

Rooted in Support: Catch Up & Read's Ability to Grow the Educator Pipeline

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Introduction

- Teacher **retention** is the ability to keep teachers in the classroom and lessen turnover (Lasagna, 2009; Rodgers & Skelton, 2014). It is important to study because teacher turnover is **costly** (Rodgers & Skelton, 2014) and **undermines student achievement** (Learning Policy Institute, 2024).
- The most frequent factor that impacts retention is a **supportive environment** (Koerber et al., 2023). When the work environment is collegial and supportive and teachers can improve their teaching abilities, they remain in the profession (Billingsley, 2004; Reitman & Dunnick Karge, 2019).
- Our study builds upon existing literature by exploring how an after-school reading program's environment and PD opportunities impact DISD teachers' ability to support struggling readers and their dedication to the program.
- Increased retention of teachers in CAR may increase their **commitment** to the teaching profession, thus remaining in DISD and building the educator pipeline.

Research Question

How do CAR's environment and social supports contribute to its ability to build the **educator pipeline**?

Methodology

- Qualitative research design and a **descriptive case study** approach to explore teachers' perceptions of CAR's environment and supports
- SAMPLE:** 40 CAR teachers across 16 sites in DISD (6 Accelerator Sites and 10 Classic Sites)
- DATA SOURCES:** Open-ended responses on the CAR Teacher Survey Results 2023-24 and CAR Teacher Demographics

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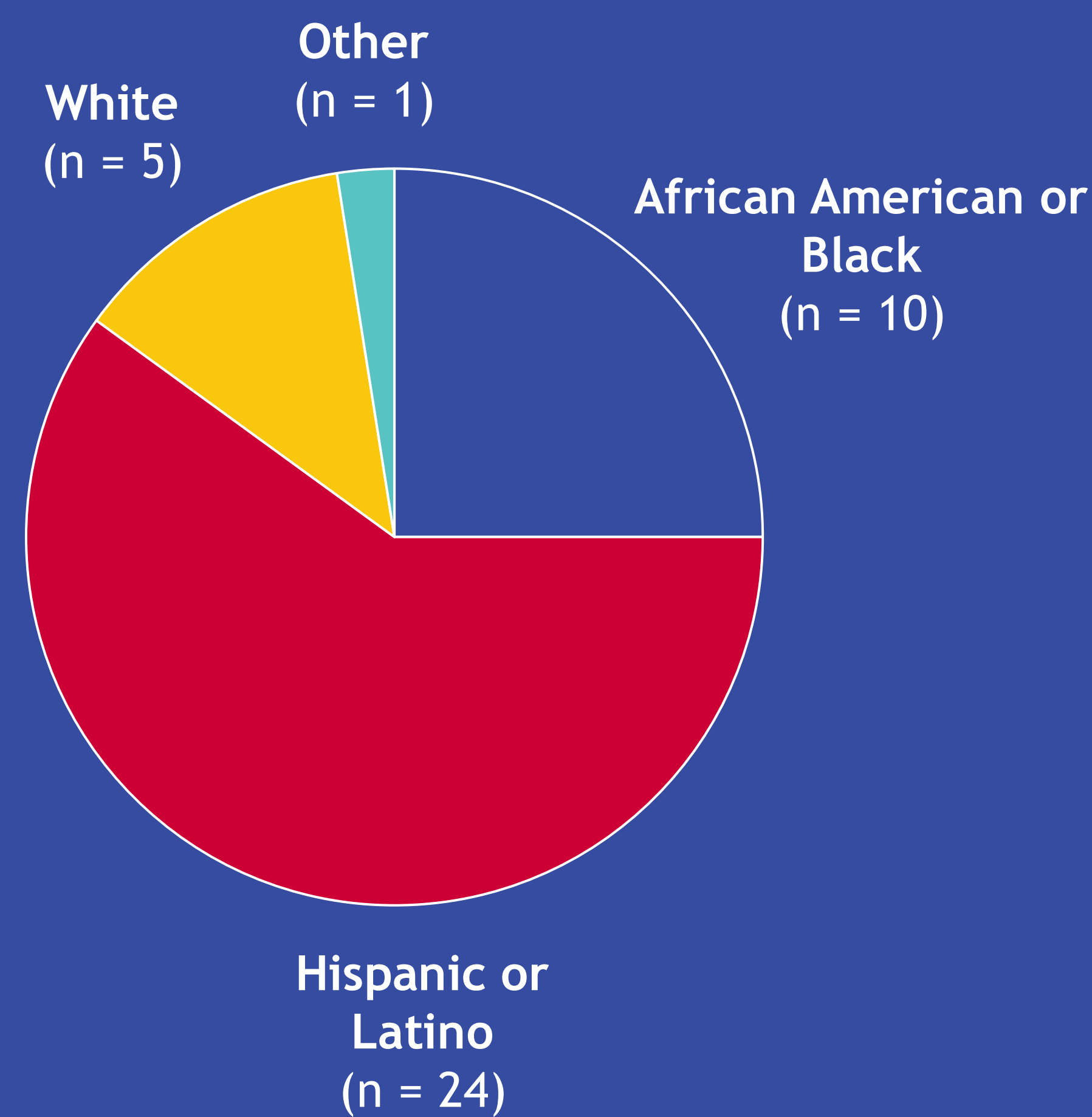
Analysis

- Used an **inductive coding** process to allow themes and patterns to emerge organically from the data, rather than imposing predetermined codes (Saldaña, 2021)
- 2 cycles of **open coding** to capture a wide range of teachers' experiences (Saldaña, 2021)
- Developed a coding scheme, engaged in an inter-coder agreement process, and refined the codebook
- Used **thematic analysis** to identify recurring topics and ideas; categorized codes into broader categories; grouped categories into themes that reflect meaningful data patterns related to our research question

Codebook		
Code	Definition	Example
Team	Describes instances where CAR team members consistently demonstrated care and encouragement for teachers where teachers felt valued and prepared	"I truly enjoyed being a part of this program. I felt valued as a teacher." "All of the CAR Staff has been so kind and helpful to me for several years." "keeps teachers feeling supported."
Support	Describes instances where CAR teachers felt supported by program leads	"Thank you for spoiling us and supporting us all year!"
Atmosphere	Refers to comments about a positive and collaborative environment	"the atmosphere is different and I really like it." "positive learning environment, prizes days rock!"
Professional growth	Describes teachers' perceptions of their own success in acquiring new skills and knowledge by participating in the CAR program, which has positively impacted their current role	"I could see my hard work paying off right away." "I think it has made me a better teacher overall." "I did move from teacher to Lead teacher."

"I do love how teachers are treated, and how they are giving us everything ready to star[t] to work."

Participant Demographics



"I truly enjoyed being a part of this program. I felt valued as a teacher, and I could see my hard work paying off right away."

"Thank you for taking in an aspiring teacher and believing in me!"

"As a first-year teacher...I'm grateful to be a part of such an amazing team who also helped me grow as a teacher."

Findings & Discussion

FINDING 1:

CULTURE CLUB: The CAR staff create an uplifting atmosphere and encourage teamwork.

Teachers described the atmosphere as collaborative and affirming. The CAR team played a pivotal role in promoting teachers' sense of value and readiness through sustained encouragement and support. Teachers' expressions of gratitude affirmed both appreciation for staff and recognition of the program's effectiveness. Collectively, these factors reinforced a **positive work culture**, aligning with existing studies that link supportive professional communities and collegiality to stronger teacher retention (Billingsley, 2004; Koerber et al., 2023).

FINDING 2:

DEVELOPMENT DEN: CAR's commitment to professional development may contribute to the retention of teachers.

Teachers described how the program provided opportunities to **develop skills and knowledge** essential for supporting struggling readers, which in turn enhanced their classroom practice and self-confidence. The steady encouragement and support from CAR staff reinforced their professional efficacy, leading many teachers not only to stay engaged with the program but also to sustain their dedication to the teaching profession. This finding is consistent with the literature, which demonstrates that when teachers receive structured support and opportunities for professional growth, they build the self-confidence vital for remaining in the teaching profession (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Reitman & Dunnick Karge, 2019; Rodgers & Skelton, 2014).

Limitations

- Small sample
- Limited **depth and detail** since teachers provided brief answers to only one open-ended question, restricting our ability to probe or clarify responses

Recommendations

- CAR should collect **more qualitative data** from CAR teachers through interviews or focus groups to better understand their experiences