

IL Affinity Group Network (IL-AGN) EOY Survey Results

Spring 2025

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IL-AGN Theory of Change

If the Network...

- Brings facilitators together to receive training, to conceptualize and design their affinity groups, and to be part of a professional learning community that build skills, shares ideas, and works through problems of practice via **monthly training sessions and semester network convenings**
- Builds facilitators' liberatory mindsets and capacity as leaders via **1-on-1 monthly coaching and small group coaching**

And Affinity Group Facilitators...

- **Recruit, manage, and facilitate monthly affinity groups** for teachers of color in their district or surrounding district
- Leverage affinity groups to **connect, heal, and strategize**
- Work in Advocacy Action Teams to **identify and advocate for strategies to retain teachers of color** according to their districts' unique needs

Then...

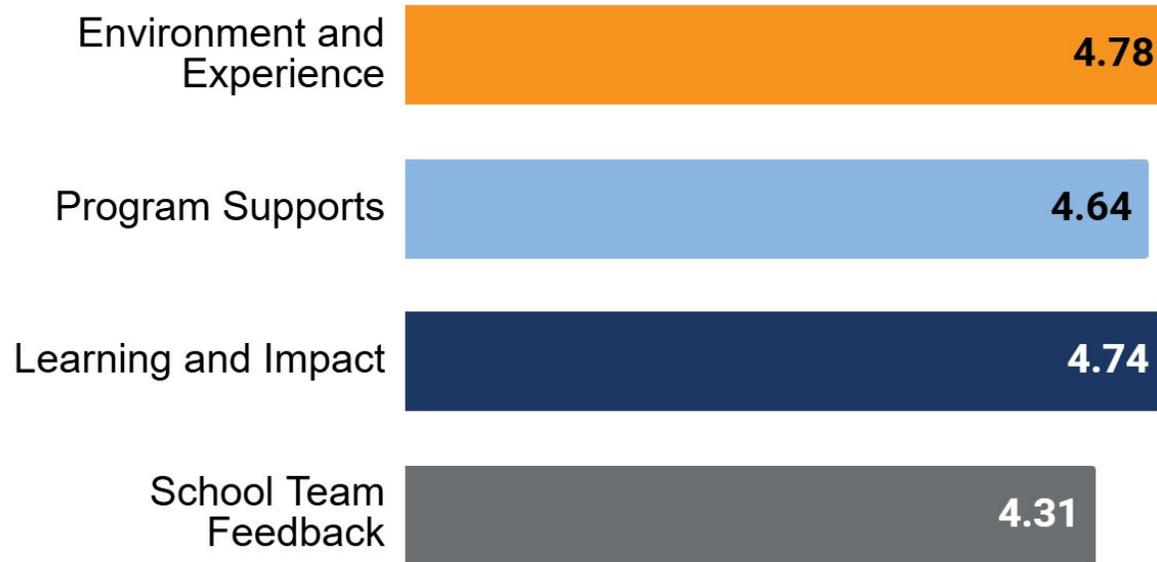
- Teachers of color will experience **increased sense of belonging**
- Teachers trained as facilitators will see **improved capacity for conducting racial equity work**
- Districts will begin to **adopt recommendations** to create more equitable policies and practices that address systemic inequities within the local school system
- **Retention rates will improve** for teachers of color

And Ultimately...

- Students of all backgrounds will see their **identities and cultures represented** by adults in their school
- **Student outcomes will improve**, as research indicates that diverse teacher workforces improve results

Summary of End-of-Year Survey Results

Category Average Scores



1-5 scale where 1 is Strongly Disagree and 5 is Strongly Agree

Highest Scoring Items

- *In this program, I feel that I belong and am part of a community (100%)*
- *Information is presented in a way that is easy to understand (100%)*
- *I am gaining valuable skills or knowledge from this program (96%)*

Lowest Scoring Items

- *My team receives adequate support from our school or district leadership (67%)*
- *I am optimistic that conditions will improve in my school or district (29%)*

Open-ended responses:

Top themes for overall program glows: **Peer Connection & Solidarity, Belonging & Visibility, Personal Growth**

Top themes for overall program grows: **Desire for Program Continuation, Scheduling Challenges, District Support**

Environment and Experience



100% Strongly Agreed/Agreed: The IL Affinity Group Network helps educators feel like they belong and are part of a community.



“The program created a space where my lived experiences as a BIPOC educator were not just acknowledged, but valued and centered in our conversations. I found inspiration and strength in the community of educators, many of whom share similar backgrounds and aspirations for equity in education. The facilitators demonstrated cultural humility and provided space for honest dialogue around race, equity, and systemic change.”



“I felt that IL-AGN exceeded my expectations. I learned so much about facilitation, expanded my ideologies about educational equity, how to unlearn some problematic teaching philosophies and best ways to engage in difficult conversations.”

Program Supports



96% Strongly Agree/Agree: The IL Affinity Group Network program directors are effective at keeping everyone engaged.

92% Strongly Agree/Agree: The support received was satisfactory.



“[IL-AGN] has equipped me with the tools to navigate and influence educational policy with confidence and clarity—something that feels particularly urgent and necessary as a BIPOC leader. I now approach my role with a deeper sense of purpose, knowing that my perspective adds unique value to the advocacy work shaping our schools and systems. The experience reaffirmed my commitment to building inclusive environments where all students—and educators—can thrive.”



“The program facilitators went above and beyond to make sure we were informed and connected. The monthly sessions and individual coaching meetings were always much needed times to get support and guidance.”

Learning & Impact



100% Strongly Agree/Agree: The IL Affinity Group Network program empowers me to share and voice my perspective.



96% Strongly Agree/Agree: I am gaining valuable skills or knowledge from the IL Affinity Group Network program.



92% Strongly Agree/Agree: This program provides opportunities for leadership to which I have not previously had access.



“I have always struggled to identify as a leader (despite voluntarily signing up for opportunities like this). The work I've done with this group and my coach this year really helped me gain confidence that my voice is actually valuable and that I can in fact lead groups like this that require nuance and flexibility.”

Racial Equity Leadership Development



100% Strongly Agree/Agree: I have increased my skill at facilitating a racial affinity group.

96% Strongly Agree/Agree: I have increased my skill at navigating conflicts regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.

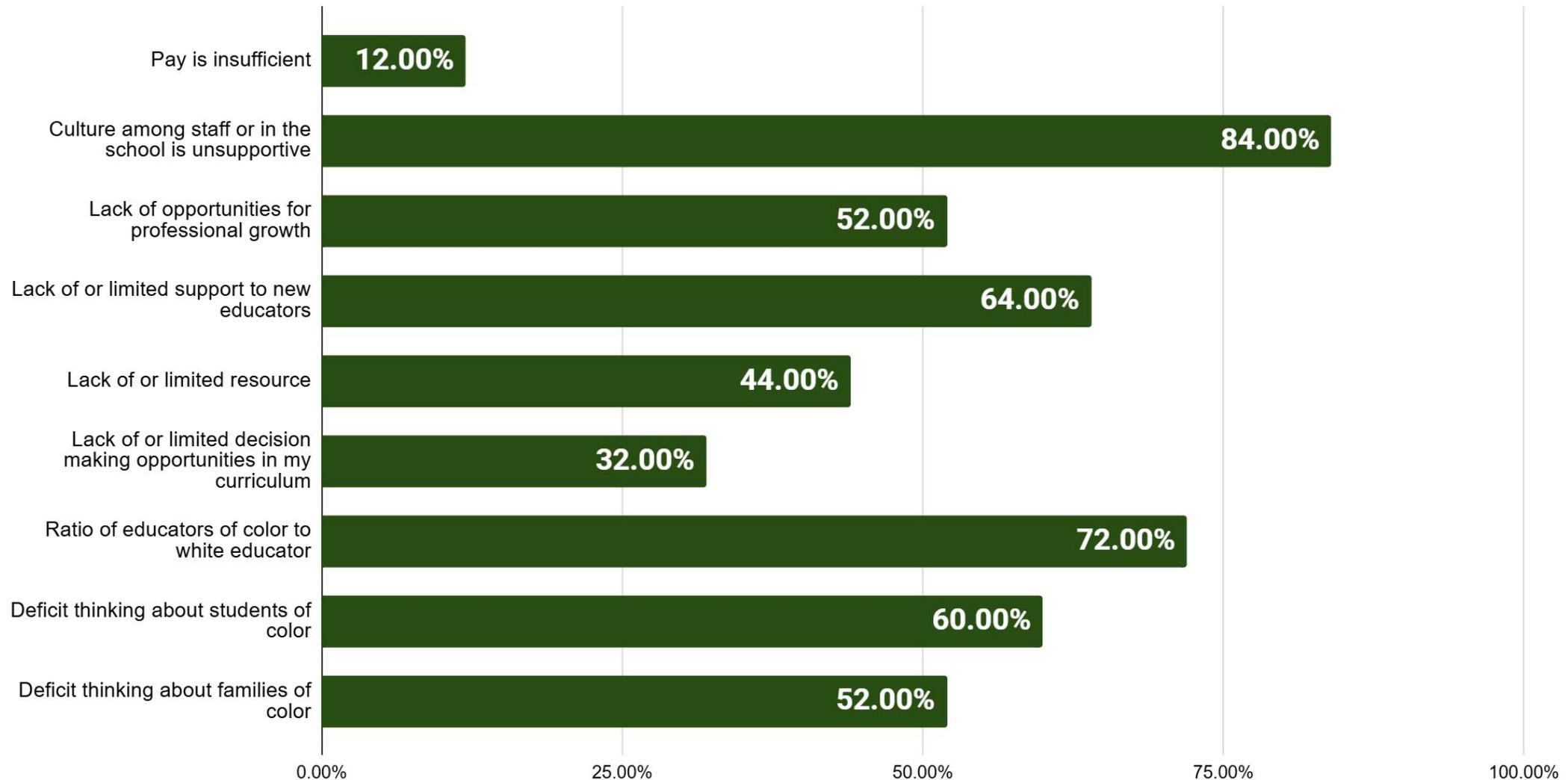
92% Strongly Agree/Agree: I feel prepared to support my affinity group with co-developing ideas to address recruitment and retention of educators of color.



“The program has equipped me with a nuanced understanding of policy levers, organizational dynamics, and the importance of elevating voices that are often marginalized. I now have the tools and confidence to facilitate collaborative conversations within my affinity group that are rooted in shared identity, trust, and strategic action.”

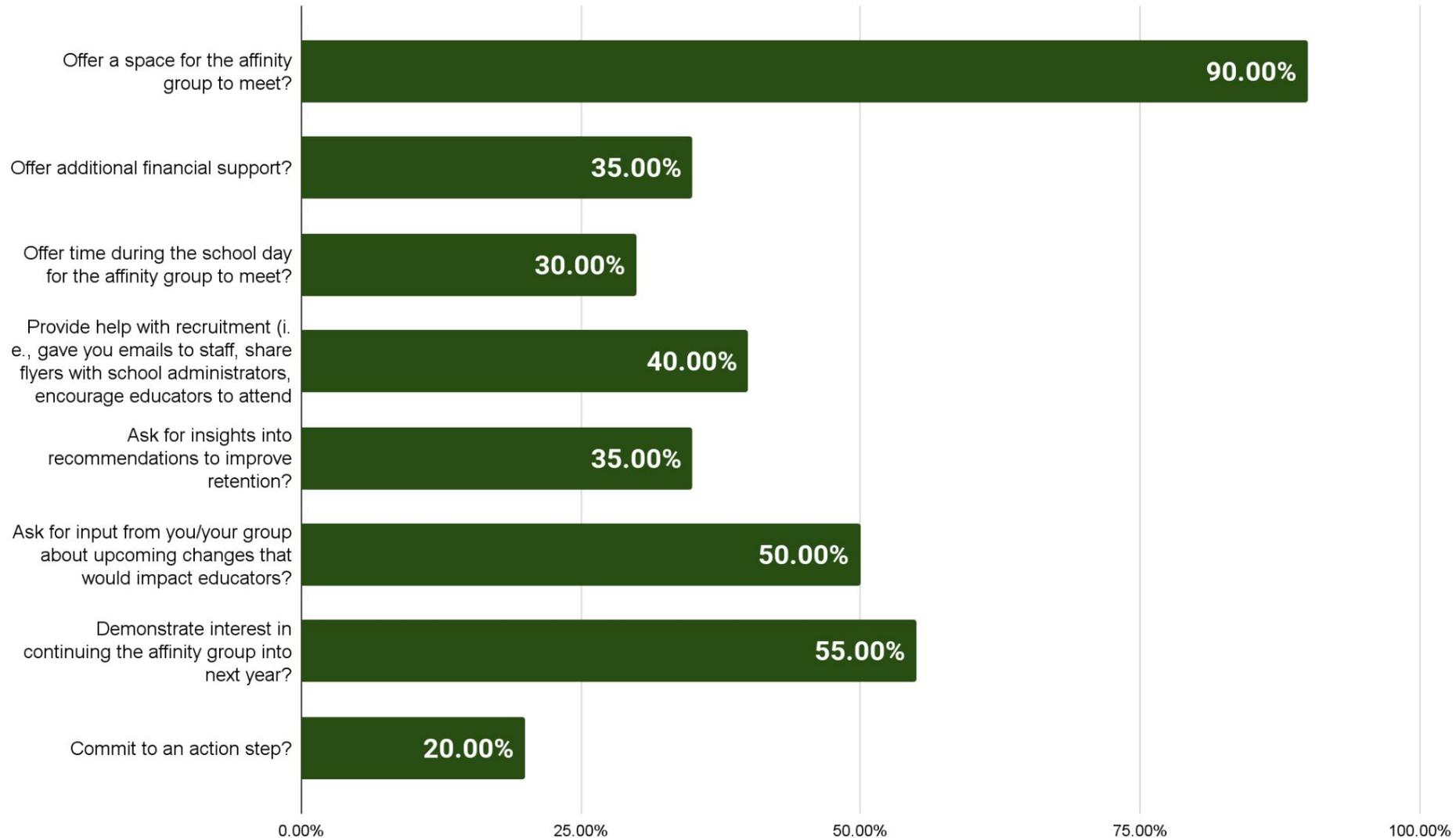
School/District Retention Barriers

Retention Barriers Discussed by Affinity Groups as Impacts to Teacher of Color Attrition



School/District Team Support Feedback

Did your district (select all that apply)...



Strengths of the IL Affinity Group Network

Primary Themes:

- 1. Peer Connection & Solidarity: Relationships and connections facilitators were able to build throughout the fellowship experience**

 *"I forget how much being in community with others who are also trying to do this work is so important - every monthly meeting invigorates me, even when I come in with very low energy."*

- 2. Belonging & Visibility: Creating a space of belonging, a welcoming environment for all diverse educators**

 *"The most rewarding and helpful things for me was the new connections and expansion of my village after years of feeling isolated and unseen in this profession."*

- 3. Personal Growth: Opportunities to learn about relevant topics**

 *"Personal healing fuels collective empowerment. It's how we sustain the movement, not just survive it. This program helped me internalize that truth—and it's a mindset I carry forward as I strive to lead with both heart and resilience."*

Challenges Faced by Facilitators

Primary Themes:

1. Desire for Program Continuation

“An additional year as a supported facilitator in some capacity. I am just beginning to understand my full potential. A third year would provide the consistent motivation to do more!”

2. Scheduling Challenges for Affinity Group Meeting

“Finding a better time to meet, so that everyone can be more involved and have greater participation.”

3. District-Level Support

“There are still moments where advocacy led by BIPOC educators is met with hesitation or seen as disruptive rather than transformative. This reflects broader cultural dynamics that need continued reflection and professional learning across the district. For affinity groups to truly thrive and drive change, they must be recognized not just as support systems, but as critical engines of equity and leadership development. My hope is that with continued visibility, success stories, and structured opportunities for affinity-based collaboration, the district will move toward a more proactive and institutionalized embrace of these efforts.”

Recommendations to Address Educator Retention

Below are broad categories of changes elevated by affinity group members to district leaders as levers for addressing educator retention

- **District Financial Support of Affinity Group(s)**
 - Examples of district change: 1) Offering reimbursement for refreshments, 2) offering district meeting space.
- **District Hiring Practices of Diverse Educators**
 - Examples of district change: 1) Stay survey and interviews implemented, 2) adding diverse educators to the hiring team.
- **District Onboarding, Mentorship, and Coaching of Diverse Educators**
 - Example of district change: dual mentor program with a mentor from an affinity group taking a culturally responsive support approach.
- **Student Impacts: Elevating Student Voice**
 - Example of district change: Facilitator's launch of a student group identified as needed by students.
- **Other Issues (Pay, Practices Disproportionately Impacting Diverse Educators, and Professional Learning for Staff to Build Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices)**
 - Example of district change: 1) Developing a committee to support the district's co-development of professional learning to build teachers' cultural awareness and address specific needs of multilingual learners in the district.