



Chicago's School Leaders 2020-21 Overview

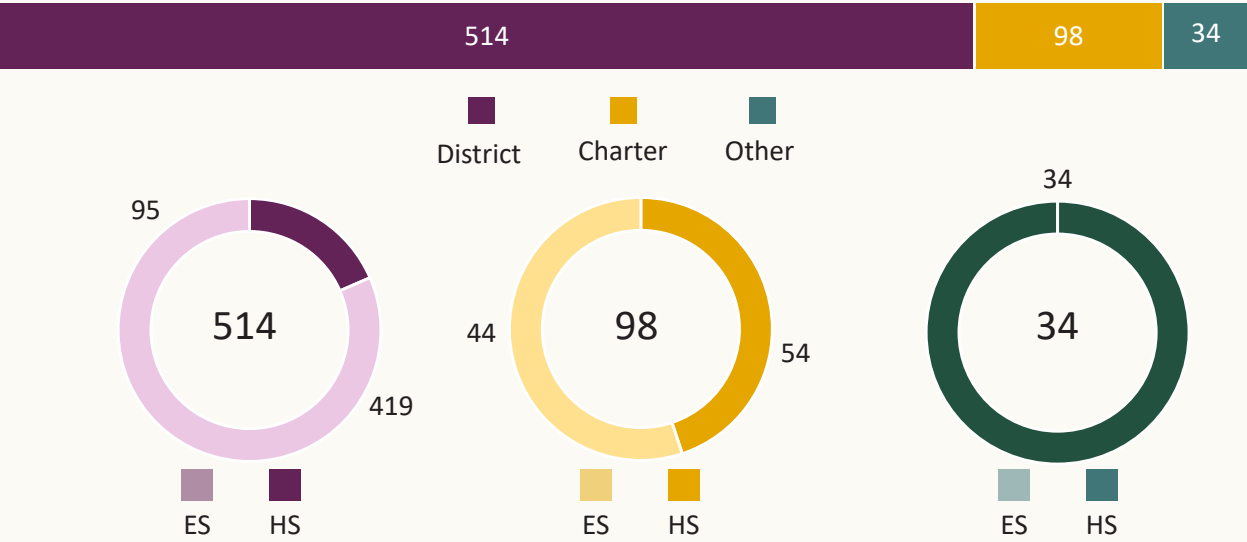
A snapshot of Chicago's public schools and the talented educators who lead them.

MARCH 2021

646 principals lead in Chicago’s public schools.

In every school, principals play an essential role. They attract and retain great teachers, create a welcoming environment for students and families, and enable academic success. National research suggests that a top principal produces between two and seven months of additional student learning in one academic year. Chicago’s principals are particularly important, with unique authorities and responsibilities compared to principals in other districts. Given the challenges students have faced in 2020-21, principals are more important than ever.

These leaders serve over 340,000 students across three types of schools:



514 principals lead in district-operated schools.

District-operated schools operate under the authority of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and are staffed by CPS employees. The district school total includes 31 schools operated by The Academy of Urban School Leadership (AUSL). Principals in district schools are hired by Local School Councils, CPS or AUSL.

98 principals lead in charter or contract schools.

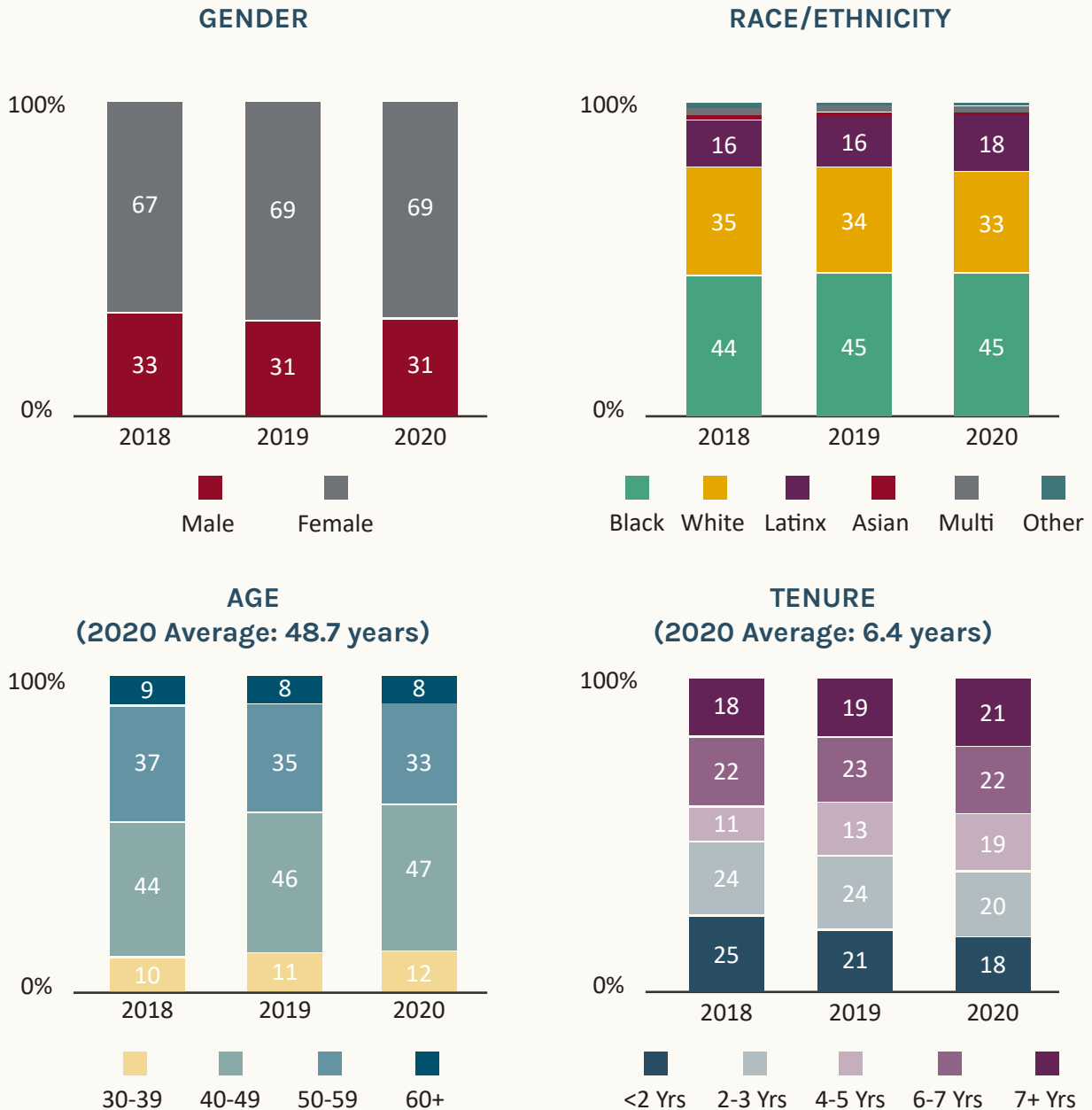
Charter schools are public schools managed by independent operators authorized by CPS. They are staffed by employees of the charter school or management organization. The charter total includes seven contract schools; these are similar to charter schools. Charter principals are hired by charter boards or management organizations.

34 principals lead Options high schools.

Options schools include programs such as Alternative Learning Opportunity Programs (ALOP) and SAFE schools where students receive credits for their studies through alternative educational placements. These schools and programs are charter- or contract-operated.

514 principals lead in district-operated schools.

In recent years, the average principal tenure has increased, from 5.5 years in fall 2018 to 6.4 years in fall 2020, even as the average age of principals has decreased slightly, from 50 in fall 2018 to 49 in fall 2020. These trends are consistent with success in both retention and pipeline work: District principals are able to start their leadership careers earlier and stay in-role longer.

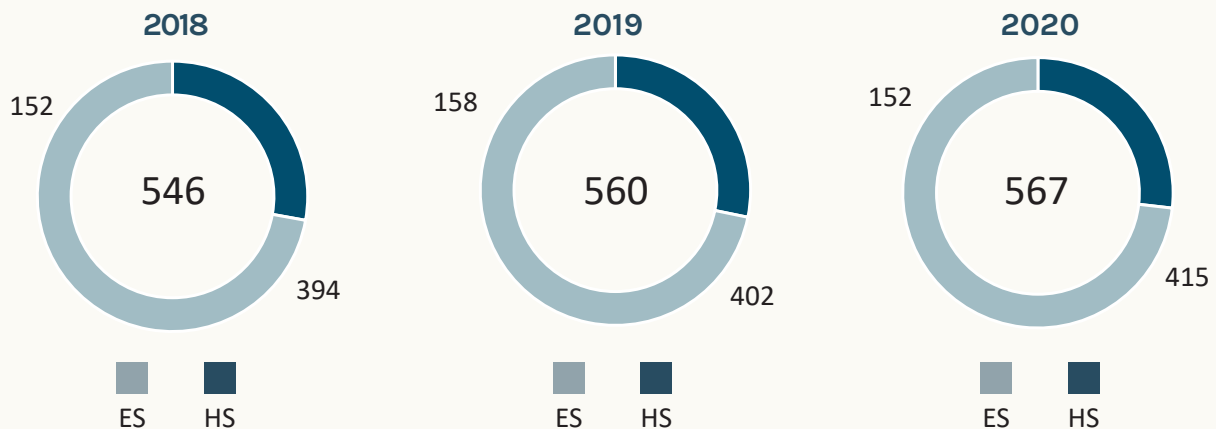


Principal demographic data reflects principals in-role on October 1 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Assistant principals support principals as leaders of their school communities.

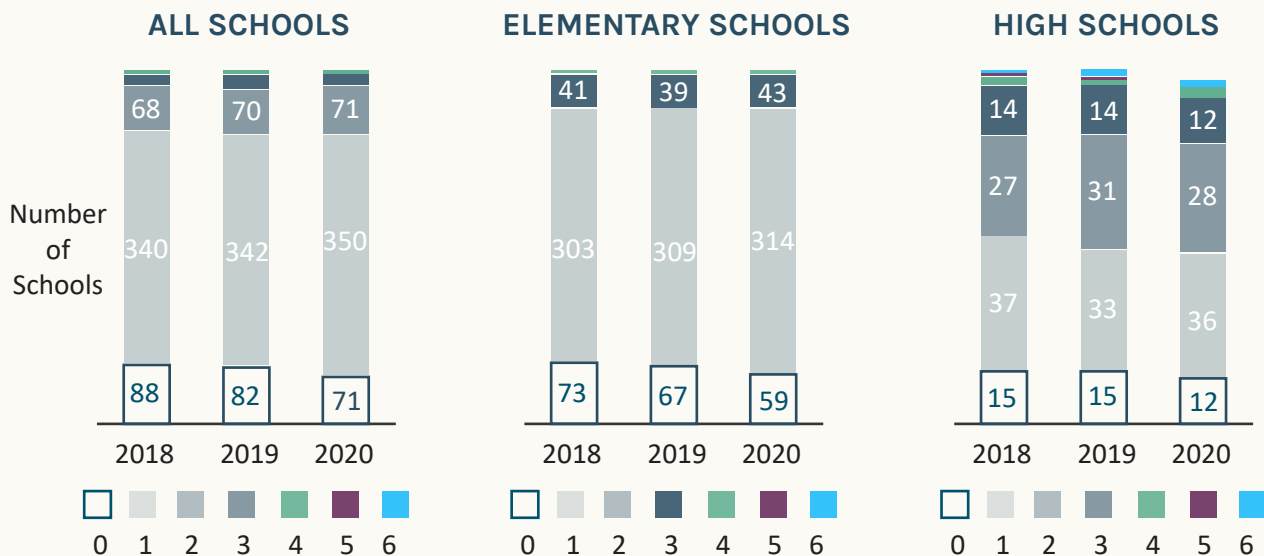
Assistant principals (APs) play a critical role in school leadership and in the principal pipeline in Chicago’s district-operated schools. APs are trusted by principals to take on important tasks such as supporting curriculum implementation, developing teachers and managing instructional leadership teams. APs also serve in charter schools, but data are not easily compiled from public information.

Total number of APs in district-operated schools:



In recent years, as school budgets have expanded, the total number of schools without an AP has decreased and the total number of APs has increased. In 2020, 71 district-operated schools have no AP, a decrease from 88 in 2018.

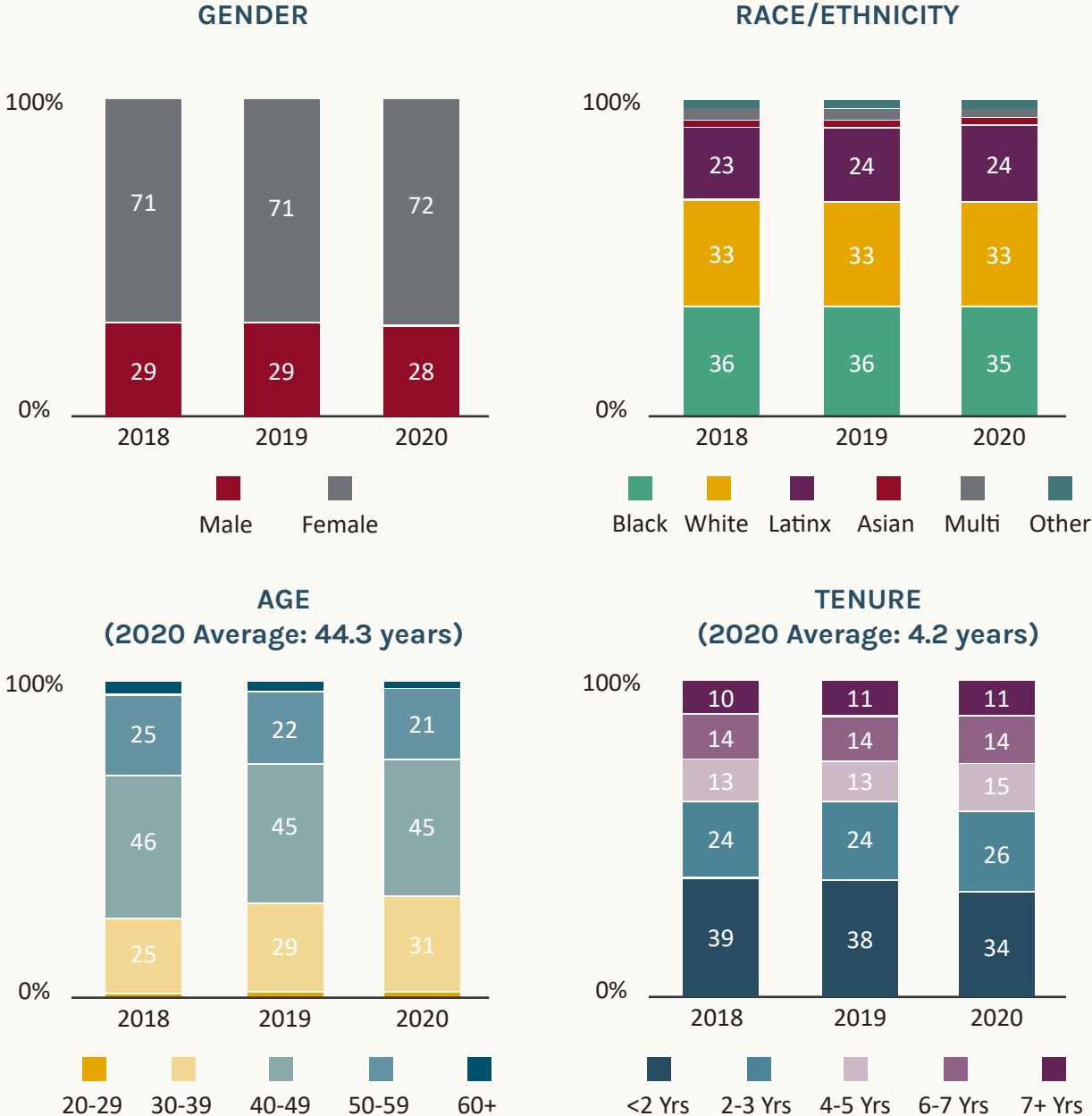
The distribution of APs varies across school types



Most district-operated elementary schools have one AP. High schools are more likely to have 2 or more APs. Thus, while 83% of CPS principals lead in elementary schools, only 73% of APs work in elementary schools.

567 assistant principals lead in district-operated schools.

As with principals, average AP tenure has increased incrementally, even as the average age of APs has decreased slightly. Districtwide, the majority of APs have been in their current role for five or fewer years. The average tenure in 2020 is 4.2 years, up from 3.8 years in 2018 and 4.0 years in 2019.



AP demographic data reflects APs in-role on October 1 2018, 2019 and 2020.


Chicago’s principals impact every aspect of their school communities.

Chicago principals have wide impact and possess considerable autonomy—especially when compared with principals in other cities. Principals directly hire and support the teachers and staff in their schools, and they engage families in a way that accelerates progress. They make decisions about their school budgets and schedules based on their unique community needs. On average, they impact over 500 students each year.

This is true every year, and especially now.

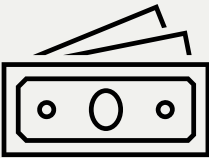
66
Average number of team members

14 to 334
Range of team sizes




\$6.4M
Average size of budget managed

\$2.0M to \$33.7M
Range of budgets managed



527
Average number of students impacted

21 to 4,428
Range of students impacted



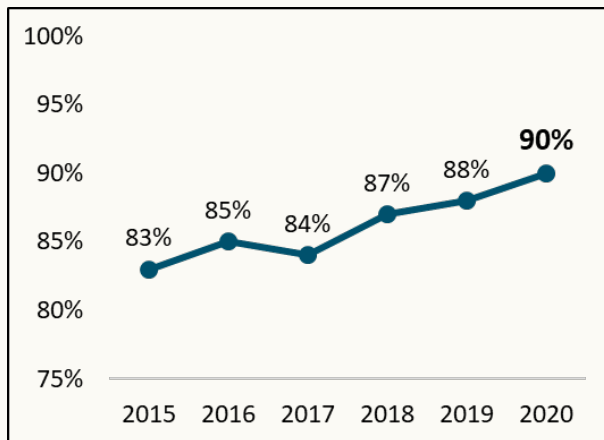
“People look to you for clear and consistent information about what to expect. They expect you to project calm and confidence and ensure that in whatever school structure - remote learning, hybrid instruction or in-person instruction - their children receive the best possible education.”

Tyrese Graham
Principal, Uplift HS

Principal turnover in district-operated schools has continued to decrease.

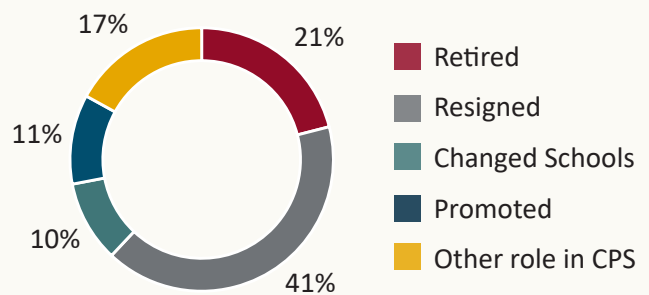
Principal turnover is a concern for schools nationwide; nearly 25% of principals leave their schools each year.¹ There is considerable evidence that principal turnover can generate instability, negative school culture and lower student achievement gains.² In Chicago, principal turnover has been lower than the national average for several years.

Principal retention has increased over the past few years.



There are many reasons principals leave their roles.

Of the 193 principals who left their roles since 2017:



Of the principals promoted internally...

71%

as Network Chiefs or Deputy Chiefs

29%

as other Central or Network leadership

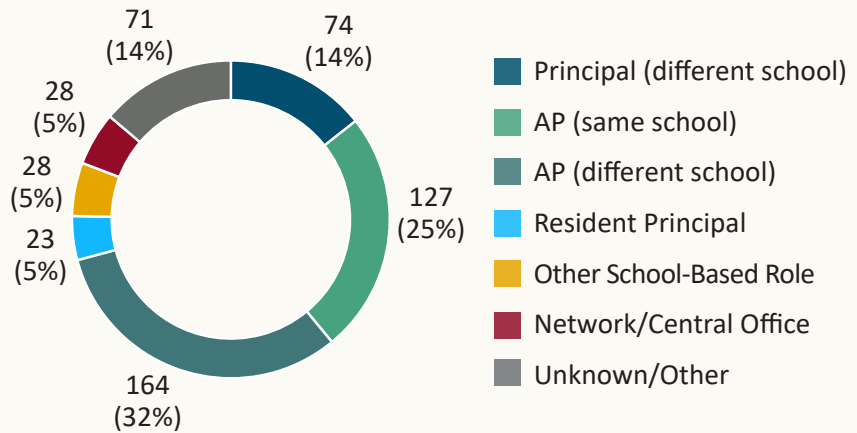
1: Snyder, Thomas D., Cristobal de Brey, and Sally A. Dillow. 2016. Digest of education statistics 2014 (NCES 2017-094). Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics.

2: Mascall, Blair & Leithwood, Kenneth. 2010. Investing in Leadership: The District's Role in Managing Principal Turnover. Leadership and Policy in Schools. 9. 367-383.

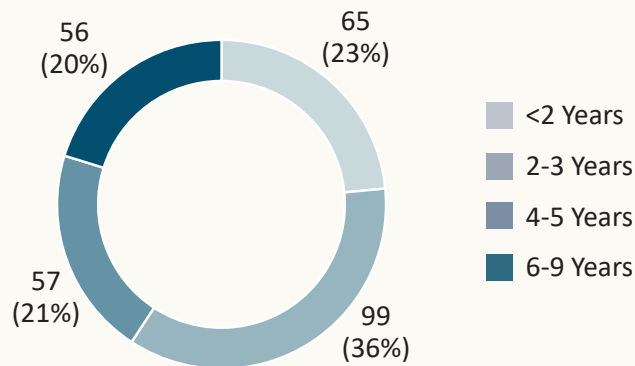
Assistant principals are an important element of the school leadership pipeline.

The AP role is a critical steppingstone for most school leaders. The vast majority of current principals in district-operated schools have AP experience, often immediately prior to their current role. In addition, the AP role is a common first formal leadership role for teachers.

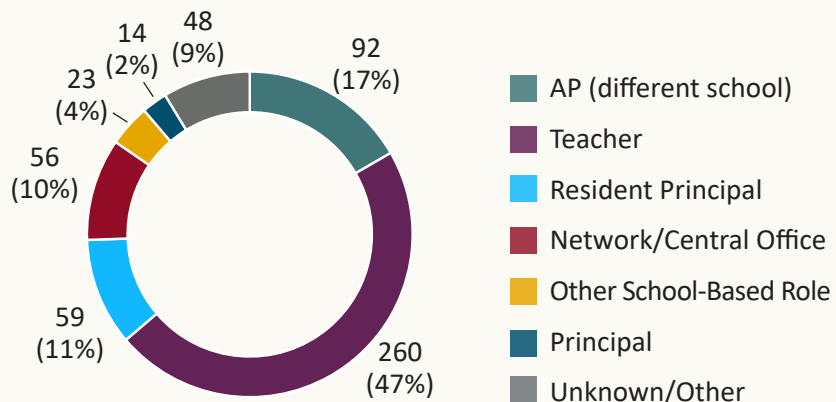
The majority of today's district principals were APs immediately prior to their current role.



The average district principal who worked as an AP has 3.9 years of AP experience.



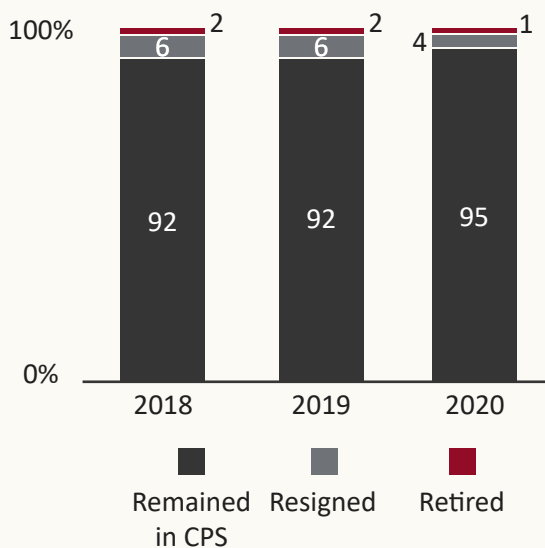
The most common prior role for current district APs is classroom teacher.



The share of APs leaving the district has been stable to decreasing.

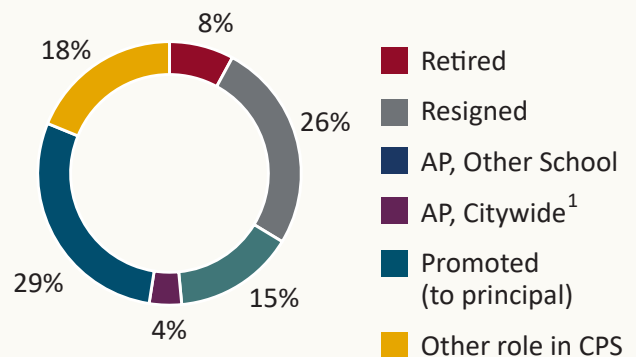
Given the role of APs in the principal pipeline, it is relatively common for APs to be promoted to principal. In a typical year, 40 APs, or around 7% of APs in CPS-operated schools, are promoted to principal. At the same time, principal turnover can lead to AP turnover as well, as new principals may hire a new AP. As such, AP turnover is higher than principal turnover.

Over 90% of APs have remained within CPS in recent years.



APs most commonly leave their role to become a principal.

Of the 346 APs who have left their roles since December 2017:



Of those APs promoted to principals since 2017:

92%
in the same type
of school
(ES or HS)

63%
in the same
Network

44%
in the same
school

1: In a typical year, about 20 APs are temporarily assigned to a Citywide position. This category is for APs that spend more than two months in this position.



About This Report

The Chicago Public Education Fund (The Fund) is a nonprofit organization that improves public schools in Chicago by investing in the talented educators who lead them. We are a catalyst for accelerating student learning and a long-standing leader in identifying and scaling what works. For 20 years, we have worked with our partners in the education, nonprofit, civic, corporate and philanthropic communities to redefine what it means to lead in Chicago's public schools.

Each year, we assemble and share some basic statistics on Chicago's school leaders – principals and assistant principals. Information on demographics, job history, experience, turnover and retention enables all of us to improve. The Fund and our partners regularly use these data to advance our work through pipeline, in-role support and retention efforts.

We thank Matt Lyons and the Chicago Public Schools Talent Office and Dr. Zipporah Hightower and the Chicago Public Schools Department of Principal Quality as well as members of The Chicago Principal Partnership's Pipeline Partners Council and Partnership Advisory Council for their help and comments.

THE CHICAGO
PUBLIC
EDUCATION
FUND

20 YEARS of
REDEFINING
LEADERSHIP

 thefundchicago.org

 @TheFundChicago

 /TheFundChicago