

## Study Finds Inequities in AP Advancement

Black and female assistant principals (APs) often wait longer to be promoted to the position of principal than their white and male counterparts, although they might have more experience, says a study released in June by the American Educational Research Association (AERA).

“Despite equivalent qualifications and more experience, on average, women and Black assistant principals are systematically denied promotions,” says study co-author Sarah Guthery, assistant professor of curriculum and instruction at Texas A&M University–Commerce.

The study crunched the numbers on 4,689 assistant principals serving in Texas from 2001 to 2017, using data from the Texas Education Agency. With study co-author Lauren Bailes, assistant professor of education leadership at the University of Delaware, Guthery identified first-

year assistant principals and analyzed their progress toward promotion, if a promotion occurred. All APs held at least a master’s degree and a principal’s license—the minimal credentials needed to qualify for promotion to principal in Texas.

With education, experience, school level, and location held constant, the study found that Black assistant principals were 18 percent less likely to be promoted than white candidates with equal qualifications. Black candidates’ average time to promotion was 5.27 years, while white peers waited 4.67 years—0.6 years less.

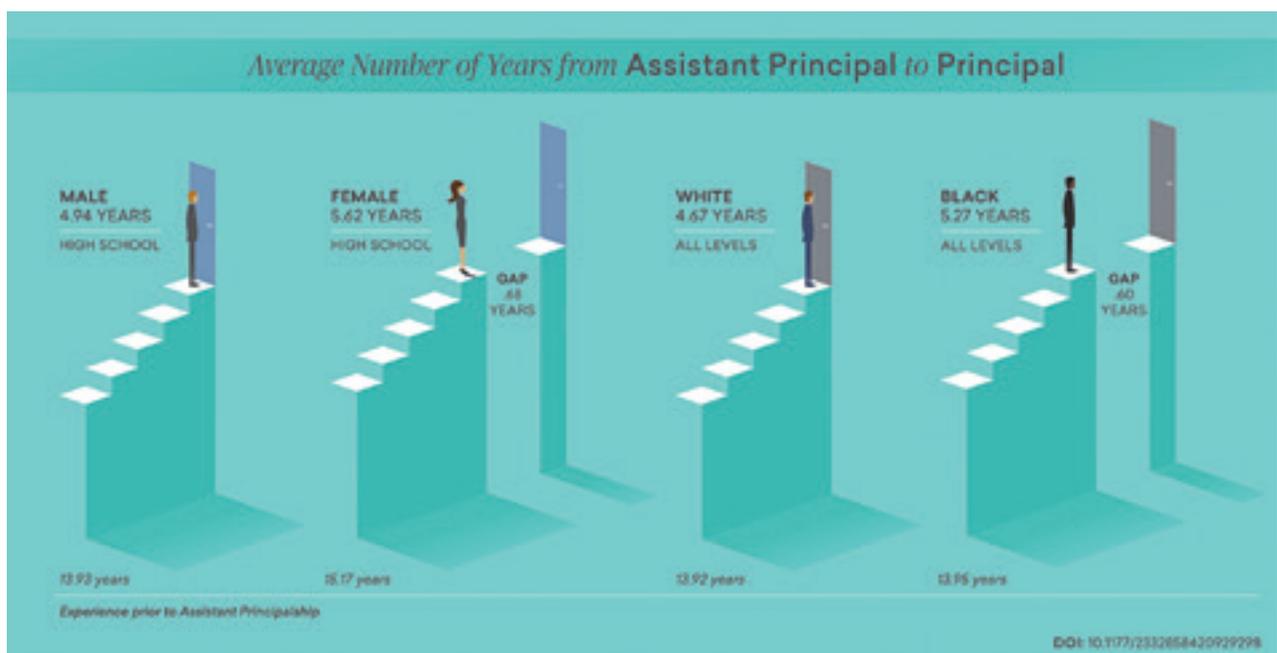
The authors also found a gender differential when they looked at promotions to high school principalships. Although women comprised half of high school APs and nearly two-thirds of all APs in Texas, women were 5 percent to 7 percent less likely to be promoted

than men. Worse, as women gained more years of experience as assistant principals, their likelihood of promotion *decreased* relative to male peers. If they did get promoted, women spent an average of 5.62 years as an assistant principal versus 4.94 years for men.

“Even though more diversity in the teacher and principal workforce has been shown to improve teacher retention and student outcomes, our findings indicate that there are still systematic race- and gender-based inequities within the profession,” Guthery says. “This is despite a teacher corps that is overwhelmingly female and becoming more racially diverse.”

### EARLY DETECTION

While prior research has identified gaps in promotions at the top levels of leadership, Bailes and Guthery identified inequities earlier in the leader-





ship pipeline. Women had more years of experience before becoming APs; males who became assistant principals had 1.25 years less experience, on average, than female APs, and in elementary and middle schools, the gap was 1.62 years.

“At every point of promotion, the pool of candidates is whiter and more male, especially compared to the teacher workforce,” Guthery says. “We find that diversity exists in the pipeline, but the pipeline tends to squeeze out women and Blacks much earlier than studies of school leadership usually capture.”

Bailes and Guthery further found that even when women worked as high school APs for a longer time and had more career experience than male counterparts, they were more likely to be promoted to principal positions in elementary schools than in high schools. Since a high school principalship is often viewed as a gateway to district leadership, the inequities are likely filtering upward.

### **NURTURING DIVERSITY**

State and district policymakers should establish metrics that track and rate equity in promotions for equivalently qualified individuals who aspire to school leadership. “It is crucial that districts monitor inequities in their promotion practices,” Bailes says. “Administrators such as principals and district leaders need to identify and actively nurture diversity in all levels of leadership.”

The authors published their findings in *AERA Open*, the association’s peer-reviewed, open-access journal. To read “Held Down and Held Back: Systematically Delayed Principal Promotions by Race and Gender” in full, visit [bit.ly/34zy3br](https://bit.ly/34zy3br). ●

## **Effective Remote Learning Strategies**

The Institute of Education Sciences’ Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Mid-Atlantic recently reviewed 110 studies on the effectiveness of remote learning, releasing a fact sheet of recommendations in July. When schools are forced to close their doors or limit attendance, it says, educators should try the following:

- **Provide opportunities for real-time interactions.** Office hours held through video chat or phone calls with teachers can support students with or without web access, one-on-one or in small groups.
- **Facilitate and share feedback.** Feedback from teachers or peers can be sent via email or shared through phone calls or text messages. When possible, provide feedback in real time.
- **Connect the curriculum to students’ experiences through project-based learning.** Relating academic content to meaningful real-world problems can help students find relevance in their learning and foster creative thinking to develop their own solutions.
- **Engage and motivate through games that embed learning content.** Competitions through instructional packets or by video can engage students who might otherwise lose interest or become distracted.
- **Offer resources to students and families to help explore content on their own.** Explicit directions, responses to frequently asked questions, and links to quality educational resources can help ease anxiety that students and families might experience while learning remotely. ●

# Elementary Education Needs More Science, SREB Says

A brief published in May by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) says that elementary-level teachers spend just a fraction of the classroom time on science that they dedicate to literacy and math instruction, giving students less time to develop thinking skills that can benefit them in multiple subjects and prepare them for career success.

The 2018 “National Survey of Science and Mathematics Education” found that while 99 percent of K–3 teachers reported teaching reading and math on all or most school days, only 17 percent said the same of science. On average, K–3 teachers spent an average of just 18 minutes per day on science, compared to 89 minutes on reading and 57 minutes on math.

This is despite widespread acknowledgment of the importance of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) subjects to the workforce, SREB says. Job growth in STEM-heavy fields such as health care and the skilled trades will remain strong through at least 2030, according to McKinsey statistics.

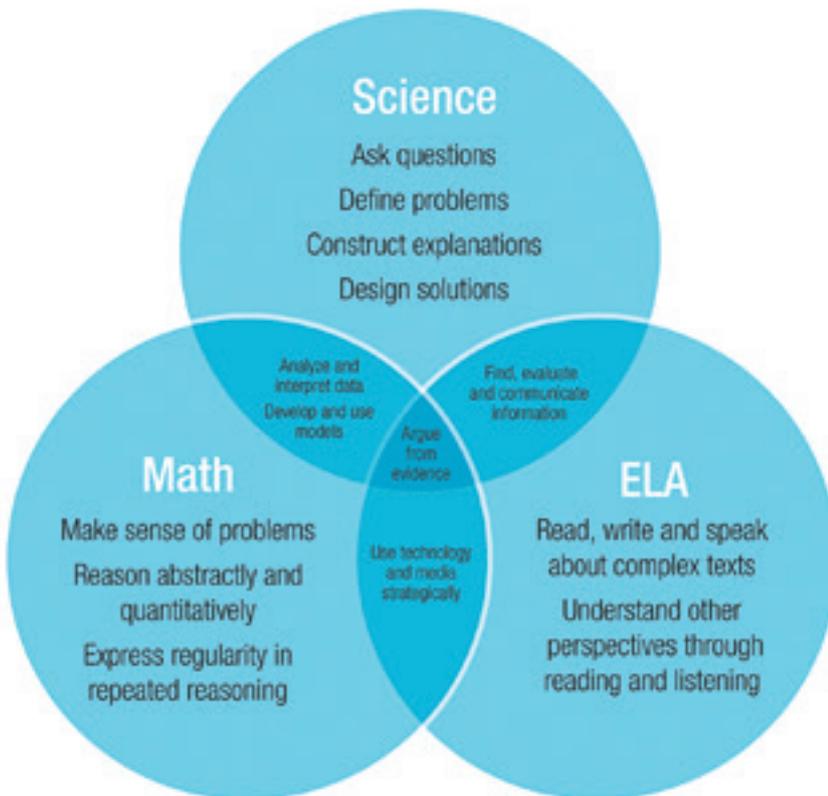
Researchers have found that students who spend more time in science instruction tend to perform better on fourth-grade NAEP science assessments and other standardized tests. But few states have policies mandating that elementary

schools spend a specific amount of time on science instruction, unlike literacy instruction policies.

SREB agrees that developing reading and math skills in elementary school is critical to future success. But reading, math, and science “don’t have to compete for classroom time to the extent that they currently do, especially later in elementary school,” the brief says, and science can actually support literacy and math instruction.

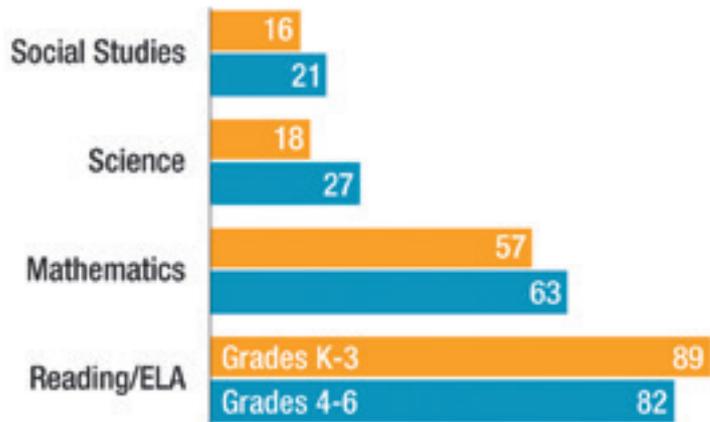
Unfortunately, elementary teachers who responded to the 2018 survey said they felt less prepared to teach science than other subjects. While 77 percent of teachers reported feeling “very well prepared” to teach reading and language arts and 73 percent felt “very well prepared” to teach math, just 31 percent said the same for science.

Here’s how schools can prepare students for success in science in elementary school:



- **Ensure that science receives adequate time in the classroom.** A National Science Teaching Association 2018 position statement recommends that science get the same attention as other core subjects. The statement encourages schools to aim for at least 60 minutes of science instruction and investigation per day—about three times the average number of minutes elementary teachers report spending on science now.
- **Encourage interdisciplinary instruction.** Schools can increase the time spent on science without taking away from other subjects by helping teachers integrate science with topics such as literacy and math. Studies show that combining literacy practice with science learning in the upper elementary grades can result in greater gains in both subjects.

## Average Number of Minutes Per Day Spent Teaching Each Subject



Source: SREB, based on data from the 2018 National Survey of Science and Mathematics Education

• **Equip elementary teachers to use inquiry-based, three-dimensional learning.** Teachers need preparation to encourage children’s natural interest in science, including knowledge of content and effective teaching methods that help integrate reading, writing, math, and science skills. Teachers also need to be equipped to unify scientific practices, SREB says, “crosscutting” concepts and core ideas of scientific learning in instruction. To read “Elementary Science: Equipping Students Through Inquiry and Integration” in full, visit [www.sreb.org/publication/elementary-science](http://www.sreb.org/publication/elementary-science).

## Seeking Balance in Literacy Instruction

Nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of K-2 and elementary special education teachers surveyed said their schools use a “balanced literacy” program to teach reading, according to a report from the Education Week Research Center; one-quarter (26 percent) use something else.

The approach is more common in large districts, with 80 percent of

teachers in districts with enrollments of 2,500 to 9,999 citing a balanced literacy approach, as did 74 percent of those in districts with 10,000 or more students. Still, 68 percent of elementary teachers in districts with fewer than 2,500 students said their schools use balanced literacy.

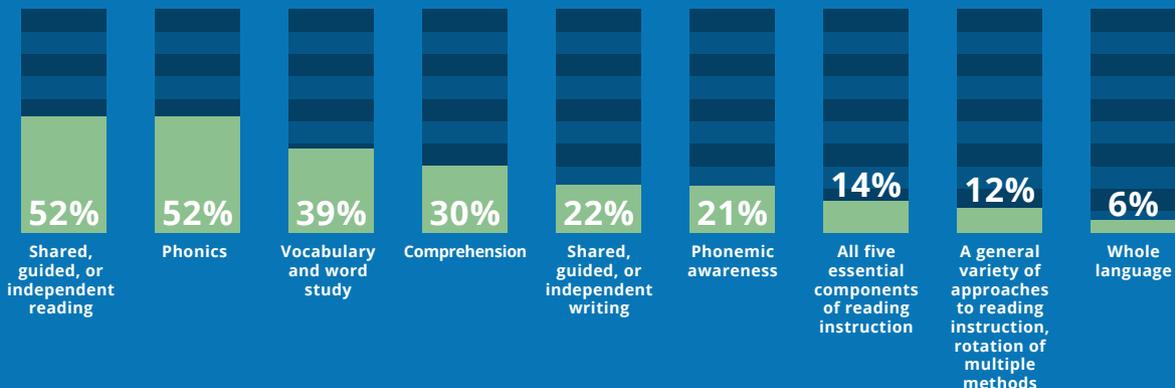
While balanced literacy programs typically incorporate phonics

instruction, some have been criticized for paying insufficient attention to this area. Most respondents (70 percent) said they place “a lot” of emphasis on phonics, dedicating 31 minutes per day to phonics, or 39 percent of the 80 minutes devoted to literacy instruction.

Visit [bit.ly/34vxpvi](http://bit.ly/34vxpvi) to download the report.

### What Is Balanced Literacy?

Asked to define balanced literacy, teachers surveyed by EdWeek cited a variety of aspects to instruction.



Source: EdWeek Research Center, “Early Reading Instruction: Results of a National Survey of K-2 and Elementary Special Education Teachers and Postsecondary Instructors”