teaching workforce. In California, more than 78,000 Black students are in schools without a Black educator. This not only impacts Black student achievement but also continued efforts to diversify our educator workforce.

Districts and schools must urgently work to create the conditions necessary for Black educators to thrive and stay in the profession. In Fall 2023, the Black Educators Advocates Network (BEAN) conducted its first annual California Black Educator Survey to hear directly from Black educators about what they need to feel valued and affirmed.

METHODOLOGY

BEAN worked closely with Poder Consulting Group (Poder) to design and conduct a survey of current and former Black educators in California. The goals of the survey were to **1)** understand Black educators' views and experiences of their workplace and school culture, and **2)** learn what it would take to create an environment that is affirming of Black educators' humanity, values, and needs.

In order to take the survey, participants must identify as Black/African American and as working as a current or former teacher in the public school system in California. Participants were recruited to take the survey through email, text, and social media. Through a social media ad campaign on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, we targeted teachers or anyone working in the education field in the largest regions in California including: Los Angeles, Bay Area, Sacramento, Riverside, and San Bernardino. We also emailed a list of approximately 300 school leaders identified by Innovate Public School's Top Public Schools [Los Angeles](#) and [Bay Area](#) reports published in 2020.

Profile of Black educators who took our survey:

Figure 1. Most are between ages 35-60 years old.

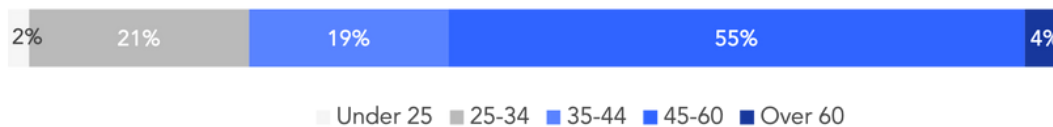


Figure 2. Half work in Los Angeles and 44% in the Bay Area

50%	Los Angeles County
44%	Bay Area
2%	Riverside
2%	Bakersfield

Figure 3. Eight in 10 are women

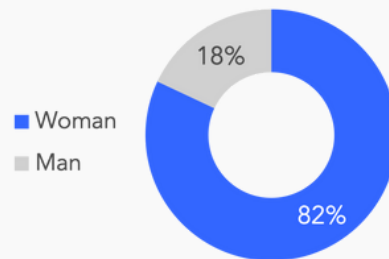


Figure 4. Most are experienced teachers

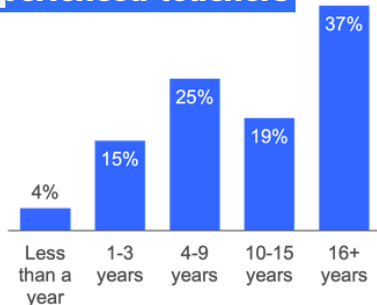


Figure 5. Seven in 10 are current teachers

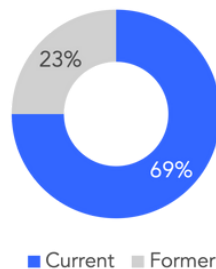
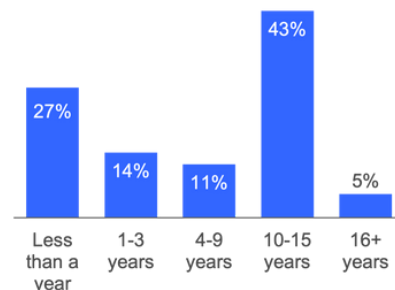


Figure 6. Nearly half plan to continue for 10+ years



Demographic questions and number of responses: How old are you? (N=101); What is your zip code? (N=56); What is your gender? (N=103); How long have you been a teacher? (N=107); Are you currently working as a teacher? (N=125); How many more years do you plan to teach? (N=81).

BLACK EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES AND VIEWS ON SCHOOL CULTURE

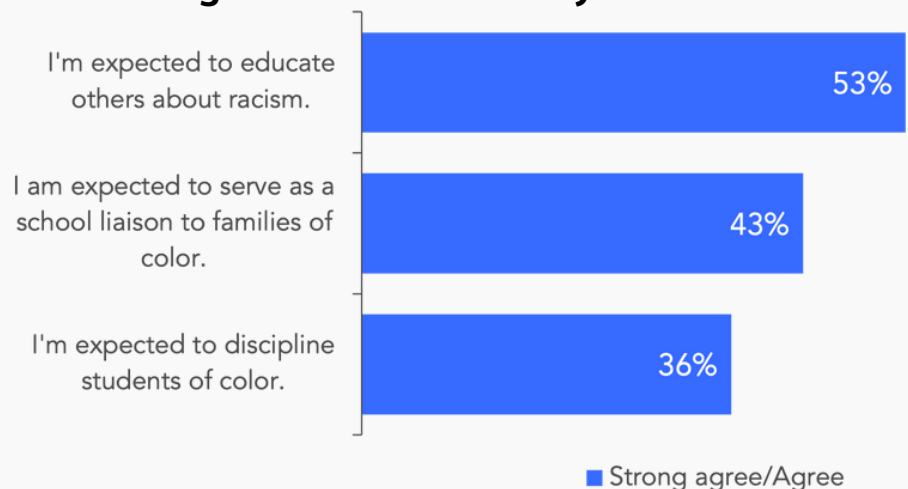
More than half of Black educators report they have a school leader who is Black/African American, but at most schools, Black/African American teachers make up 15% or less of all teachers. The fact that many respondents reported having a Black school leader likely influenced how they experience their school cultures. Below are key findings from questions we asked Black educators about their experiences and perspectives on workplace and school culture.

Black educators take on additional responsibilities because of their race.

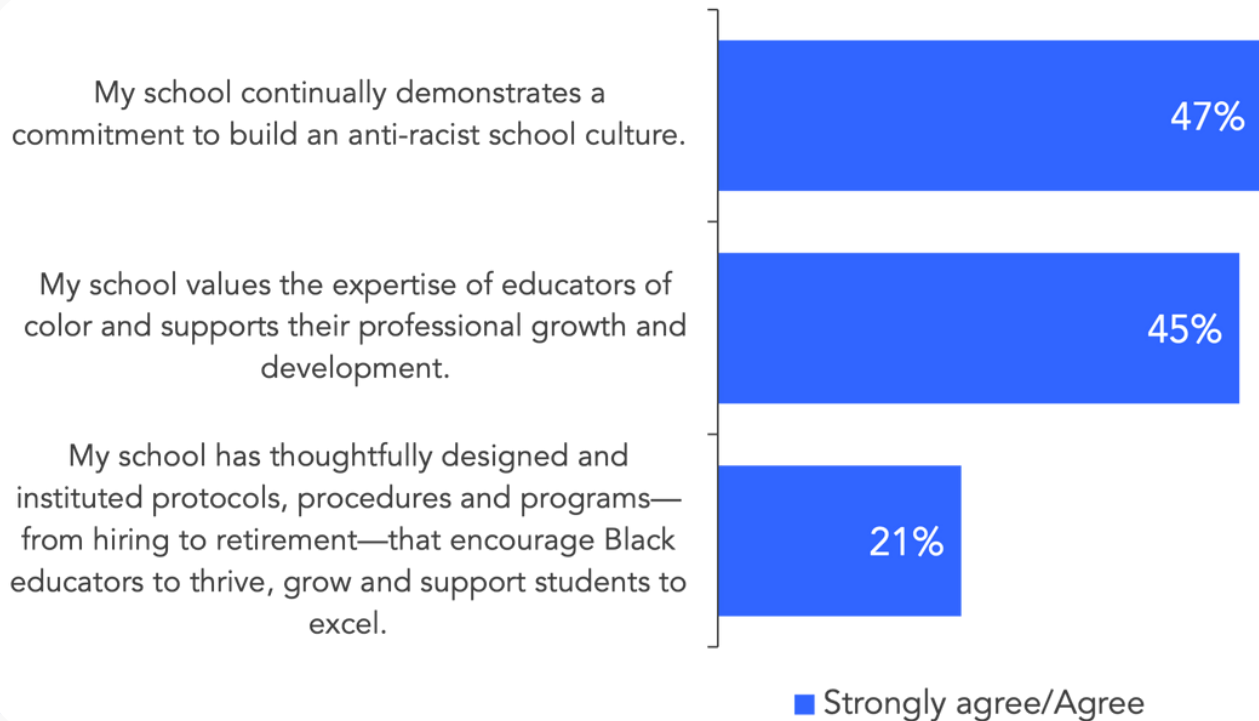
Black teachers we surveyed report that they shoulder additional responsibilities due to their race. These responsibilities include educating others about racism, serving as liaisons to families of color, and disciplining students of color. Educators also shared that they lead professional development sessions, teach classes on African American identity, and address racism in their schools in various ways.

“ I’ve spoken to **educators regarding racism in schools** and shared resources to enlighten their repertoire of skills.”

Figure 7. Because of my race...



Schools are working towards an anti-racist culture but must implement policies and protocols to actualize that commitment.



Nearly half of Black educators we surveyed reported that their school demonstrates a commitment to building an anti-racist school culture, and 45% reported that their school values the expertise of educators of color and supports their professional development. However, fewer (21%) reported that their schools have thoughtfully implemented protocols, procedures and programs that encourage Black educators to thrive and support students to excel. Additionally, six out of 10 educators reported that teachers do not reflect the students they teach in their racial, life experiences and world views. Although there is progress amongst many schools, there are still challenges Black educators face and gaps in supporting them. In open ended questions, several educators point out discrepancies between the rhetoric of anti-racist practices and the actual implementation within school culture. They emphasized a lack of follow-through on promises and values stated by school and district leaders.

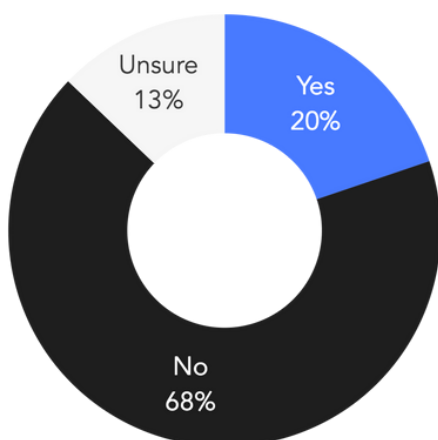
“ —
The culture of my school claims to practice restorative practices but implements policies that are nearly identical to exclusionary, punitive policies. ”

Schools lack groups, spaces and resources specifically for Black educators.

The large majority of respondents (68%) reported that their school did not provide groups, spaces or resources specifically for Black educators to feel heard and seen. Respondents shared that they faced challenges in expressing their cultural identity, ranging from discomfort with colleagues' comments to a lack of support in addressing racism within their schools. Some mentioned feeling isolated or encountering resistance when discussing anti-Blackness or organizing cultural events.

“ —
We are not supported or valued. I have had two incidents of discrimination and we still lack culturally responsive training and protocols. ”

Figure 9. Does your school provide groups, spaces, or resources specifically for Black educators to feel heard and seen in their identities (e.g., Black educator affinity groups)?



“ —
“When I talk about my experience being a Black educator, **some white teachers get up and walk out.**”

Figure 10. What would be most impactful in creating a welcoming and affirming school culture for Black educators?

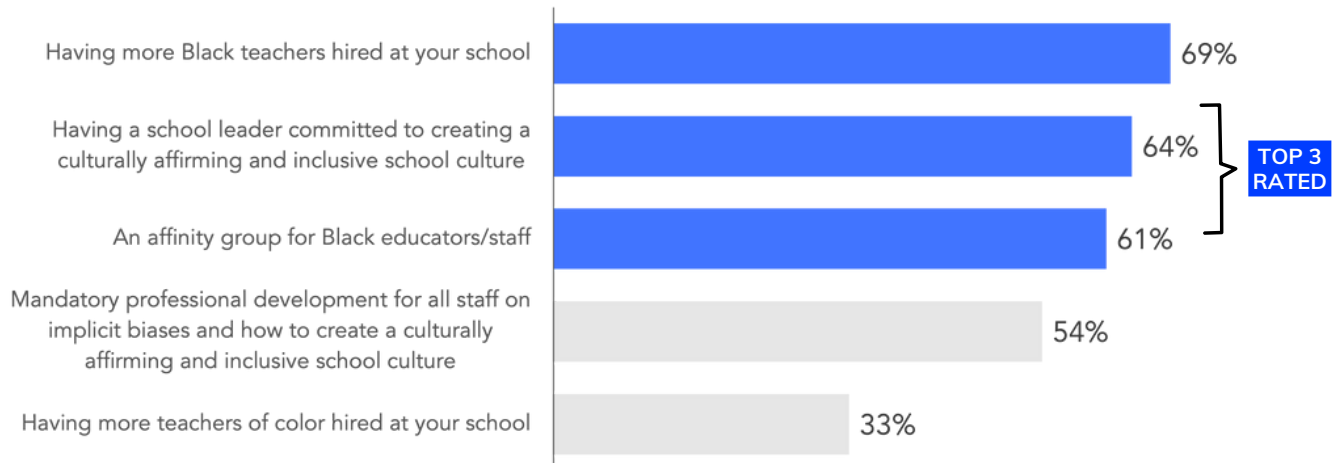
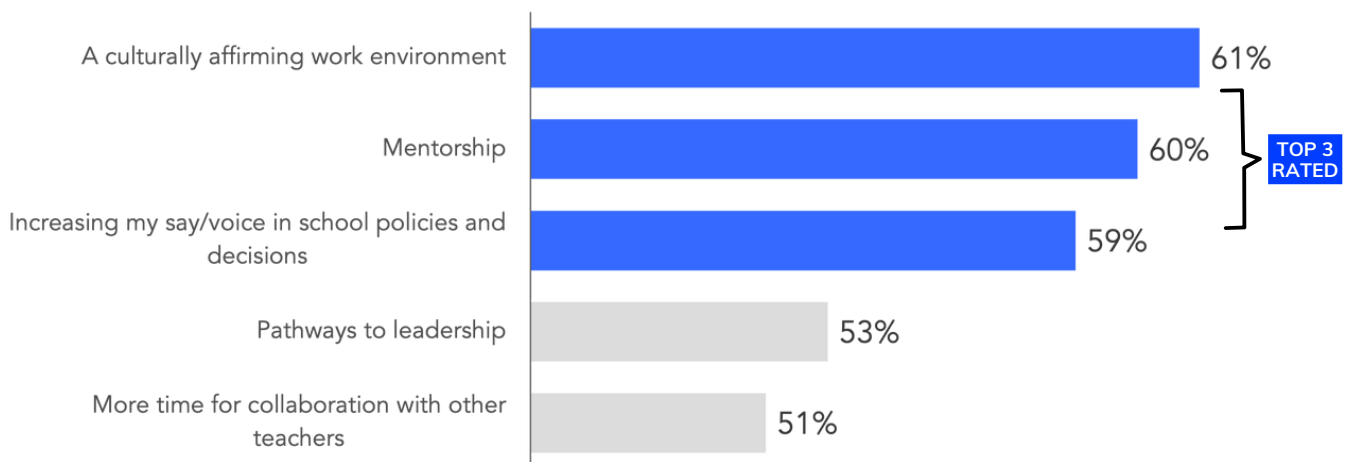


Figure 11. What would be most impactful to your professional growth and development as a Black educator?



Others shared they have seen anti-racist initiatives with little action and have experienced challenges when addressing systemic barriers.

WHAT IT TAKES TO RETAIN BLACK EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

We asked Black educators what would be most impactful to creating an affirming school culture for Black educators and students, and what specific changes or improvements would they like to see. Based on their responses, below are five recommendations for district and school leaders.

HIRE MORE BLACK EDUCATORS AND STAFF.

#1

- Educators emphasized the importance of hiring more Black teachers and administrators, and Black students seeing themselves in the staff, curriculum, and school culture. They said schools must ensure they reflect the diversity of the community it serves and provides spaces for shared experiences. Hiring more Black teachers was rated as most impactful for affirming Black educators (see Figure 10).

“*One respondent emphasized how important it is for Black students to “see teachers who look like them, that they can relate to and/or who support them and show them they are capable of greatness.”*”

- 64% of respondents said it is critical to have a school leader committed to creating a culturally affirming and inclusive school culture (see Figure 10). Educators called for a school culture focused on eradicating anti-Blackness, incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons, celebrating diversity, and affirming and celebrating students' cultures and backgrounds. Respondents suggested creating an inclusive environment by intentionally embedding Black culture in various aspects of the educational environment.

“*An educator suggested “schools develop one page protocol to follow when there are acts of discrimination or racism, hosting assemblies on Black culture, and training for teachers to dispel deficit mindsets”. Another shared that schools should “not just acknowledge them during special times, but purposefully and mindfully infuse culture from the front door to the back door and in everything that is done every day.”*”

BUILD AN ANTI-RACIST, CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE, AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT.

#2

CREATE SAFE SPACES FOR BLACK EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS TO COME TOGETHER (E.G., AFFINITY GROUPS)

#3

- Educators suggested more spaces specifically for Black educators and students. More than six out of 10 respondents said creating an affinity group for Black educators (see Figure 10) and 70% said creating spaces and opportunities for Black students to come together would be one of the most impactful ways to affirm Black educators and students. Several suggested creating more opportunities for Black students to come together (e.g., through a Black student union).

**PROVIDE AND REQUIRE
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE
TRAINING FOR ALL STAFF.**

#4

- Several respondents highlighted the need for educational opportunities for all staff, including implicit bias training, anti-Black racism training, and professional development. Respondents emphasized the need to enhance the knowledge and skills of all educators to create a more inclusive environment. More than half said mandatory professional development for all staff on implicit biases was one of the most impactful ways to create an affirming school culture. As one educator noted, this requires “total buy-in from every teacher to commit to culturally responsive teaching and learning”. Being a culturally affirming educator does not mean compromising on rigor and high expectations for all students. Nearly 6 in 10 respondents said holding high expectations for Black students and providing them access to rigorous content is one of the most impactful ways to affirm Black students.

- Educators expressed the importance of listening to and supporting Black educators, providing pathways for leadership, and recognizing their contributions. These opportunities help to create an environment where educators feel valued and heard. Support and recognition include mentorship, pathways to leadership, and more time for collaboration (see Figure 11). Nearly 6 in 10 respondents said it would be impactful for schools to increase the say and voice of Black educators in school policies and decisions (see Figure 11)

“*My identity and experience are celebrated in abstract ways but are never meaningfully considered in the creation or implementation of school programs.*”

**RECOGNIZE, PROVIDE LEADERSHIP
OPPORTUNITIES, AND INCLUDE BLACK
EDUCATORS' VOICES IN DECISION-MAKING.**

#5

“For schools to be well educators need to be well.”

Dr. Bettina Love

About the Black Educators Advocates Network

The Black Educators Advocates Network (BEAN) is a non-profit organization focused on transforming the environment, practices and policies that affect the educational experience of Black educators, administrators, students, and parents. BEAN was founded by Black educators who recognized the desperate need for an educational experience that considered and centers around Black students. BEAN is committed to transforming the learning environment for all students of color. We do our work through community building, research and discovery, and bold advocacy.

About Poder Consulting Group

Poder Consulting connects people and empowers communities by providing community outreach and engagement, research and evaluation, and capacity building services. We work closely with clients to develop tailored research and engagement strategies that build upon and expand their reach. We excel at bringing diverse stakeholders together, bridging connections, using research and data to drive action, and facilitating inclusive and effective discussions.