# Minority Representation on School Boards: Choosing a Superintendent

Juan Campanario

March 27, 2022

*"Without question, when the majority of students in public schools are students of color and only 18 percent of our teachers are teachers of color, we have an urgent need to act."*

– Education Secretary John B. King, Jr., 2016

- Significant attention has been brought to promoting a diverse staff to reduce achievement and graduation gaps (Gershensen et al. 2021; Department of Education 2016; Dee 2004)

- Recent literature has emphasized the role of school boards in hiring teachers and increasing funding to schools within their district (Kogan, Lavertu, Peskowitz 2021; Fischer 2021)

- School board members are elected officials that set visions and goals for their public schools and set standards for the performance of schools and superintendents (NSBA)

- School boards directly hire one employee, the superintendent (EdSource, 2007)

- "School district superintendents serve as chief executive officers for schools within their communities." (EdSource, 2007)

- They recruit teachers and principals

- 90% of surveyed superintendents responded that their school board has not overturned a decision they made over personnel termination (NSBA, 2018)

1. Does greater minority representation lead to hiring a non-white or same-ethnicity superintendent?

2. Does greater minority representation on school boards lead to longer superintendent retention?

Table: Superintendents and Their Districts by Race

| | Average Years | Free or Reduced Lunch (%) (04-05) | Free or Reduced Lunch (%) (16-17) | Same-Ethnicity Students (%) (16-17) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Ethnicity/Race* | | | | |
| White | 8.333 | 0.461 | 0.462 | 0.523 |
| | (9.200) | (0.257) | (0.229) | (0.500) |
| Hispanic | 6.718 | 0.638 | 0.605 | 0.829 |
| | (8.486) | (0.247) | (0.212) | (0.377) |
| Black | 6.455 | 0.548 | 0.529 | 0.053 |
| | (7.421) | (0.250) | (0.226) | (0.226) |
| Asian | 7.749 | 0.429 | 0.408 | 0.038 |
| | (9.302) | (0.273) | (0.252) | (0.194) |
| Native | 11.265 | 0.588 | 0.714 | 0.200 |
| | (14.885) | (0.172) | (0.183) | (0.447) |
| Observations | 3062 | 2979 | 3038 | 2819 |

Table does not include current superintendents. Superintendent race was identified using a combination of Census surname and self-reported data.

- Minority representation and outcomes
  - School Boards: Kogan, Lavertu, and Peskowitz 2021; Fischer 2021; Ross, Rouse, and Bratton 2010; Stewart, England, and Meier 1988
  - Cities: Beach, Jones, Twinam, and Walsh 2020; Beach and Jones 2017; Nye, Rainer, Stratmann 2015; Hopkins and McCabe 2012

- Impacts of school officials
  - Gershenson et al. 2021; Francis, de Oliveira, and Dimmitt 2019, Hill and Jones 2018; Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff 2014; Hanushek and Rivkin 2009

- Roster of superintendents for every local educational agency in California since 1997
    - Start and End Date
    - Ethnicity
- School board election results from 1996 to 2014
    - Candidate surname
    - School district in which they ran
    - Vote totals
- 2000 Census
    - List of surnames with more than 100 people
    - Racial and ethnic distributions

- School boards in the state consist of three, five, or seven publicly elected officials

- Most districts have at-large elections and all others have ward

- Most elections occur biennially, with few contested seats each cycle

- Members serve four-year terms and there are no term limits

- I use close elections, between white and minority candidates to estimate the effect of a minority winning a seat on the school board on superintendent outcomes
  - Hiring a minority superintendent
  - Length of time as superintendent

- *Identifying Assumption*: winning a sufficiently close election is essentially random

Table: False Positive and Negative Rates

|  | False Positives | False Negatives |
|---|---|---|
| *Ethnicity/Race* | | |
| White | 36.43% | 4.71% |
|  | (98) | (52) |
| Hispanic | 3.03% | 23.37% |
|  | (36) | (43) |
| Black | 1.27% | 88.57% |
|  | (17) | (31) |
| Asian | 0.67% | 38.46% |
|  | (9) | (10) |
| Native | 0.00% | 100.00% |
|  | (0) | (11) |
| Observations | 1536 | 1536 |

The total number of false positives and negatives are in parentheses.