STUDY 14

What do Cambridge after-school educators say about their career aspirations, job satisfaction and how Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) can better support them?

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INTRODUCTION

We are a group of educators who chose to participate in CPAR because we believe in grassroots movements as a powerful tool for change. As participants in our own study, we have the opportunity to see inequities from within, and have the responsibility to make our voices heard. Our diverse research group is composed or two after-school educators of color, a White math coach, and a Latinx classroom teacher.

Our interest in looking at inequities in Cambridge through the lens of the experiences of after-school educators of color comes from our respect and admiration for the job these educators perform each day with CPS students, sometimes for years with the same group of students. It is fair to say that they know our students in ways that CPS staff do not. Through our personal experiences working in CPS schools, we have noticed that after-school staff seem to be more racially diverse than the CPS staff. We wondered if they were interested in positions in CPS and what supports they might need to meet certification requirements. Like other Bridges to Equity research groups, our goal was to ask questions, thoughtfully consider the answers, and elevate the responses to our district in order to offer insights into how to address inequities that currently exist.

STUDY DESIGN AND RECRUITMENT

In refining our thinking about the purpose of our research, we came up with the following research questions:

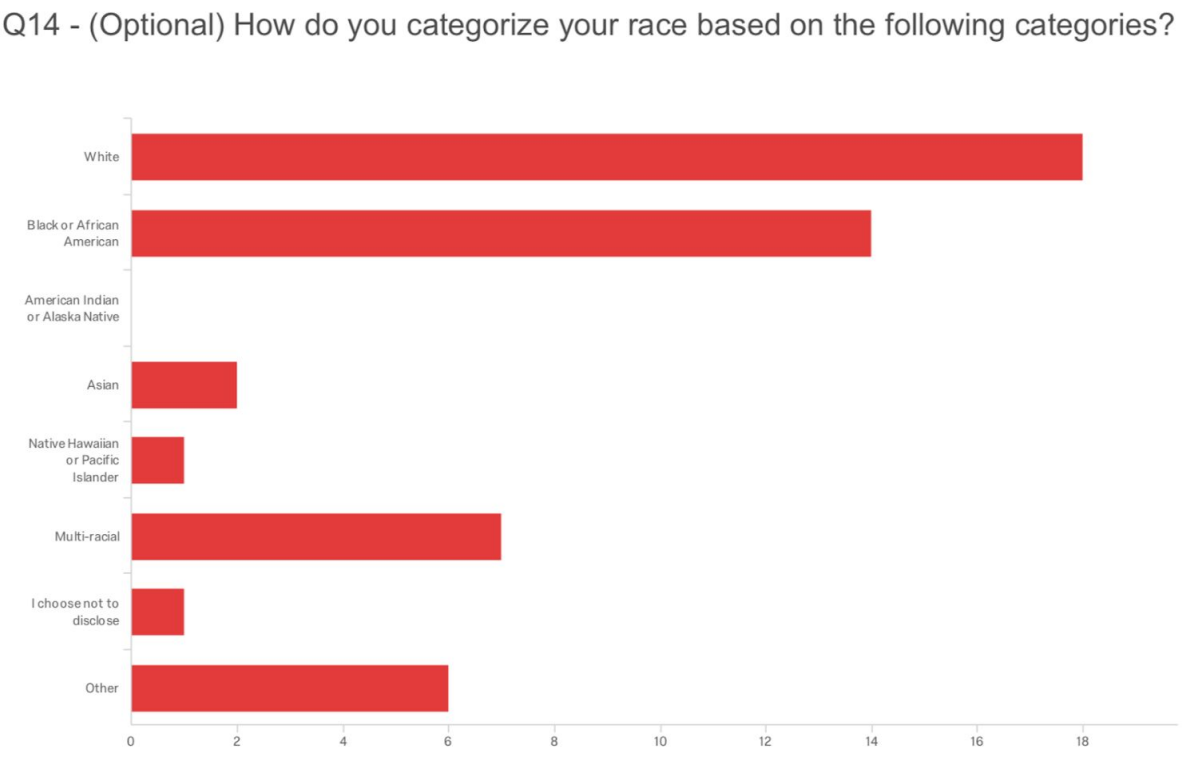
- How do extended day after-school educators talk about their job experiences and job satisfaction?
- How, if at all, do these educators talk about their career aspirations?
- How do they suggest they might be better supported by the district in their career aspirations?

Our group designed a survey comprising several questions about job satisfaction and career aspirations, to be sent online to all after-school educators in Cambridge, regardless of which organization they belong to (Department of Health and Human Services or non-profit organizations). Optional questions related to participant's race and ethnicity were added because we wanted to understand if the responses about job satisfaction and career aspirations were significantly different for respondents who identified as being from an underrepresented group.

In addition to sending out our online survey, we also used a more personal approach to recruiting study participants by visiting after-school programs to distribute paper surveys. Finally, we had a focus group in which study participants had the opportunity to express their opinions and provide anecdotal data about their job experiences and satisfaction.

WHO PARTICIPATED IN OUR SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP?

Forty-seven[1] after-school educators who currently work with CPS students answered our survey about their job satisfaction and career aspirations. These educators have been out-of-school time educators for an average of about 4 years, and were fairly evenly split between Department of Health and Human Services and non-profit afterschool programs.[2] The ratio of female to male survey respondents was 3:2, and two of our respondents identified as gender non-conforming.[3] Fifty-seven percent of respondents identified as Asian, Black or African American, Haitian American and/or Hispanic or Latino[4] (please see charts below for more detailed information on the racial/ethnic demographics of our survey participants).

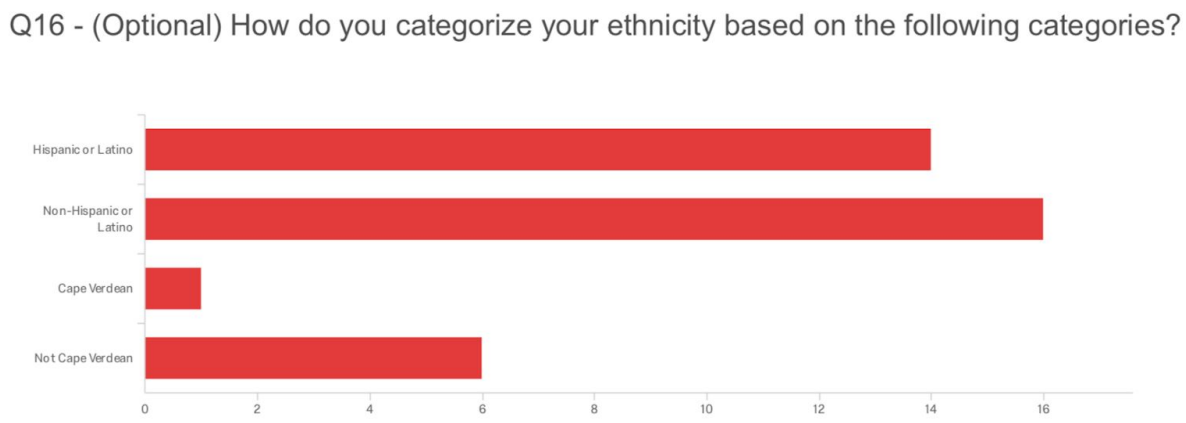


[1] Many statistics are cited as out of 49 because 2 respondents did not answer any questions. For this reason we consider the 47 who answered several/most questions as our respondents but Qualtrics uses 49 as the number of respondents.

[2] Q20 - What type of after-school or extended day program do you work for? Of 48 responses to this question, 21 (43.75%) work for the Department of Health and Human services Resources after-school programs and 24 (50%) work for Non-profits and 3 (6.25%) work for "other."

[3] Q13 - (Optional) What is your gender identity? (16-male, 26-female, 2- gender non-conforming, with 5 respondents not answering)

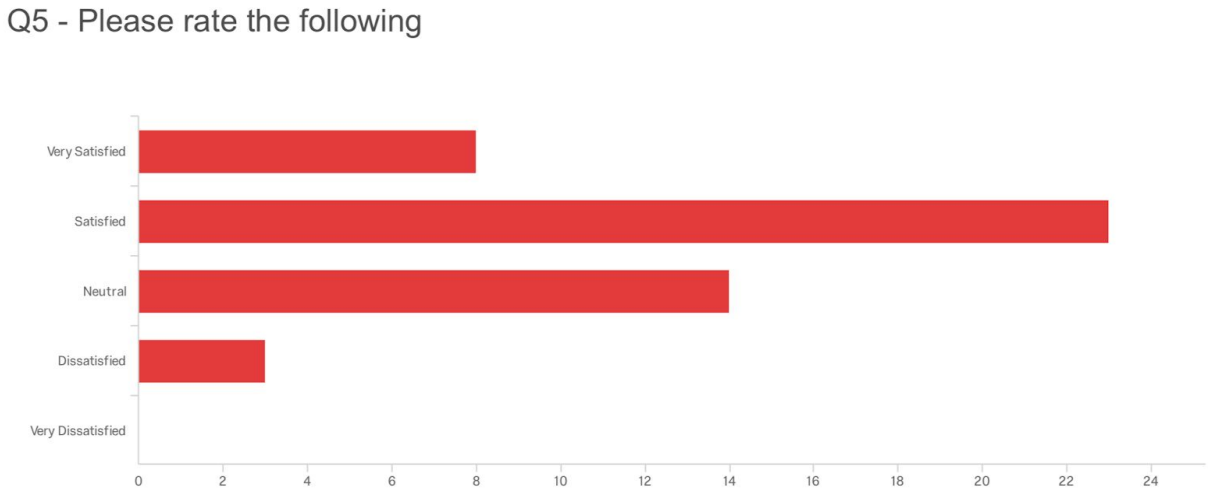
[4] By combining optional responses to Q14 on race and Q16 on ethnicity there were 27 of the 47 (57.4%) respondents that identified as Asian, Black or African American, Haitian American and/or Hispanic or Latino.



Three after-school educators of diverse linguistic backgrounds, ethnic identities, and professional experiences participated in a focus group on 4/17/19 to discuss some survey questions in more depth.

WHAT DID STUDY PARTICIPANTS SAY ABOUT THEIR JOB SATISFACTION?

More than 60% of the survey participants were satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs[5].



Survey respondents indicated that the four most satisfying aspects of their jobs were: working with young people, curriculum development, relationship with supervisor and relationships with

[5] Q5 What is your satisfaction level with your job? (8-very satisfied, 23-satisfied, 14 - neutral and 3 - dissatisfied). 31 of 48 respondents to this question (or 64.58% of the sample) were very satisfied or satisfied with their job.

colleagues.[6] **Working with children was mentioned by all who responded as a satisfying aspect of their job.**

When asked which aspects of their job were dissatisfying, **half of survey responses were either exclusively about salary or included salary as a job dissatisfaction.[7] Less than 40% felt highly regarded and respected by CPS staff in their school.[8]** Focus group participants echoed these findings of not feeling highly regarded and respected, overall, by CPS staff in their school but did not mention being dissatisfied about their salary.

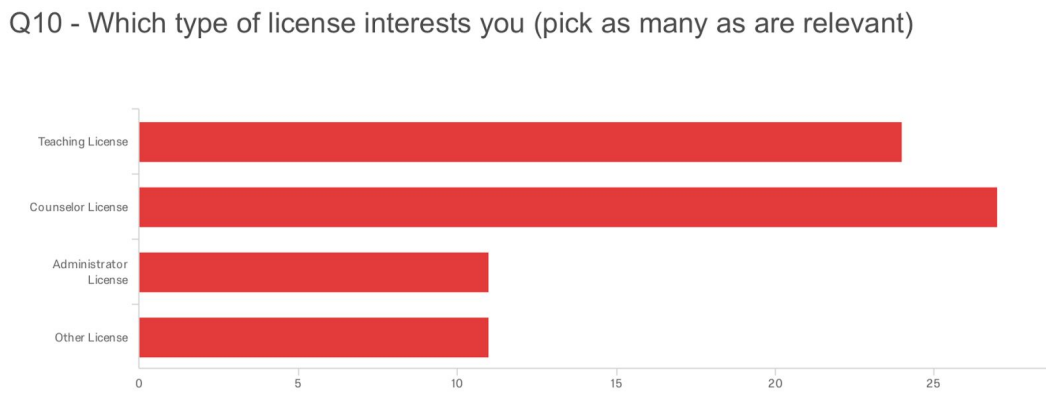
Two focus group participants described a **lack of communication** between classroom and after-school educators that negatively impacts their ability to support students. This lack of communication directly impacted their ability to fully support their students. One of the participants pointed out that she has worked with several CPS students over the course of years, which has given her the opportunity to see their challenges and their progress over time. Her unique perspective about these students would be very useful to classroom teachers having contact with these students for the first time. However, she was never consulted about what she knows about these students other than inside her own program.

ARE THEIR CAREER ASPIRATIONS TO BE TEACHERS, COUNSELORS, OR ADMINISTRATORS?

More than half of respondents expressed interest in either a teaching license, counselors license, or both.[9] Importantly, all but one respondent who identified as Asian, Black or African American, Haitian American AND/OR Hispanic or Latino indicated interest in one or more licenses especially counseling and/or teaching.[10]

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[6] Q3 - What aspects of your job/work are most satisfying? Working with young people (49 of 49), curriculum development (38 of 49), Relationship with supervisor (31 of 49) and colleagues (31 of 49)
[7] Q4 - What aspects of your job/work are not satisfying? Half of the 42 responses (21) either included salary or were exclusively salary.
[8] Q6: How are you perceived and treated by teachers and CPS staff in your school? (17 - highly regarded and respected, 15 - somewhat regarded and respected, 11 - neutral, 4 - somewhat disrespected)
[9] Q10 - Which type of license interests you (pick as many as are relevant) 24 - Teaching, 27 - Counselor, 11 - Administrator, 11 - other)
[10] Q10 - Which type of license interests you (pick as many as are relevant) 16 - Teaching, 17 - Counselor, 9 - Administrator, Other - 3



HOW CAN CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS BETTER SUPPORT AFTER-SCHOOL EDUCATORS IN THEIR CAREER ASPIRATIONS?

The top four ways that after-school educators in our sample wanted support from CPS in their career aspirations (in order of popularity) were: 1) paid internships working with classroom teachers, guidance counselors or administrators that fit the schedule of afterschool staff, 2) financial assistance in the form of a scholarship or reimbursement for completed courses, 3) opportunities to shadow CPS teachers, counselors or administrators in order to better understand the job requirements and 4) support in selecting and applying to degree programs.[11]

Respondents who identified as Asian, Black or African American, Haitian American and/or Hispanic or Latino prioritized support from the district in a similar order and ways[12].

CONCLUSIONS

The district has set the following goal in its Diversity Dashboard: 30% of teachers of color by Fall 2020, while the current status is 24% teachers of color as of October 2018."[13] Our research reveals that after-school staff are a group of experienced educators who enjoy working with our

[11] Q11. Regardless of who pays you, how could the Cambridge Public School District support you in achieving your career aspirations? (Please check all that apply). **29**-Offer paid internships, **20**-Provide scholarship or reimbursement, **17**-Provide opportunities to shadow CPS teachers, counselors or administrators, **16**- Offer support in selecting and applying to degree programs. **13**-Provide district-sponsored programs that lead to certification, **11**-Provide logistical and support services , **1**-other.

[12] Q11. Disaggregated data: Regardless of who pays you, how could the Cambridge Public School District support you in achieving your career aspirations? (Please check all that apply). **20**-Offer paid internships, **14**-Provide scholarship or reimbursement, **13**-Provide opportunities to shadow CPS teachers, counselors or administrators, **11**-Offer support in selecting and applying to degree programs, **7**-Provide district-sponsored programs that lead to certification, **9**-Provide logistical and support services, **1**-other.

[13] https://www.cpsd.us/cms/One.aspx?portalId=3042869&pageId=33736973

students, have a unique perspective regarding the experiences of CPS students in a less structured environment, and are interested in becoming teachers or counselors.

Based on our research we believe that there is a great deal to improve on in relation to communication with and opportunities for after-school educators. CPS staff and after-school educators have limited opportunities to collaborate about student issues and there is no formal district initiative to attract after-school educators to come work for CPS.

We find these compelling reasons to make the following recommendations, which we outline below and describe in detail in the following section:

a) deepen CPS knowledge of after-school teachers' job satisfaction and career aspirations;
b) create multiple, consistent opportunities for collaboration between CPS staff and after-school educators; and
c) offer supports, especially financial, to after-school educators who want to obtain degrees and/or certification(s), making sure to prioritize opportunities for members of underrepresented groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CPS needs to commit to fully collaborating with and supporting after-school teachers, with the aim of improving their job satisfaction and efficacy.

We suggest that CPS conduct further research to clarify and define the numbers and the racial/ethnic backgrounds of after-school staff supporting CPS students, resulting in an additional wheel on the district diversity dashboard.

It could be especially powerful to create a model of potential improvements to which after-school educators could give feedback. For example, a communication to after-school educators explaining what CPS has learned from this study and giving a date that the district can have a proposal for improvements and financial supports will go a long way towards building the trust and mutual respect needed between CPS and its various after-school programs and educators.

B. Create multiple, consistent opportunities for collaboration between CPS staff and after-school educators for both professional development and student support rationale.

- **Create a mentorship network and shadowing opportunities for after-school educators to access information and support in pursuing certification in teaching or counseling.**

  Mentors from CPS could help after-school educators navigate the licensure process, seek relevant professional information, and/or provide support for steps toward licensure

such as standardized test taking or navigating the MA licensing process. There should be differentiated support for adults that are already in the process of obtaining a license or know how to proceed and for adults who for various reasons (e.g having moved here from another country) do not know how to navigate the MA certification/education process.

Shadowing experience for after-school educators would also improve overall communication between CPS staff and after-school educators. Focus group participants said that they would like to see how the morning school works, and how their students behave in a more structured setting. Both sides would benefit from the exchange of ideas and perspectives about student behavior, classroom management, and best practices.

- **Create improved, consistent communication to support our students for their <u>whole day.</u>**

  Improved communication must be based on an increased knowledge of what each educator does, and mutual respect for their roles in a student's day. It must also be consistent across the district, connecting every school and after-school program. Social events, professional development and joint activities with families can create a stronger network for all educators to rely on. Together we can form a stronger system of support for students; when we are apart, we are all working without the breadth of knowledge and perspective that we all need.

  A combination of high touch and high tech will make the biggest impact. CPS should consider a portal-type communication system, similar to healthcare applications, where teachers and after-school educators can communicate easily about individual students. The portal could feature teachers' profiles and after-school rosters, as well as student's information such as CPS and after-school educators' names. CPS staff and after-school staff could easily reach out to each other using their cell phones.

C. Offer supports, especially financial, to after-school educators who want to obtain degrees and/or certification(s), making sure to prioritize opportunities for members of underrepresented groups.

- **Create paid internship positions during the school day (that fits after-school educators' hours) in every school, prioritizing educators from underrepresented groups and providing experiences that may lead to a licensed position.**

  Survey respondents emphasized the financial ways in which CPS could support them in their career aspirations. Like shadowing opportunities, paid internship positions will support stronger, more consistent communications and build networks to support

after-school educators in pursuing degrees and/or certifications. By creating paid positions, after-school educators will also have some some additional financial support from the district.

- **Provide financial assistance, in the form of scholarship or reimbursement, for completed courses for degrees leading toward certifications.**

  Our research survey did not ask about what financial supports, if any, are currently available to after-school educators in pursuing their career aspirations. Regardless, their responses indicate that more financial supports are highly desirable.

Finally, we are grateful to the survey respondents and focus group participants for their honesty--even in answering questions that may have made them feel uncomfortable at times--and trusting us with their responses. They answered the questions put forth by our research team in enough depth to support the previous recommendations to CPS.

Recommendations for actions can be mutually beneficial by helping the district to reach its goal for a more diversified staff while increasing the the job satisfaction and supporting the career aspirations of after-school educators, especially those from underrepresented groups in CPS. In addition, given the depth of knowledge that after-school educators carry about current CPS students, increasing communication has the potential to improve the efficacy of school day programs.