Retaining Diverse Teachers and Leaders

Challenges and Strategies

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Overview

- Context
- Overview of academic literature
- Our research process
- **Challenges** with retaining teachers and leaders
- **Strategies** for retaining teachers and leaders
- Future directions for the AIB
- Our next steps

Context: Teacher and Leader Retention under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future

A primary goal of the Blueprint is to **recruit and retain high-quality and diverse teacher and leader workforces**. The policy initiatives under **Pillar 2** of the Blueprint—including **raising teacher salaries** to $60,000 per year and **developing career ladders** for teachers and leaders—all seek to advance this goal. The analysis presented in this slide deck addresses challenges and strategies related to the ***retention*** side of Pillar 2; we address challenges and strategies related to ***recruitment*** in a separate analysis.

For additional information about Blueprint-related teacher retention initiatives, see Bill et al. (2024) and Comstock et al. (2023).

Retention is a Key Policy Issue

- Teacher and leader retention is a pressing **national and state issue**
  - **Nationally**: in 2021-22, turnover rates were 16% for teachers (U.S. DOE, 2024) and 11% for leaders (U.S. DOE, 2024)
  - **Maryland**: 10.7% teacher turnover rate in 2023-24 (MSDE, 2024)
    - Higher for Black (13.8%) and Hispanic (11.5%) teachers

While some studies have identified **factors that promote retention**, most focus on the **factors that drive turnover** (Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). Altogether, this evidence points to **strategies that may support teacher and leader retention**, described on the following slide. However, most existing studies are descriptive or qualitative, meaning **most of these promising strategies have not been tested using causal methods**.

Literature Points to Promising Retention Strategies

One set of promising strategies includes **professional advancement opportunities** (Borman & Dowling, 2008) and, relatedly, **financial incentives** such as higher salaries and loan forgiveness (Feng & Sass, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2023).

Another set of promising strategies are those that have the potential to improve teachers' and leaders' **working conditions** and **self-efficacy** for their professional roles. Strategies addressing these factors may include **professional development** (Coldwell, 2017), and **mentoring** and **induction** programs (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Nguyen & Springer, 2023).

Additional studies have identified how the **racism teachers of color experience in schools contributes negatively to their well-being and desire to stay in the profession** (Benson et al 2021; Pizarro & Kohli 2020). Thus, **strategies that acknowledge and address the racialized school conditions** teachers and leaders of color face are key to their retention.

Our Research Process: Coding Blueprint Implementation Plans for Promising Strategies and Challenges

- Developed **coding tool designed to capture relevant data** (e.g., retention strategies)
  - Coded **deductively** to identify retention strategies aligned with literature and **inductively** to identify challenges and additional strategies districts described
  - Focused on retention of **certified teachers** and **leaders**
- Used coding tool to guide analysis of relevant **portions of districts' initial and final 2024 implementation plans**:
  - Systemwide challenges and focal points
  - Pillar 1, # 3
  - Pillar 2, #s 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
- Reviewed coded data to **identify themes** (e.g., professional advancement opportunities)
  - Attended to alignment between districts' strategies and literature

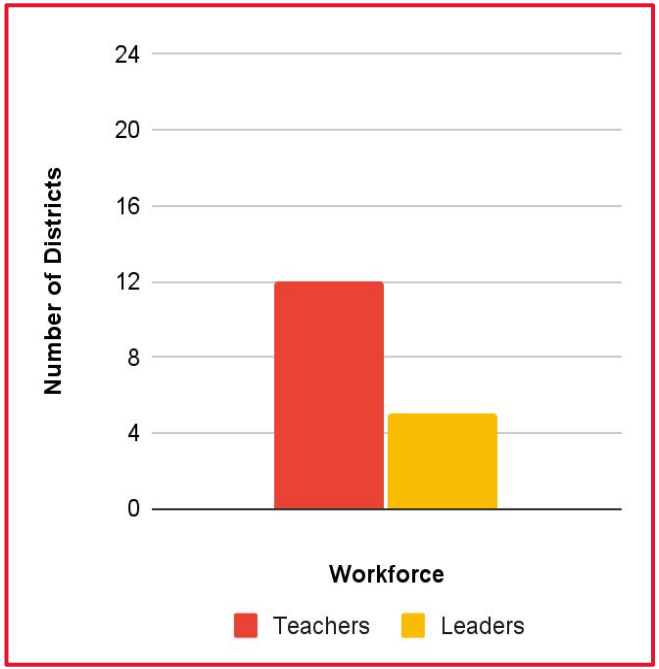
Key Takeaway

Most districts identified teacher and leader **retention as a priority** in their 2024 implementation plans. Districts described engaging in retention strategies that were related to their forthcoming career ladders as well as other strategies. **Most of these strategies** align with evidence about what prompts teachers and leaders to leave (or stay in) their schools, and thus **hold promise for improving retention rates**. However, relatively **few strategies** focused explicitly on addressing the **racialized school conditions** that teachers and leaders of color face.

Most Districts Cited Retention as a Challenge and/or Systemwide Priority

Retention was described as a **challenge for half of districts** and a **priority for almost all districts**. Most discussed teacher retention more than leader retention.

Number of Districts Citing Retention as a Challenge



Number of Districts Citing Retention as a Goal

Qualitative Examples of Retention as a Key Challenge

Quotes from implementation plans illustrate how districts spoke about retention as a challenge and priority. Several districts noted the **importance of retaining teachers and leaders of color**, in particular.

*"[Our district] has been challenged with a **10-year trend of 50% staff retention**."*

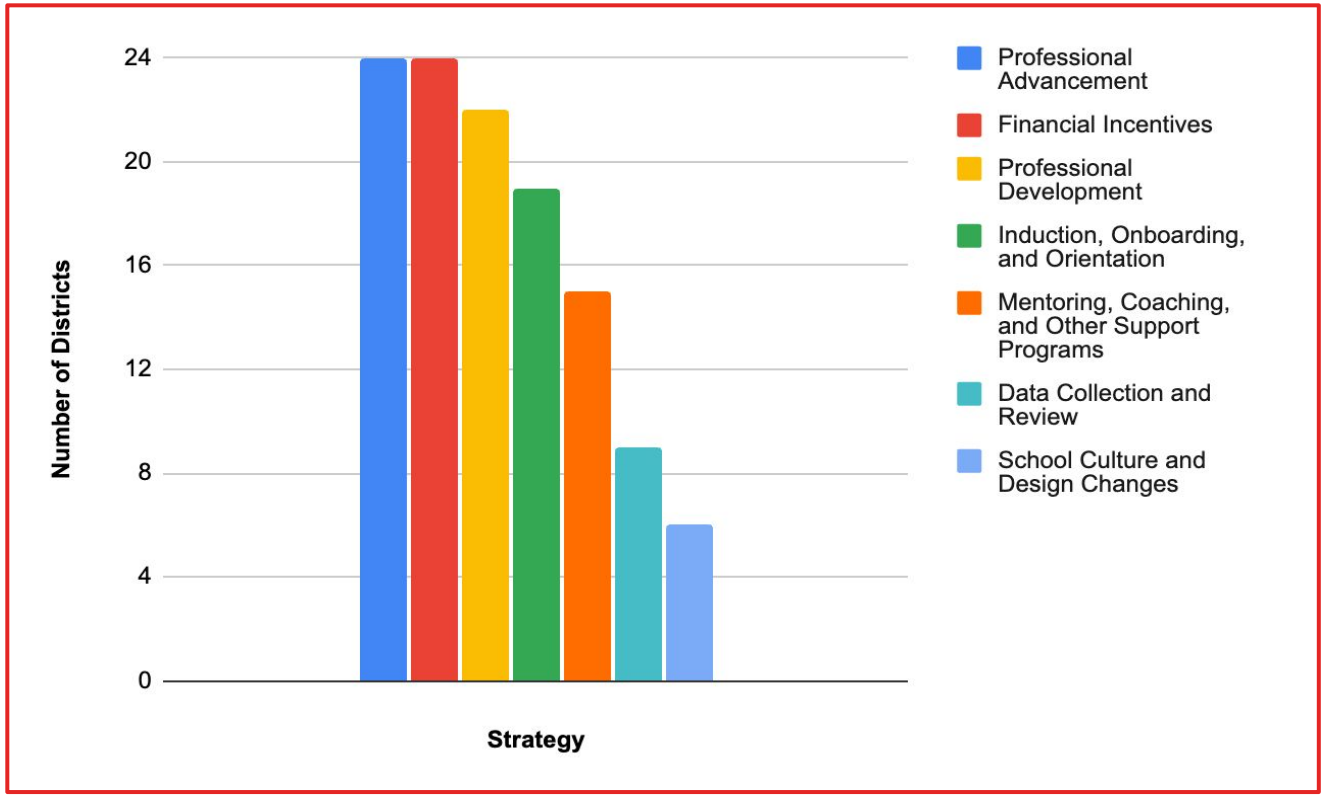
*"**Challenges that rural communities … face in** recruiting and **retaining a high-quality professional staff** have become **more acute** in recent years."*

*"Teachers' racial demographics in comparison to [our] students continues to be disproportionate. The data clearly illustrates the **need to continue the focus on the recruitment and retention of African American and Hispanic teachers**."*

*"School leaders in [our district] are 87% white and 13% African American, while student data is 57% white, 19% Hispanic, 14% African American, and 9% multi-racial. Therefore, [we] must continue to **take action to recruit and retain a diverse pool of school leaders**."*

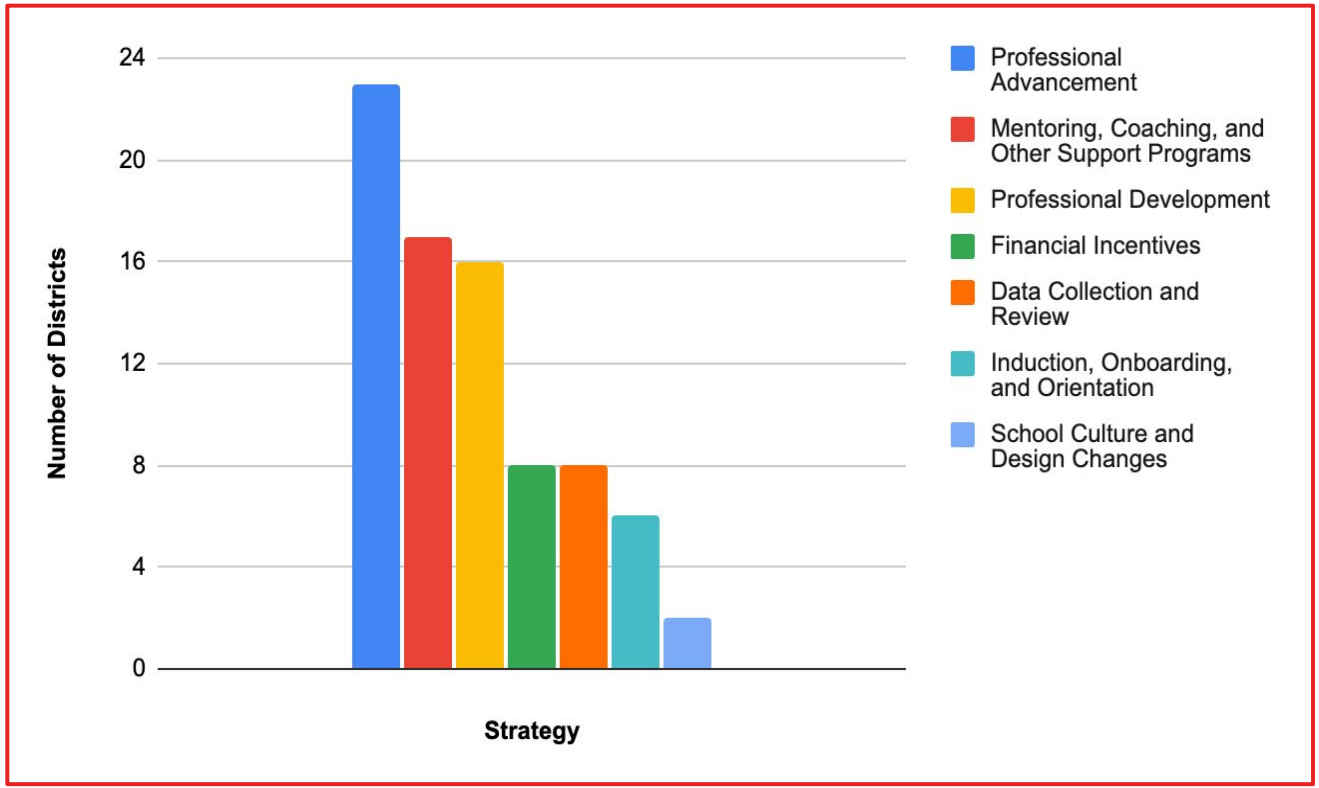
Teacher Retention Strategies

The most common teacher retention strategies were **professional advancement** (n=24) and **financial incentives** (n=24), which were often associated with advancement pathways. The majority of districts also described offering **professional development** (n=22), **induction** (n=19), and **mentoring** (n=15) opportunities.



Leader Retention Strategies

The most common leader retention strategies were **professional advancement** (n=23), **mentoring** (n=17), and **professional development** (n=16).



Strategies Fall into Two Primary Categories

Teacher and leader retention strategies fell into two primary categories: **strategies related to the career ladder** and **other strategies**.

Strategies Related to Career Ladder

- Professional advancement
  - Teacher leader pathways (e.g., National Board Certification)
  - Administrator pathways
- Financial incentives (e.g., salary raises, bonuses, tuition reimbursement)

Other Strategies

- Professional development
- Mentoring, coaching, and other support programs
- Induction, onboarding, and orientation
- Data collection and review
- School culture and design changes

We categorize career-ladder-related and other strategies on a continuum from ***Most Promising*** to ***Least Promising***. Criteria determining the category in which a strategy falls, detailed on the following slide, include the **extent to which a strategy aligns with academic literature** and the **level of detail** in which it is described in districts' implementation plans. To reflect the academic literature, **some criteria vary by strategy**.

Strategies Related to Career Ladder

	Most Promising	Potentially Promising	Least Promising
Professional Advancement **Financial Incentives**	Opportunities are offered and described in sufficient detail 	Opportunities are offered but not described in sufficient detail 	*Given evidence that professional advancement and financial incentives can support retention, no examples of these strategies are categorized as least promising.*

Other Strategies

	Most Promising	Potentially Promising	Least Promising
Professional Development	Addresses working conditions (e.g., school climate) and/or self-efficacy (e.g., building pedagogical or content knowledge) Includes sufficient detail about *how* the strategy addresses those foci	Addresses working conditions and/or self-efficacy Does not include sufficient detail about *how* professional development addresses those foci	Does not address (or include sufficient detail to determine whether it addresses) working conditions or self-efficacy
Mentoring, Coaching, and Other Support Programs **Induction, Onboarding, and Orientation**		Programs are offered but there is not sufficient detail to determine whether and how they address working conditions and/or self-efficacy 	*Given evidence that mentoring and induction can support retention, no examples of these strategies are categorized as least promising.* 
Data Collection and Review **School Culture and Design Changes**		Relates to working conditions and/or self-efficacy but does not include sufficient detail about *how* strategies address those foci	Does not address working conditions or self-efficacy

Most Strategies are Promising

We used a **district-by-strategy** approach to place data into ***Most Promising***, ***Potentially Promising*****,** and ***Least Promising*** categories. This table includes strategies for **teachers and/or leaders**.Within each strategy, **categories are mutually exclusive**. If a district provided examples that had **different degrees of promise**, we placed it into the **higher category**.

Number of Districts Engaging in Most, Potentially, and Least Promising Strategies for Teachers and/or Leaders

	Most Promising	Potentially Promising	Least Promising	*Total*
Professional Advancement	24	0	0	*24*
Financial Incentives	24	0	0	*24*
Professional Development	0	17	6	*23*
Mentoring, Coaching, and Other Support Programs	5	16	0	*21*
Induction, Onboarding, and Orientation	4	16	0	*20*
Data Collection and Review	4	7	1	*12*
School Culture and Design Changes	3	3	0	*6*

All examples of **career-ladder-related strategies**, which include professional advancement and financial incentives, fell into the **Most Promising** category because they **aligned with literature** and **were described in sufficient detail**. Furthermore, given that all districts are required to implement a career ladder, there was **little variation across districts**. We provide qualitative examples of these strategies on the following slides.

Professional Advancement Examples

Most Promising *(n=24 districts)*

*"[Our district and education association] reached an agreement on the **teacher career ladder**. … During the 2024-2025 school year, [our district] will engage in negotiations with the [administrators' association] to **develop the career ladder for administrators** based on the Blueprint requirements."*

*"[Our district] is entering its third cohort for Cohort Inspire, a **program for current and aspiring school leaders** interested in leading in highly impacted schools. … The approach focuses on developing and sustaining effective leaders by providing a **comprehensive self-assessment, best practice research, personalized coaching, and monthly cohort learning opportunities**."*

*"[Our district] offers various **pathways for leadership and career progression** … including lead teacher, instructional support roles, and school-based administrative roles. Through funding from Maryland Leads, [our district] has partnered with [a local university] to grow and support staff members in their **leadership development to earn a certificate for administrative licensure**. … We are considering ways to include the **NBCT process as a capstone experience** for educators in these programs so that they have both administration certification and NBCT."*

Financial Incentives Examples

Most Promising *(n=24 districts)*

*"[Our district] is accommodating **salary enhancement for NBCTs** as they transition from teacher to assistant principal. … The … senior leadership team believes attaining NBCT certification prior to becoming an assistant principal will be advantageous because of the **acceleration on the salary scale** this certification provides."*

*"We … continue to offer a **tuition reimbursement incentive** of $4,200. This incentive is utilized by many aspiring and/or current leaders to reach new professional goals."*

*"The FY24 starting teacher salary is $58,477, leaving [our district] $1,523 away from the FY27 mandated starting salary of $60,000. … [Our district] is confident that the **$60,000 starting salary** will be met by July 1, 2026."*

*"With the **Blueprint-funded salary enhancements for NBCTs** … we have seen a few current non-teaching staff seek out and return to classroom positions, putting more experienced teachers back in classrooms."*

Most examples of other strategies—including **professional development, mentoring, induction, data collection and review, and school culture and design changes**—fell into the **Potentially Promising** category. Many examples of these strategies **aligned with literature** but **did not include sufficient detail** about whether and how they related to improving teachers' and leaders' working conditions or self-efficacy. We provide qualitative examples of these strategies on the following slides.

Professional Development Examples

Potentially Promising *(n=17 districts)*

*"[Our district] requires all staff to attend **training on Equity** with the goal of ensuring antiracist and culturally responsive practices become normalized across the district, and that staff have the **skills to work toward equitable outcomes**."*

*"[Our district] has … established and will continue to implement a **robust professional learning plan** to support early childhood teachers and eligible private provider staff in **building instructional capacity** within the field."*

*"The equity and organizational development department is … creating **five MSDE courses aligned to support and strengthen educators in developing their leadership skills**. … The two-credit modules will have the following focus areas: **Adult Learning Theory, Collaboration, Communication, Equity-Driven Leadership, and Systems Thinking**. These courses will be built on the foundation of **research-informed practices**, **data driven techniques**, and will embody the **teacher leadership standards** being adopted by [the district]."*

Professional Development Examples

Least Promising *(n=6 districts)*

*"We provide ongoing … **professional development opportunities** to school leaders. This includes … opportunities for **continued education and skill development**."*

*"[Our district] has implemented various **training opportunities for our employees** who are moving into leadership roles. … Various **professional development work groups** are scheduled throughout the summer with **specific focus on roles and responsibilities** they will be assigned."*

*"In terms of retaining teachers and leaders, the district is reimagining opportunities for … **professional development during the school day**, which has been a challenge due to the shortage of substitute teachers. [Our district] will continue to explore alternative professional development solutions … to offer **flexibility for teachers to participate in professional development activities without disrupting instructional time**."*

Mentoring, Coaching, and Other Support Programs Examples

Most Promising *(n=5 districts)*

*"We have an **Office of Mentoring** that supports all new or non-tenured teachers with **full time mentors dedicated to mentoring and coaching teachers**. … The mentors work with the new teacher to support them in areas of need such as **lesson planning, classroom management, student behaviors, co-teaching and coaching for improvement**. … They provide **daily support in the classroom, on-the-job training, and professional development events**."*

*"The **administrative intern program** is designed to prepare future leaders by providing **hands-on experience** in school administration. Administrative Interns in the program are … given opportunities to develop their leadership skills under the **mentorship of current school-based administrators**. Interns are involved in … tasks aligned with the responsibilities of school administrators, such as planning, managing, and implementing school policies and engaging with students, staff, and the community."*

Mentoring, Coaching, and Other Support Programs Examples

Potentially Promising *(n=16 districts)*

*"We have established a **year-round New Teacher Mentor position** and an enhanced **new teacher mentoring program** which includes a **2-week induction** at the beginning of the year, Buddy Teachers, and New Teacher Mentors throughout the year."*

*"We offer **mentorship programs** where **aspiring leaders can be paired with experienced administrators** who provide guidance, support, and valuable insights into the responsibilities and challenges of school leadership roles."*

*"[Our district] has been proactive in leadership development by concurrently focusing on assistant principal development. A dedicated supervisor provides **individualized coaching to all district assistant principals**. This **non-evaluative, on the job support** offers real time opportunity to hone leadership skills and provides the space for assistant principals to develop their self-reflection and critical thinking skills."*

Induction, Onboarding, and Orientation Examples

Most Promising *(n=4 districts)*

*"First year educators … receive systemwide professional development through a **4-day New Hire Orientation that supports a community of learners, introduction to content curriculum, evidence-informed instructional strategies, and resources available to them**. … The Instructional Coaches and other Teacher Specialists provide **job-embedded support** to nontenured and other identified teachers through demonstration lessons, co-teaching, co-planning, data collection, reflective conversations, visits to master teachers' classrooms, and other identified best practices. … Survey data from new hire orientation, mid-year, and end-of-year show an overwhelming percentage of staff who indicate the **Induction experiences are helpful** and identify the **Instructional Coach as the most significant support to their effectiveness and retention**."*

*"As part of [our] **New Teacher Induction program** … all teachers new to [the district] participate in sessions delivered by our New Teacher Induction and school leadership teams based on **Core Teaching Capabilities of knowing your students and self, knowing your standards, knowing your resources, and knowing your community**. New teachers participate in professional learning in early August and throughout the school year in … areas [including] learning your school and content department [and] creating culturally responsive and safe environments for learning."*

Induction, Onboarding, and Orientation Examples

Potentially Promising *(n=16 districts)*

*"Over the next 3-4 years, [we] will work with IHE partners to **develop and implement an induction program** based on MSDE's guidelines to include provisions regarding mentoring, professional learning, eligibility criteria and standards utilized in hard-to-staff schools. Additionally, the program will include Teacher Induction, Retention and Advancement Pilot Program framework guidelines."*

*"We have provided all new teachers an **intensive onboarding program** called BEST class while also providing a high quality mentor who provides support throughout the school year."*

*"The International Trained Teacher Support Network (ITTSN) and the Office of Equity, Diversity and Belonging are in preliminary discussions to collaborate in a **sustainable onboarding process** in which new hires can feel a sense of community as well as receive the support needed in order to acclimate to the district, thereby increasing retention efforts."*

Data Collection and Review Examples

Most Promising *(n=4 districts)*

"[Our district] is currently exploring opportunities to engage professional services to ***evaluate employee engagement to ensure a climate and culture conducive to supporting retention****. …* ***Focus groups*** *were formed in the spring of 2024 to* ***determine the conditions necessary for teachers to stay in an assigned school****. … Social/emotional and behavioral supports for students, embedded coaching and planning support for teachers, as well as support from school administration were all factors for teacher retention."*

"[The ***employee exit survey****] was re-implemented to* ***collect feedback from departing school system employees****. This confidential survey provides a platform for employees to share insights regarding their experience. … Specifically-designed questions solicit feedback on various aspects including the* ***employee's role, interactions with immediate supervisor and department, workload, reason for departure, and their overall recommendations of [our district]*** *as an employer or for students. A recent analysis of survey results revealed that … the* ***primary reason for departure was working conditions****, with family circumstances ranking as the second most influential factor."*

Data Collection and Review Examples

Potentially Promising *(n=7 districts)*

*"Supervisors have **proactive 'stay' conversations** and **reactive exit interviews**. … [Our district] has **conducted and analyzed data from staff satisfaction and exit surveys** and is developing intervention plans to address feedback. … The next steps will include increasing opportunities for 'stay' conversations, support for when staff are thinking about leaving, and live exit interviews."*

*"We will **create KPIs** to monitor and adjust recruitment, selection, and hiring of all staff. We will also **collect qualitative data** from prospective applicants, applicants, and those exiting the system."*

*"We **closely monitor retention rates** of diverse leaders within our school system. This involves **tracking the tenure and turnover rates** of school leaders from underrepresented groups, as well as conducting **exit interviews and surveys** to gather feedback on their experiences."*

Data Collection and Review Examples

Least Promising *(n=1 district)*

*"The Leader Tracking System (LTS) supports the district in **tracking the leadership development** of its school leaders. The LTS tracks individual professional growth, informs best-fit hiring decisions, and identifies patterns and trends. It collects data on school leaders and candidates that are in the principal pipeline. Data collected includes, but is not limited to: **demographics, education, years of experience, professional learning, certifications, evaluation data, schools served and their demographics**. However, with the implementation of the Career Ladder, the LTS has been put on hold so [our district] can reconfigure the district's needs in tracking its leaders under a new system."*

School Culture and Design Changes Examples

Most Promising *(n=3 districts)*

*"[Our district] is working to strategically **cultivate an environment where diversity thrives** and where every member of the … workforce feels valued for their strengths and unique characteristics, respected, included, and empowered to fully engage in service to students, families, staff, and communities. One strategy is to **develop a plan to intentionally welcome and onboard diverse staff**, as well as **develop opportunities for students, staff, and faculty from diverse groups to connect with others** who share their backgrounds and affiliations. … [We] will also develop **professional development opportunities in inclusive environments, diversity, unconscious bias, and culturally responsive practices**."*

*"[Our district] identified two schools for SY2024-25 to **pilot innovative designs**. … A team … had been meeting regularly to start planning and envisioning ways [we] can innovate practices in these schools to maximize opportunities provided through the Blueprint and expand learning to other schools. … Beginning in SY2024-25, additional positions will be added to these schools to help with **additional coaching and planning opportunities for staff** and **additional support for students**. … [The district] hopes that by implementing suggestions made by teachers and current staff, these schools will not only see open positions filled, but students will be paired with **highly-qualified teachers with supports necessary to build capacity**."*

School Culture and Design Changes Examples

Potentially Promising *(n=3 districts)*

*"**Change the way schools are organized and managed** to increase the amount of time available for teachers to tutor students who need intensive help and work together in teams."*

*"Revisions to this strategic theme will include developing key performance indicators and related growth strategies in areas such as … **creating a culture of inclusion** that promotes workforce diversity."*

*"Other considerations regarding the Career Ladder involve **organizing school schedules to meet the 60/40 requirement** to allow for embedded professional development opportunities. [Our district] has selected one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school to **pilot different organizational structures** and programs to facilitate this process. Data collected from the pilot will be analyzed to determine the next steps."*

Few Strategies were Race-Conscious

Few examples of strategies not related to the career ladder attended to the **racialized school conditions** teachers and leaders of color face. The table below shows the **number of examples of strategies that are "race-conscious"** (the term we use to describe strategies attentive to racialized school conditions), organized by strategy and category of promise.

Number of Districts Engaging in "Race-Conscious" Retention Strategies for Teachers and/or Leaders

	Most Promising	Potentially Promising	Least Promising	*Total*
Professional Development	0	10	0	*10*
Mentoring, Coaching, and Other Support Programs	1	7	0	*8*
Induction, Onboarding, and Orientation	0	2	0	*2*
Data Collection and Review	0	2	0	*2*
School Culture and Design Changes	1	2	0	*3*

The **degree to which "race-conscious" strategies attended to racialized school conditions**—and, thus, had the potential to address them—**varied substantially**. For example, professional development opportunities that offered training around "equity" and "culturally responsive practices" **appear to be race-conscious**—and are categorized as such—but **may not actually address racism, macroaggressions, and other forms of discrimination** teachers and leaders of color may face. The following slide provides examples of various race-conscious strategies.

Qualitative Examples of Race-Conscious Strategies

*"The **Teacher Leader Academy** was introduced … targeting K-12 teachers interested in assuming leadership roles within their schools. This academy covered various topics, including … **courageous conversations, equity, and bias**."*

*"Internally, [our district] will examine our current teacher leadership workforce … to create **affinity groups** designed to identify the current **barriers preventing our teacher leaders of color from pursuing leadership roles**."*

*"[Our district] provides new administrators with … **intensive onboarding** focused on systems and operations. This orientation also includes our **Introduction to Racial Equity Seminar as a foundation to Equity Centered Leadership development**."*

*"[We] saw an opportunity in hosting a **Minority Administrator Mentorship Program** with its Coordinator of Equity and Multicultural Education. … **Minority school-based administrators** who are under five years in their current position were **targeted to have extra support**."*

Future Directions for the AIB

- Commission studies of whether ***Most Promising*** and ***Potentially Promising Strategies*** are **actually promising** and facilitating progress toward retention goals
    - Particularly important for retention of teachers and leaders of color, given evidence that the impact of strategies may vary by race (e.g., Blazar et al., 2024 on financial incentives)
- Seek to better **understand and support districts' challenges with implementing specific strategies**—including strategies related to the career ladder, which have high potential to improve retention rates

Future Directions for the AIB

- Consider requiring **comprehensive plans**, similar to the comprehensive literacy plans, detailing interrelated strategies to **recruit *and* retain diverse workforces**
- Through comprehensive plans or other avenues, require districts to provide detailed information about:
  - ***How their retention strategies aim to address working conditions and/or self-efficacy***
  - ***How their retention strategies aim to address racialized school conditions for teachers and leaders of color***
- Additionally, require districts to collect and share data about interim progress toward long-term retention goals, including:
  - ***How successful strategies have been at improving retention*** (for **ongoing** strategies)
  - ***How they will measure progress moving forward*** (for **new** and **ongoing** strategies)