

# Root Cause Report Westport Public Schools

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Innovations in Equity and  
Systemic Change (IESC) - New  
York University

**METROPOLITAN CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON EQUITY AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF  
SCHOOLS**



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## Introduction:

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### Executive Summary

New York University's Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools (NYU Metro Center)-Innovations in Equity and Systemic Change (IESC) partnered with Westport Public Schools to engage in an Equity Study. We offered a capacity building approach in conducting the equity study by employing an evidence-based root cause analysis process that examined both quantitative and qualitative data and beliefs, policies, practices, and procedures to unveil the root causes of student experiences and outcomes. We believe that local socio-cultural-political and historical knowledge held by the district staff and community are invaluable to the equity audit process. With this in mind, our equity audit used a collaborative approach, understanding that building an ongoing inquiry focus is the most impactful approach to systemic change (Kozleski & Artiles, 2012). In particular the equity study occurred alongside Westport's Root Cause team. The plan proposed six training and technical assistance support sessions with the Root Cause team to build: (1) their capacity in examining student level and organizational level disaggregated data by race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, IEP/Non-IEP status and ENL/non-ENL status; (2) examine and identify beliefs, policies, practices, and procedures that are leading to student outcomes; and (3) explore how race, culture, and privilege in systems perpetuate inequities. These processes were used to identify the root causes of disproportionate student experiences and outcomes, next steps, and recommendations for Westport to develop a coherent multi-year strategic plan to address their disparate student outcomes.

The findings from the Equity Study revealed some of the following. The focus groups unearthed some of following consistent patterns across parent/caregivers and students: 1) grateful and feeling fortunate for a quality education; 2) a culture of competitiveness that leads to students feeling pressured to fit a mold for success; 3) limited exposure to students/families/communities that hold identities differences and a lack of preparedness to engage in spaces outside of Westport; 4) a desire for the Westport school community to be more diverse and inclusive; 5) harm caused to students and families of social identity differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, disability, religion); and 6) a desire for the district to proactively have a plan to address bias-based incidents and inclusivity.



Across several points of analysis, inequities exist in Westport that particularly have a disproportionate impact on Black and Latino/a students. Asian and White students have greater access to rigorous instruction and curriculum, consistently score higher on academic assessments and on average, are impacted the least by the disciplinary system.

Some of root causes for inequities that were derived from the collaborative process included: 1) Inconsistency across all schools as related to Tier 1, 2 intervention implementation and the lack of data collection and review of the data; 2) Lack of data system to collect discipline data across schools; 3) Lack of widespread, consistent, restorative practices/approaches to discipline and dispute resolution across all schools; 4) Implicit biases impacting responses, decisions, treatment of students, perceptions of families; 5) Insufficient targeted deep professional learning on culturally responsive sustaining education. After moving through the 6 days of collaborative work with the district's root cause team, analyzing the data, including the student and parents/caregivers focus groups, student outcome data, staff survey results and, policies, practices, NYU Metro Center's IESC offers the following 4 recommendations as avenues to grow equity in the district:

- Develop welcoming and affirming school communities
- Increase access to educational programming for every student
- Overhaul data systems: Disaggregated data collection, analysis, and usage
- Invest in ongoing professional learning and development

## **IESC's Mission**

Innovations in Equity and Systemic Change (IESC) provides professional development, technical assistance, and consultancy to educational institutions in general and special education. IESC's mission is to advance educational equity by disrupting, dismantling, and eliminating disproportionality by building the capacity of educators to implement Culturally Responsive Sustainable Equity-Based Systems that meet the needs of all students and families.

## **Framing the Equity Study**

Districts aiming to engage equity work must grapple with the impact of racial inequities of historically marginalized communities (Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia & Nolly, 2004). Equity audits have a deep and significant history in civil rights enforcement to assess racial educational inequities and more recently with federal accountability measures such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Federal accountability policies such as ESSA require State Education Agencies (SEA), and ultimately districts to monitor progress towards closing achievement and graduation disparities rates based on race, income, disability, and ENL/Multilingual status. To that end, states and districts must set equity goals and indicate how they will monitor their progress toward them. Educational equity is framed in the following way: "educational equity incorporates educational policies, practices, interactions, and resources that are representative of, constructed by, and responsive to every student such that each individual has access to and can meaningfully participate and make progress in high-quality learning experiences that support students towards self-determination and reduce disparities in outcomes

regardless of individual differences and social identities” (Great Lakes Equity Center, 2011).

The framing of the equity study for Westport is built on research that underscore the causes of inequities (Klinger et al., 2005; Kozleski & Artiles, 2012). Effective equity assessments rely on a comprehensive inquiry approach, in which qualitative and quantitative data collection, including key stakeholder interviews, surveys, student outcome data, policy, procedure and practice reviews (Kozleski & Artiles, 2012). The efficacy of equity assessments further relies on a team of district stakeholders who hold socio-cultural-political and historical knowledge to contextualize the data, systemic beliefs, policies, procedures and practices. Our approach aims to collaborate with, listen to, and build relationships with and in communities that question disproportionality to disrupt educational inequities (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017). Effective equity studies seek to unearth the inequities that exist in a given community, to give voice to those historically and currently marginalized and to support the development of protective spaces for vulnerable communities, which inevitably strengthens the community at-large. This process offers a counter-narrative, which is often a paradigm shift from the ways in which districts continue to operate and continue to maintain systemic inequities (Milner, Liu, & Ball, 2020). Such an approach creates the conditions to push against centering multiple data sources to triangulate data to verify truth, instead offering the opportunity for counter-narratives to be revealed and discover alternate perspectives.

## **About the School District**

### **Westport Public Schools**

The root cause report offers a synthesis of both the quantitative and qualitative data collected from Westport Public Schools throughout the root cause analysis process. As a part of the root cause analysis process, NYU Metro Center’s IESC requested two years of district student outcome data (2018-19 and 2019-20). Additionally, a staff survey, student parent/caregiver focus groups and the root cause teams’ review and analysis of policies, practices and procedures are reflected in this report. The overarching data offered at a glance below will be further unpacked within the body of the report. This report is not meant to be exhaustive, instead it will highlight critical next steps based on the equity study process.

### **Narrative**

Westport Public Schools is a mid-size school district with a total of eight schools. There were a total of 5,525 students enrolled in the district during the 2018-19 academic year. According to the district level data for 2018-2019 school year, Black students comprised 2.35% of the district’s population and made up 5.98% of the total students identified as students with disabilities. Latino/a students in Westport comprised 6.44% of the district population and were 10.29% of the total students identified as students with disabilities in the district. White students’ enrollment in the district during the year was at 79.89% and White students comprised 77.61% of the total students identified with disabilities in the district. Asian students were 6.62% of the total district’s student population and comprised 3.62% of the total students identified with

disabilities. During this school year, 1.65% of the total student population, i.e., 91 students received at least one suspension.

There were a total of 5,341 students enrolled in the district during the 2019-20 academic year. According to the district level data in the 2019-20 school year, Black students in Westport comprised 2.19% of the district population and were 5.56% of the total students identified with disabilities in the district. Latino/a students comprised 6.91% of the district's population and made up 10.83% of the total students identified as students with disabilities. White student enrollment for the district during the year was at 78.94%, White students comprised 76.39% of the total students identified with disabilities. Asian students were 6.65% of the total district's student population and comprised 4.03% of the total students identified as students with disabilities. Overall, during the year, 0.86% of the district's total student population i.e., 46 students received at least one suspension.

During the school year 2019-20, out of the total staff working in the district, 75.7% were female and 24.3% were male. Also, out of the total staff members employed in Westport, 90.1% were White, 4.4% were Latino/a, 4.0% were Black, and the remaining 1.4% identified themselves as Asians (see Appendix L).

## **Notes from the Field**

*This section serves to give further context to what took place during the six, full-day Root Cause Analysis training sessions by providing key highlights of participant collaboration, session content and a broader overview of the group's engagement throughout the trainings.*

Westport Public Schools engaged in a root cause analysis process with 30 participants, including the superintendent, assistant superintendent, principals and assistant principal, instructional coaches, teachers, pupil support staff across grade levels, three parent members, one community member and two board members. The district made a concerted effort to bring together a diverse group of school and community-based stakeholders.

To open the first session, the district superintendent highlighted the following current district priorities: examining policies that limit access to students, developing welcoming environments, and fostering inclusive curriculum and instruction. He underscored how the root cause analysis work is directly aligned with the above district priorities. The content in session one started with participants being asked to define "disproportionality" in their own words. Their responses ranged from, "disproportionality is an opportunity gap" to "disproportionality is unrealized potential." It was readily apparent that the group as a whole was bringing in substantial personal experience and expertise.

As is the case with all root cause teams, the group spent significant time focusing on key frameworks for engaging and processing the work to come. These included: 1) highlighting and co-creating community norms - from 'active listening' to 'pushing your growing edge,' 2) understanding the three tensions that come up in doing racial equity work - personal, structural and strategic (Pollock et al., 2010) and lastly, 3) learning how to name the elephants in the room



- that is, naming the specific individuals and communities that continue to be impacted by disproportionality in the district. When asked to name, based on the group's experience, who was disproportionately impacted in Westport, participants highlighted boys of color coming into the district through the open choice program, Black girls, particularly through a lack of representation in the curriculum, children with a low socio-economic status, LGBTQIA+ students, also because of a lack of representation and families of color in general as they often feel isolated and invisible.

Participants came into session two highlighting important focus areas to engage as the sessions continued. One participant shared, "that we need to start talking about race as the foundation of discussions about systemic inequity and then build into intersectionality from there." This comment underscored the importance of understanding the ways race and racism impact disproportionate outcomes in schools and also how critical it is to look at multiple identity intersections that impact inequities (e.g. gender, SES, sexuality, religion, etc.) (Carter, Skiba, Arrendondo, & Pollock, 2017). Further in session two, the team started an analysis of the district's behavioral data that was provided by the district to IESC and compiled into workbooks. Participants examined where disparate behavioral outcomes lived in the district and commented on the disproportionate impact felt by Black/African American students. They also highlighted the need for more data analysis, not just for suspensions (which was what was mostly provided by the district), but also discipline referrals, to get a deeper sense of how students are impacted even before a suspension becomes the outcome. The group was beginning to identify the ways in which disproportionality is layered - how beliefs, policies, procedures and practices all lead to disproportionate outcomes. Connected to this, participants highlighted the ongoing importance of professional development and support, for teachers and staff to have structured learning experiences to better understand equity-driven instruction and how to respond to the current inequities that live in their community. At the end of session two, moving into session three, participants started to analyze the academic workbooks.

Before further engaging the academic workbooks, participants shared reflections on the readings that they completed between sessions. In thinking about shifting school culture, particularly when it came to being more culturally responsive in responding to behavior, a participant commented that, "systemic, sustainable change can only come with involvement of students, families, and community toward a united purpose with alignment of resources and support of all stakeholders." This idea of the varying spheres of influence was one that the group continued to bring with them into sessions - they grounded the work in how everyone in the community could benefit, not just from a personal/individual perspective.

Key takeaways from the academic workbook analysis included: noticing that there were a disproportionate number of students of color in track C classes (designated as the lowest district academic track), grappling with how students end up in AP and Honors classes where White and Asian students are overrepresented, and the need to train staff on culturally responsive interventions to minimize disproportionality that is occurring across the academic tracking system. Participants made connections across the two years of data, recognizing that the patterns reveal a systemic problem.

In session four, the group analyzed the various district discipline policies and practices including the code of conduct, behavioral referral forms and the overall school discipline process. This analysis served to identify potential gaps that may be leading to inequities and disparate outcomes and experiences. The group highlighted a lack of tracking and analysis of behavioral incidents throughout schools in the district. They offered that without a more systemic approach, internal bias and educator's attitudes and beliefs can have a potentially deleterious impact on students, particularly historically marginalized individuals (Gregory, Skiba, & Mediratta, 2017). They echoed the need for more staff training.

Session five and six were both in-person sessions where NYU Metro Center IESC facilitators and root cause participants met to finish out the root cause series. Participants were asked to complete the CR-SE District Self-Assessment, organized by six CR-SE focus areas and scored by identifying how culturally responsive a district is based on a list of indicators in each focus area (district scores offered in Appendix I). One of the key group takeaways after this process was the need for more student voice needed to move the district to a more equity-based, culturally responsive approach. In the second half of session five, participants split up to work on both crafting an equity-based moral imperative statement - identifying why this work is important to the district - and further analyzing potential root causes that were leading to disproportionality in the district.

The last session was focused on building out a multi-year action plan grounded in all of the analysis the group had completed in the previous five sessions. The goal of the multi-year action plan is to offer tangible next steps that align with the findings of this root cause report. Westport's action plan is divided into three distinct focus areas in effort to connect this work to larger strategic initiatives and school/district-based processes. The focus areas that were chosen are: 1) *Teaching and Learning*, 2) *Professional Learning and Development*, and 3) *Data Systems*. NYU Metro Center IESC facilitators walked participants through key phases of implementation science in order to most effectively build an action plan that can have long-term success. NYU Metro Center IESC facilitators reminded the group that an effective action plan is iterative, has a cycle of analysis and review built in, which means it will continue to adapt and change based on the district's needs and outcomes. The group closed out session six sharing what they had accomplished in building out the multi-year action plan. All groups highlighted a very thoughtful starting point to the initial years of the plan, which will need to be further built out by district personnel.

## **Key Recommendations**



## Recommendation 1: Develop Welcoming and Affirming School Communities

Welcoming and affirming schools are communities in which every student and family feels safe. In these spaces, people can find themselves represented and reflected, and treated with respect and dignity. Such an environment ensures every social identity (i.e., race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, language, religion, and socioeconomic background) are affirmed, valued, and used as vehicles for teaching and learning (NYSED, 2019). This includes:

- ❑ Teaching and learning grounded in relationship building, where differentiation occurs based on student experience and cultural background - where differences do not equate to deficiencies.
- ❑ Educators as learners, recognizing the importance of everyday growth through engaging in difficult dialogues, particularly around critical issues regarding race and equity.
- ❑ Students are exposed to a variety of voices and experiences, including the experiences of historically marginalized identities in order to broaden students' understanding of the world and deepen critical thinking.

When welcoming and affirming school spaces fail to exist, students experience marginalization and harm. Findings from the student and family focus groups underscore a lack of welcoming and affirming spaces, exemplified by marginalized individuals feeling like there is a particular mold one has to fit into in Westport. Without the valuing of diverse social identities, conditions for marginalization for students of difference continue to exist in the district.

Welcoming and affirming environments foster space that allows for risk taking and uses student mistakes as learning opportunities (NYSED, 2019). When asked to describe their school, most students and several family members immediately began describing the climate of their school community, highlighting that it feels like it was created to push students to achieve, but is also very competitive and “toxic.” Students described being pushed too far and feeling pressured.

It can be really toxic at times...it's a lot of work and it's competitive.



The competitiveness of it. In terms of academics that's a big part of it in pushing to achieve, and I think that's the good side of it. But [it's] also like pushing yourself to the point where you don't necessarily need to, and it can like hurt you in the long run, in terms of like depression and like sleep issues.

Every single student, I know, stressing about just about their grades, stressing about how many AP classes they can take. Like what will get them into Harvard, it's very oriented around taking as many AP classes you can to get the highest grade possible and I don't think that's the strongest thing to have in a school, obviously, because it causes so much stress in these kids' lives.

[Staples is a] big high school and the academic environment is pretty competitive, like the teachers and I think the environment pushes you to try to take difficult classes and push yourself pretty far.

I think the overall atmosphere of the school is very competitive, and I think it's pressure that the students put on each other.

I think academic culture is a big part of that. It feels like there's one path and if you're a student who doesn't strive to take difficult classes and you're not looking to get into the top school that's more uncommon. Most students feel pressure, from themselves, from the environment or from their parents to take really difficult classes and get into a top school. So that creates a very stressful academic culture.

Students also expressed a lack of freedom of choice despite being surrounded by a plethora of options. They felt confined to the academic path they were on without the ability to explore any other options.

[It] is very, very academically focused. I mean if you don't think that college is the right path for you or if your intent is to go straight from Staples and become an actress there's not really paths for you. There's classes and you have to start in freshman year and sort of build your schedule from there, and by the time like I was in mid sophomore year... although I didn't have set electives yet I knew exactly what English classes I was taking, exactly what math classes I was taking. I know there's a variety of electives but there's not really enough slots to fill with electives. It's all very "you need to take this, you need to take this, you need to take this."

I don't like the curriculum, it is fairly restricted, I don't like how strict the academics are. There is very little freedom when it comes to choosing whether you want to pursue this or that, that kind of puts you in a position where you're doing many, many things that you did not enjoy.

People are really stressed about grades, and things like that, and I think the school altogether is kind of catered more towards the kids who are on that path that are going to college... There's a lot of classes for students who excel, but I think sometimes for the people who are in the middle, it can kind of be a bit more difficult. Like I think staples



definitely caters towards the super smart people...sometimes people I think can kind of be left behind. I think especially those who aren't on the traditional path of education or maybe they're more into art than they are academics, and we do have a lot of like art classes and things like that which is great, but also the school just puts a big emphasis on like the core subjects like math, science, English and social studies [the school] sees those as the most essential. It kind of takes away from a more well-rounded experience.

The strict and competitive culture creates an environment that allows particularly for the marginalization of students of color, students with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ identifying students. Students and family members shared moments where they experienced the impact of deficit thinking based on racial biases at the hands of their teachers and counselors. They expressed differential treatment and access to resources or information based on racial perceptions and stereotypes held by teachers, peers, and counselors.

Their guidance counselor was specifically not showing them or telling them about harder colleges, because of their race and that's a very, very specific example that happened to someone but um yeah unfortunately there are situations like that.

In terms of race, teachers and other students expect like Asian students to be smart. Like sometimes if I get a good grade on something of course people talk about it because that's how it works at Staples it's like everyone's like what did you get and, of course, when I get a good grade then people sometimes will say like well, of course, you got that like as if like my race matters or something. I don't know, I feel like teachers, just expect certain kids to be in front of others. They expect kids of other races like kids who are Black or Latino/a not to do as well, they definitely expect kids to perform a certain way.

Students shared instances where they experienced or observed biases from their teachers or counselors against students who need accommodations, have disabilities. In these examples, the biases manifested in teacher refusal to accommodate learning disabilities as well as insensitive remarks in class.

The kids who don't fit into a standard like academically [are not treated well]. But kids who need extra help or who need extra time I feel like teachers always looked down upon when kids asked for their extra time.

[I know a student who] has dyslexia....there's [teachers] that don't really respect that [they] have it and don't like don't view it as an obstacle.

A lot of people are not very open minded about [autism] or not very conscious of the stuff that they say and I don't know Staples likes to say they're open minded but, in reality, not as much as they like to think they are.

[A teacher stated that] I will not accommodate him, because no one deserves accommodations and they're fake and all that kind of stuff.



This year I got two accommodations, one of them said “essential assignments only for a period of time” and every teacher responded that every assignment is essential so I cannot give her any accommodations. I can't lighten the work because she needs to know every single thing we're doing.

My teacher was made aware of the fact that I had been recovering from anorexia so I didn't need to work out basically because I was still in recovery. And it was really hot out so I was wearing short sleeves and she saw my scars and said “oh you're a cutter too.”

Students shared experiencing transphobia and homophobia at the hands of their teachers and peers. A student has specifically stated that the transphobia from staff causes them to be unsuccessful.

I've had a teacher tell me that because I don't pass well as male that I shouldn't be upset when someone calls me by the wrong pronouns and it's basically my fault. So, it's things like that that don't lead me to be successful.

I know other students who have had those experiences and other students have been judged viciously there [for being] gay or whatnot.

People blatantly disrespect my pronouns when I've told them what name I go by and what pronouns I use. They just blatantly don't use them.

Outside of intentional harm because of differences in identities, the “cookie cutter mold” expectation leaves teachers as well as many students unprepared when met with any identities that are deemed as a deviation from the “standard” (being White, affluent, able bodied, cis gendered, straight). Because of a lack of comfort engaging identity differences, members of the school community enact microaggressions.

Just the lack of diversity, and I know that's not necessarily a super easy fix because Westport obviously it's not diverse town, but I think when a majority of the students are White, I think you don't get exposed to different cultures and races and types of people, and I think students kind of suffer from that. I think, just the lack of knowledge of other people sometimes creates an ignorance. I don't think people necessarily mean to be mean or rude. I don't really know how to describe it, but I guess ignorant. I don't think people necessarily mean to be hurtful with their ignorance, but I think just the lack of exposure to a diverse student body and staff causes it.

This White kid walked up to a group of black kids just hanging out at lunch and goes what's up my brothers and tried to hug them and they were just like whoa what are you doing they were just like what what are you doing you're not my brother. And it was just so awkward and I was just watching like “oh God.” Things like that, where White kids, I don't want to be racist but they try to act like a stereotypical Black person. Which again is racist but they just don't understand they think they're doing the right thing when they're really not so that's just some of the racial issues at Staples.



I've seen some really awkward moments [with the Black students who are part of the busing programs]. Just people who don't know how to act around people of color. I've seen some really awkward interactions at Staples between people of color and White people. It's usually the White people who do really absurdly weird things they just don't know how to act. That being said, the school is mostly White and so is Westport, it's majority White. So, I don't know how to explain this, um kids are racist without knowing that they're racist because they don't really know what to do, around people of color. Like they feel like they have to act, a special way. If you just be yourself, it will be okay, but they think like oh, I have to act quote unquote black around black people and it just leads to really awkward moments. Yeah it's more indirect rather than direct.

I don't think there's a lot of direct racism, but I know there's some kids that say racist things as jokes but it's really hurtful to the dignity of these African American kids coming into school.

The stereotype that I might have seen is that there's just one kid who's really good at math and science and all that sort stuff, really good at school, excellent and he's Asian and I recall someone saying like oh he's only good at that school because he's Asian.

I talked to one of my friends and he's African American. He told me he was in a class and that these kids were just talking about topics that they were uninformed about. I'm not really sure what he just said that he was incredibly uncomfortable and he felt really outnumbered in the class.

I would say yeah I've had experiences with the kids were like, even if we were like on tik tok someone made a joke like "oh I can't breathe" and then a kid under it was like "oh credit George Floyd" and that is like a kid that I knew and I had talked to before who obviously doesn't really understand the implications of his actions and what he was alluding to when you say things like that that are very ignorant. That happens a lot, it happens in all grades, it's kind of a culture.

Students expressed feeling 'ignorant' to a world outside of their environment. Students felt that the lack of diversity in their community was reflected in their education and personal learning experiences. They described their environment as a "bubble" or "sheltered" and highlighted their ignorance to the experiences outside of what is deemed normative within their community.

Like it feels kind of sheltered sometimes because there's not a lot of diversity and it's like pretty wealthy, pretty White.

There's not much exposure, so I think everyone claims to be very open but they're not really put to the test, I guess, to see because there's not much diversity.

I feel like it's kind of weird at the same time as people who have a lot of opportunities, because of having good education and like being more privileged, it also feels like we're not as exposed to some things other people might be. Like a lot of people get jobs at the



end of high school but don't have to like work at a much younger age or just aren't exposed to the real world, some people might say, so I think that's another aspect of it.

It feels like Westport is a bubble, and we aren't really aware of a lot of issues going on outside of our community. Especially in the past year, we have become very aware that our education is not intertwined with some of the issues that a lot of people face in real life. I've been thinking a lot, our education—it's an excellent education but the lack of diversity in the student body and the staff seeps into the curriculum.

The attitudes of some of the kids at Staples kind of like ignorance. Definitely because Staples is a bubble, and the rest of the world isn't like Staples high school at all so stuff like that. We are kind of sheltered.

The experiences and perspectives offered by students and families in the district highlight gaps in school and district culture. District staff and educators are tasked with modeling and fostering a welcoming and affirming environment in schools. To that end, it becomes imperative that the adults in school communities possess equity-driven beliefs and an understanding of culturally responsive practices.

A school staff survey was carried out by NYU Metro Center's IESC to assess the school climate, educator's self-efficacy, instructional support, and educator's responsiveness to the needs of diverse students. Out of the 975 district staff members, 216 responded to the survey. The survey highlighted belief gaps that often lead to the gaps in student and family experiences highlighted above. Most specifically, educators' high level of *color-evasiveness* (as seen in Figure 1—the *Perspectives on Culture and Race* scales below), which centers on individuals ignoring race and failing to acknowledge the impact race and racism has on student and family experiences. Statements highlighting the level of color-evasiveness in the district are outlined further in Figure 2. For example, 44% of respondents said that they “try to ignore skin color in order to view minority students as individuals.” The district's color-evasiveness is then compounded by a low level of racial awareness and knowledge, which is also highlighted within the *Perspectives on Culture and Race* scales below (see Figure 3). Similarly, the specific statements that highlight racial awareness are offered in the preceding bar graph. One example is that 75% of respondents agreed to the following question: ‘teachers bring stereotypes that affect their views of students of color, which impact how they teach them.’

Figure 1: Aggregate Perspectives on Culture and Race Survey Results

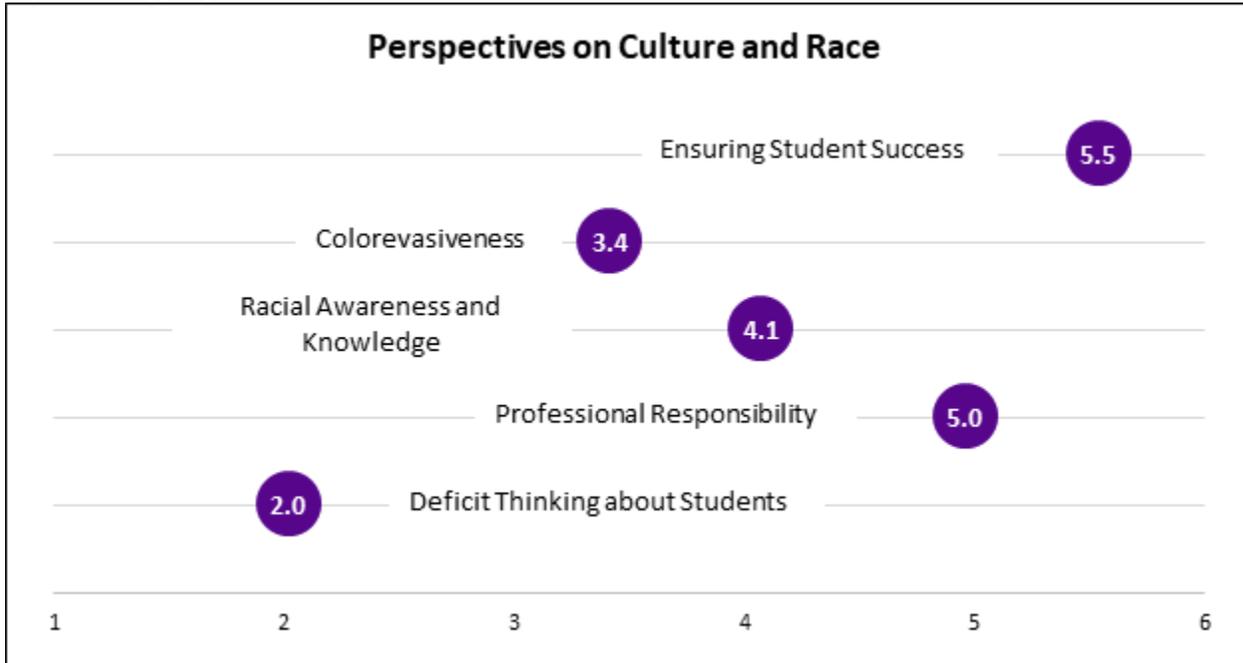


Figure 2: Responses from Colorevasive Subscale

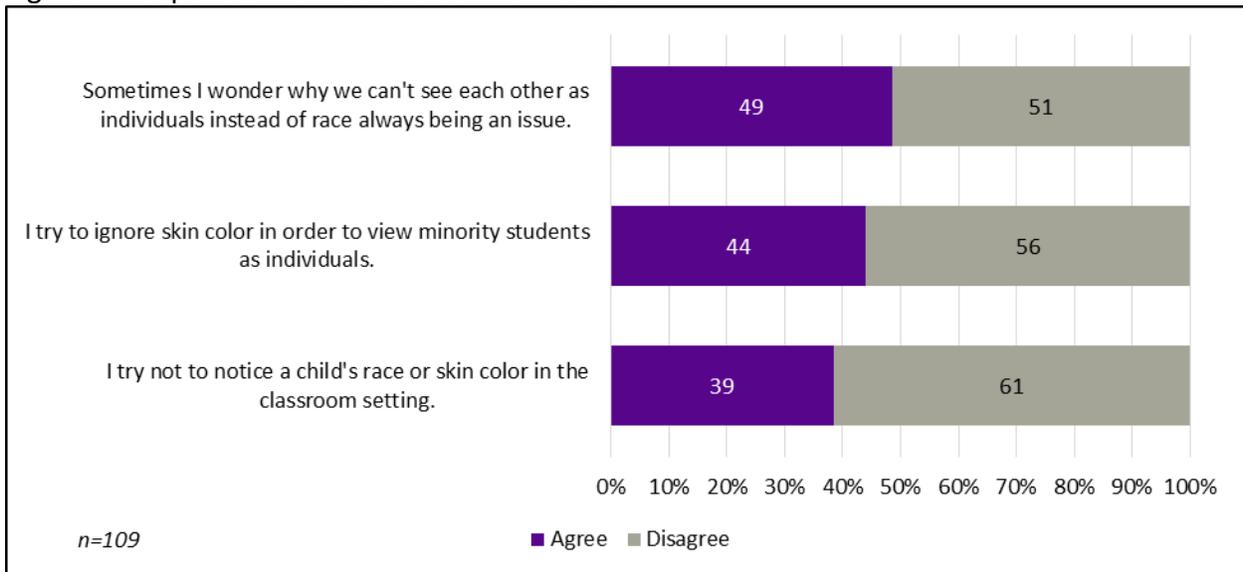
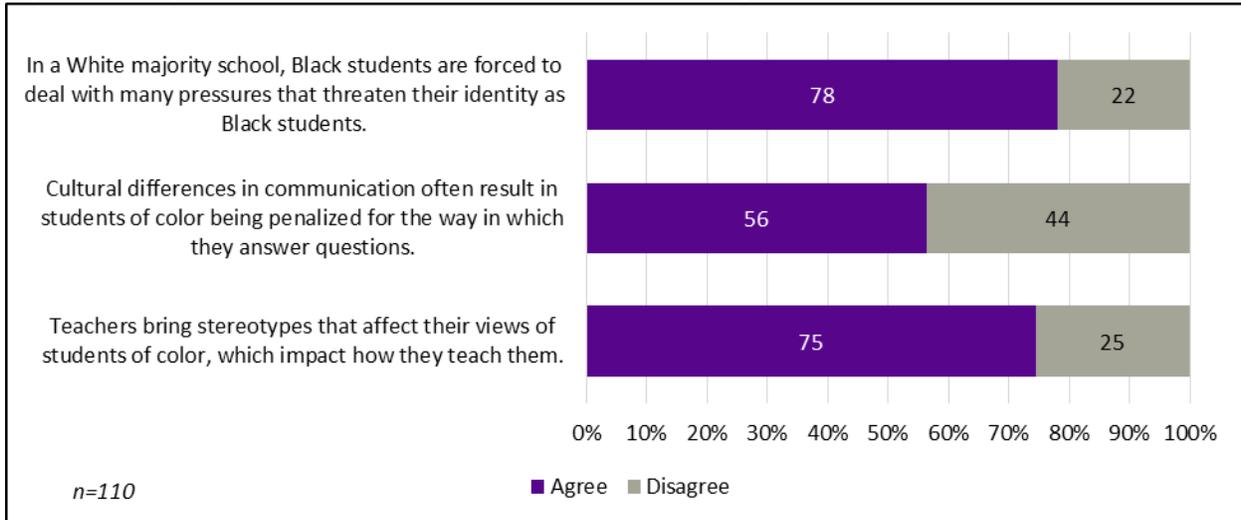


Figure 3: Responses from Racial Awareness and Knowledge Subscale



Building a more welcoming and affirming culture in Westport is foundational to creating an environment where every child feels belonging. For the district, much of this work starts with interrogating the impact a culture of competitiveness has on each and every child, across identity differences, while also examining how further marginalization happens to already vulnerable individuals and communities due to the current culture. Without recognizing the increased marginalization of particular vulnerable communities (e.g., Black, Latino/a, LGBTQIA+), disproportionality will persist in the district, even with an overarching push to make the environment less “competitive,” and “overwhelming.” To seek systemic, transformative change, this work must take on a race-conscious, intersectional lens (Hernández, Lopez, Swier & Kaur, 2022). As evidenced by the academic and behavioral outcome data as well as the student and parents/caregivers focus group responses, race and racism has a clear impact in Westport. It will be important to acknowledge this past and present impact, particularly on Black and Latino/a students, while proactively building a system that celebrates the racial, ethnic and cultural differences that currently exist in the district (Carter et al., 2017).



## **Recommendation 2: Increase Access to Education Programming for Every Student**

Educational opportunities are only valuable if individuals and communities have access to them. School communities that are based on White and affluent normative culture are often rife with inequities that are grounded in a lack of access to educational programming for individuals that do not fit this mold. Achieving equity in school communities means redistributing access and opportunity - to learning materials, rigorous instruction and curricula offered in advanced placements courses, and extracurricular programming (Gorski, 2019). Westport Public School district has a plethora of academic and programming services and a large portion of the community greatly benefiting from these supports. That said, there remain several barriers to access, evidenced by the focus groups and the academic, behavioral and classification data gathered, which particularly highlights areas of disproportionate impact on Black and Latino/a students.

### **An Abundance of Resources**

During the listening sessions, students expressed gratitude for the quality of education they were receiving as well as the abundance of choice in programs and resources available to students from dominant social groups. Although, as the session progressed students also identified an extremely competitive environment which created the conditions for marginalization, particularly for those that didn't "fit the perfect mold," specifically highlighting a set of standards regarding achievement, ability, gender, race, physical appearance. Based on what students shared, it became clear that students saw the rigid standards and marginalization as the cost of the type of education they were receiving.

Students and parents/caregivers described the high quality of education they receive, including the plethora of programs, activities, resources, and classes that are offered to them. They further highlighted the rigor, high academics of the district, and the perception that students are academically challenged.

I think like especially the extracurricular stuff. But, Staples has like there's so many different options for that, and it does like give you really nice sense of belonging and community to have those like consistent things to go to after school every day.



I feel very lucky to go to Staples...I really do think it's a great school and the education system there is very, very strong.

I think there are a lot of good resources, whenever I need something I find it, which is always helpful.

I would second that academically I think the kids are challenged fairly well [in a] rigorous public school system academically.

He's overall having a good experience. He, too, is being challenged academically. So, there's a lot of time spent on homework. The teachers are supportive. It's a strong academic program. I think the envelope is being pushed on academic rigor. I would also say that the staff is stronger, overall, the administrators are strong. It's a can-do environment.

My children are very privileged to have an education here and are in a privileged environment. I feel like they are challenged educationally.

I feel fortunate to have my kids in the school district. Academically - if we're talking about math learning, how to spell and if we're talking about skills, the hard skills that they're going to be tested on when it comes to taking standardized tests I feel very grateful to have them in this school district.

Parents/caregivers offered additional layers to the appreciations of the services available and the challenging academic approach. These layers highlighted the ways in which the environment can also feel overly competitive, overwhelming and ultimately impact the access and opportunities that are available to every student.

I would say the Westport education is rigorous. I do think there is a very high bar here, and I think it comes from different places. I think the school district is high performing. I think parents expect a lot of rigor and there's that pressure. I think for all the kids that's difficult, for the kids who are performing at a high level it's pressure for them. I can only imagine for the kids who aren't at that level how difficult it is for them.

The pressure that I feel that a lot of the students are under in terms of feeling like you know you can't be successful unless you take these courses. I think everything is driven so hard on achieving things that are really, I mean would be sort of out of reach for most people that like when I was going to school, like, I mean scores and grades were unheard of where I grew up and I just feel like there's a lot of there's a lot of academic pressure. Where I also think like for instance, my daughter I think feels like a lot of pressure, every day a junior. Now she's thinking about colleges and it's just like competitive. I think it really wears [on them].

Interestingly enough this reminds me that my child and my children, both of them say that they pick topics for research or projects that they know the teachers might grade better on if they understand the teacher's viewpoint and perspective. I found that really



interesting and they say that's the case how they pick their topics. But, [it's] also how their friends pick their topics to write that concerns me that the children are having to change what they're doing partly goes back to the standard is so high. I want to make good grades, and then I want to make sure how I do that so navigating the project or what I say in my papers pitch that my teacher will agree with me and I'll get a better grade. I just don't think that's the point of a good public education.

I don't know, it just feels overwhelming. I know there is just the competitiveness. There were kindergarteners with tutors after school. Constantly reading, writing, and everything just to make sure that they're like on top of the class and top of the standardized testing. It's just like I feel like they don't even have a chance to become themselves. They're just being pushed so early. That's just my feeling so far and it's just overwhelming for me. I can only imagine what the kids feel as they get older.

My son was in special education and that it would be administrators not taking parents or some parents seriously on goals that we wish to include in an IEP plan. I kind of felt that he's not producing and he's not growing as he's supposed to be in a special environment [to grow]. And, as I started to realize this, and I started to speak on it. A lot of things that I wanted to change in the IEP as his parents, it was kind of like we're not even gonna listen to you like at all. The advocate [being] involved changed [that] all of a sudden. It's all in the same areas, we're doing this, and this is happening. It was just a little upsetting that I had to take it to higher levels, instead of just understanding. And it just needed to be addressed, and maybe not wanting to hear, thinking that I don't know what's best for my child.

A process that examines who has access to educational opportunities relies on examining the district's disaggregated student enrollment and academic outcome and academic programming data (e.g., AP/Honors Enrollment) to assess whether the district enrollment reflects the student academic experiences and outcomes. The table below highlights the overall district enrollment numbers by race for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years.

Table 1a. District Enrollment Composition

<i>Race</i>	<i>2018-19 District Enrollment Composition</i>	<i>2019-20 District Enrollment Composition</i>
AI	0.04%	0.04%
Asian	6.62%	6.65%
Black	2.35%	2.19%
Latino/a	6.44%	6.91%
White	79.89%	78.94%
Multiple	4.65%	5.28%

**Disproportionate Access to Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction**

Foundational to equity-driven and culturally responsive environments is an instructional core that offers high expectations and rigorous instruction for every student regardless of identity markers (e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation, language, ability, and economic background) (NYSED, 2019). In Westport, critical markers of disproportionate access to opportunities are situated within the enrollment data for academic tracks, advanced placement (AP) and honors courses, as well as extracurricular activities (see Appendix E). NYU Metro Center’s IESC processed the district and school level academic data disaggregated by race/ethnicity and grade level. For the purpose of the analysis, benchmark assessment data included Fountas and Pinnell, NWEA ELA, and NWEA MATH. Alongside the benchmark data, annual report card grades (see Appendix D), extracurricular activities enrollment (see Appendix E), and AP, Honors and Track B and C enrollments were also included.

As highlighted in the 2018-19 and 2019-20 data, AP and Honors enrollment (see 2a-2d). Tables are both overrepresented by Asian and White students, exemplifying the lack of access Latino/a, Black, and mutli-racial students have to this level of curriculum and instruction. Black and multiracial students are particularly underrepresented in AP and Honors.

Furthermore, the district has academic tracks B and C which operate as more remedial instructional pathways - pathways that Black students are more likely to be on than any other racial group. In 2018-19, Black students made up 15.38% of Track B enrollment and 10.77% of Track C enrollment (compared to making up just over 2% of the student body) (see Table 2e-f). Similarly, in 2019-20, Black students made up 12% of Track B enrollment and 11.10% of Track C enrollment. Black students had particularly disproportionate representation in Track C as Latino/a students had the next highest enrollment at 1.40% in 2018-19 and 3.30% in 2019-20 (see Table 2g-h). Research has shown that higher level academic tracks like AP and Honors provide learning spaces that are more engaging and student-centered, while more remedial classrooms, largely composed of Black and Latino/a students, are focused much more on classroom management than intellectual engagement (Gregory et al., 2017). Offering equitable access to rigorous instruction can reduce the racial disparities in academics and discipline that exist in Westport.

Table 2a. Enrollment in AP Classes by Race (2018-19)

<i>Race</i>	<i>District Composition</i>	<i>Composition of Students Enrolled in AP Courses</i>	<i>Risk Index of enrollment in AP Courses</i>
AI	0.04%	0.00%	0.00%
Asian	6.62%	8.91%	16.94%
Black	2.35%	1.01%	5.38%
Latino/a	6.44%	5.75%	11.24%
White	79.89%	82.04%	12.94%
Multiple	4.65%	2.30%	6.23%



Table 2b. Enrollment in AP Classes by Race (2019-20)

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of School</i>	<i>Composition of Students Enrolled in AP Courses</i>	<i>Risk Index of enrollment in AP Courses</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Asian	6.60%	9.30%	18.30%
Black	2.20%	1.10%	6.80%
Latino/a	6.90%	5.80%	11.10%
White	78.90%	81.00%	13.50%
Multiple	5.30%	2.70%	6.70%

Table 2c. Enrollment in Honors Classes by Race (2018-19)

<i>Race</i>	<i>District Composition</i>	<i>Composition of Students Enrolled in Honors Courses</i>	<i>Risk Index of enrollment in Honors Courses</i>
AI	0.04%	0.00%	0.00%
Asian	6.62%	7.21%	22.40%
Black	2.35%	1.76%	15.40%
Latino/a	6.44%	5.63%	18.00%
White	79.89%	83.11%	21.40%
Multiple	4.65%	2.29%	10.10%

Table 2d. Enrollment in Honors Classes by Race (2019-20)

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of School</i>	<i>Composition of Students Enrolled in Honors Courses</i>	<i>Risk Index of enrollment in Honors Courses</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Asian	6.60%	7.60%	24.20%
Black	2.20%	1.30%	12.80%
Latino/a	6.90%	4.50%	13.80%
White	78.90%	83.30%	22.20%
Multiple	5.30%	3.20%	12.80%

Table 2e. Enrollment in Track B by Race (2018-19)

<i>Race</i>	<i>District Composition</i>	<i>Composition of Students Enrolled in Track B</i>	<i>Risk Index of enrollment in Track B</i>
AI	0.04%	0.00%	0.00%
Asian	6.62%	4.05%	4.10%
Black	2.35%	5.41%	15.38%
Latino/a	6.44%	8.38%	8.71%
White	79.89%	80.81%	6.77%
Multiple	4.65%	1.35%	1.95%



Table 2f. Enrollment in Track C by Race (2018-19)

<i>Race</i>	<i>District Composition</i>	<i>Composition of Students Enrolled in Track C</i>	<i>Risk Index of enrollment in Track C</i>
AI	0.04%	0.00%	0.00%
Asian	6.62%	4.29%	0.82%
Black	2.35%	20.00%	10.77%
Latino/a	6.44%	7.14%	1.40%
White	79.89%	67.14%	1.06%
Multiple	4.65%	1.43%	0.39%

Table 2g. Enrollment in Track B by Race (2019-20)

<i>Race</i>	<i>District Composition</i>	<i>Composition of Students Enrolled in Track B</i>	<i>Risk Index of enrollment in Track B</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Asian	6.60%	4.20%	4.20%
Black	2.20%	4.00%	12.00%
Latino/a	6.90%	7.60%	7.30%
White	78.90%	82.70%	6.90%
Multiple	5.30%	1.40%	1.80%

Table 2h. Enrollment in Track C by Race (2019-20)

<i>Race</i>	<i>District Composition</i>	<i>Composition of Students Enrolled in Track C</i>	<i>Risk Index of enrollment in Track C</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Asian	6.60%	6.30%	1.40%
Black	2.20%	16.50%	11.10%
Latino/a	6.90%	15.20%	3.30%
White	78.90%	62.00%	1.20%
Multiple	5.30%	0.00%	0.00%

### Disproportionate Classification and Exclusionary Discipline

Black and Latino/a students in Westport do not have the same access to even the general education pathway that so many students and parents/caregivers highlighted as rigorous and top-notch. A barrier to this access is the fact that Black and Latino/a students are being disproportionately classified with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and are also disproportionately impacted by exclusionary discipline.

In the 2018-19 school year, Black students were 2.64 times more likely to be classified into special education than their peers (see Table 3a). In the 2019-20 school year, Black students were 2.63 times more likely to be classified (see Table 3b). Similar disproportionate classification is evident with Latino/a students whose likelihood for classification was 1.67 times their peers in 2018-19 and 1.64 times in 2019-20. This data underlines the impact classification can have on the long-term academic trajectory of students - as it often becomes difficult once classified to have access to general education pathways. Dismantling disproportionate outcomes in special education requires a more specific and nuanced focus on the racial disparities both within special education services as well as general education as a whole, particularly how beliefs, policies, procedures and practices continue to lead to inequities (Kramarczuk Voulgarides, Fergus, & Thorius, 2017). Discipline policies and practices become a critical intersection in need of analysis as they often create heightened vulnerability and further inequities.

Table 3a. District IEP Enrollment (2018-19)

<i>Race</i>	<i>District Composition</i>	<i>District Composition of IEP Enrollments</i>	<i>District Risk Index of IEP Enrollments</i>	<i>District Relative Risk Ratio of IEP Enrollments</i>
American Indian	0.04%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00
Asian	6.62%	3.62%	7.10%	0.53
African American or Black	2.35%	5.98%	33.08%	2.64
Latino/a	6.44%	10.29%	20.79%	1.67
White	79.89%	77.61%	12.64%	0.87
Multiple	4.65%	2.50%	7.00%	0.53

Table 3b. District IEP Enrollment (2019-20)

<i>Race</i>	<i>District Composition</i>	<i>District Composition of IEP Enrollments</i>	<i>District Risk Index of IEP Enrollments</i>	<i>District Relative Risk Ratio of IEP Enrollments</i>
American Indian	0.04%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00
Asian	6.65%	4.03%	8.17%	0.59
African American or Black	2.19%	5.56%	34.19%	2.63
Latino/a	6.91%	10.83%	21.14%	1.64
White	78.94%	76.39%	13.05%	0.86
Multiple	5.28%	3.19%	8.16%	0.59

In terms of discipline practices in Westport, in 2018-19, Black students in the district were 6.30 times more likely to be suspended, whereas Latino/a students were 2.64 times more likely to be suspended in comparison to the rest of their peers. A similar trend persists in 2019-20, where Black students were 4.25 times more likely to be suspended alongside Latino/a students at 2.84 times more likely to be suspended in comparison to the rest of their peers. The district’s discipline system that disproportionately excludes Black and Latino/a students is inevitably limiting their access to rigorous instruction and curriculum. Furthermore, the disproportionate enrollment of Black and Latino/a students in remedial classes with less rigor and student engagement, intersected with the evident gaps in racial awareness and culturally affirming environments, leads to inequitable exposure to exclusionary discipline measures (Gregory et al., 2017).

### Academic Outcomes: NWEA Scores

Ultimately, the district’s NWEA scores, as seen below, highlight one of the potential outcomes of an educational structure that doesn’t provide access to rigorous and engaging instruction to every child. Black and Latino/a students had the highest risk of performing below the benchmark level on NWEA math and ELA assessments in both the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years (see Tables 4a-4d).

Table 4a. NWEA: ELA (2018-19)

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who completed</i>	<i>Composition of Students At or Above Benchmark level</i>	<i>Composition of Students Below Benchmark level</i>	<i>Risk Index of Students At or Above Benchmark level</i>	<i>Risk Index of Students Below Benchmark level</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Asian	6.90%	7.50%	4.10%	89.60%	10.40%
Black	2.00%	1.10%	6.40%	44.60%	55.40%
Latino/a	6.40%	5.50%	10.80%	70.90%	29.10%
White	78.50%	79.10%	75.70%	83.30%	16.70%
Multiple	6.20%	6.90%	2.90%	91.90%	8.10%

Table 4b. NWEA: MATH (2018-19)

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who completed</i>	<i>Composition of Students At or Above Benchmark level</i>	<i>Composition of Students Below Benchmark level</i>	<i>Risk Index of Students At or Above Benchmark level</i>	<i>Risk Index of Students Below Benchmark level</i>
AI	0.10%	0.10%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Asian	6.90%	7.80%	3.10%	90.80%	9.20%
Black	2.30%	1.10%	7.10%	37.50%	62.50%
Latino/a	6.50%	5.50%	10.50%	67.50%	32.50%
White	78.10%	78.80%	75.20%	80.50%	19.50%
Multiple	6.20%	6.70%	4.10%	86.50%	13.50%

**Table 4c. NWEA: ELA (2019-20)**

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who completed</i>	<i>Composition of Students At or Above Benchmark level</i>	<i>Composition of Students Below Benchmark level</i>	<i>Risk Index of Students At or Above Benchmark level</i>	<i>Risk Index of Students Below Benchmark level</i>
AI	0.10%	0.10%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Asian	6.80%	7.40%	4.10%	89.00%	11.00%
Black	2.30%	1.50%	6.10%	52.60%	47.40%
Latino/a	7.30%	6.60%	10.20%	74.50%	25.50%
White	77.00%	77.20%	75.90%	82.10%	17.90%
Multiple	6.60%	7.20%	3.80%	89.50%	10.50%

**Table 4d. NWEA: MATH (2019-20)**

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who completed</i>	<i>Composition of Students At or Above Benchmark level</i>	<i>Composition of Students Below Benchmark level</i>	<i>Risk Index of Students At or Above Benchmark level</i>	<i>Risk Index of Students Below Benchmark level</i>
AI	0.10%	0.10%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Asian	6.80%	7.50%	3.20%	92.10%	7.90%
Black	2.30%	1.40%	7.00%	48.70%	51.30%
Latino/a	7.20%	6.10%	12.60%	70.20%	29.80%
White	77.00%	78.10%	71.80%	84.20%	15.80%
Multiple	6.60%	6.80%	5.40%	85.90%	14.10%

As noted by countless parents/caregivers, Westport Public Schools has established an academic program that challenges and critically engages much of the student body. There is a history of high academic achievement and a desire to build on this legacy. The critical next step for the district is to examine this legacy with an equity framework. It is clear that access to many of the opportunities in Westport is escaping the most vulnerable communities that it serves. Moving forward, the school district needs to audit the AP, Honors and track B and C programmatic structure. It is critical that the district foundationally assess the pathways by which students are selected for these tracks and critically engage the disproportionality that currently exists within these enrichment offerings. Moreover, establishing a system of review and revision to address the disproportionality that exists in behavioral outcomes and IEP classification will also serve to open access to the teaching and learning that every child in the district deserves.



## Recommendation 3: Overhaul Data Systems: Disaggregated Data Collection, Analysis, and Usage

Districts that collect, disaggregate and share discipline data with district and school leaders and staff, including referrals and suspension data, demonstrate the importance of identifying and addressing discipline disparities (Carter et al., 2017; Gregory et al., 2017). The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA S. 1177) reauthorization included a number of provisions intended to reduce disciplinary exclusion and disparities in exclusion in states and districts. Such provisions for instance at a local level have included collecting disaggregated discipline referral and suspension data (Gregory et al., 2017). Without having a systematized disaggregated data collection process, including collecting and analyzing discipline referrals and outcome data, root causes cannot be identified nor action steps developed to address disciplinary outcomes (Carter et al., 2017). Through the equity study process it became evident that disaggregated data collection, analysis and usage varied. A noticeable gap existed with the lack of consistent collection of district and school discipline referral data. The district shared very limited discipline referral data. The only discipline referrals shared were ones that led to suspensions. Further, as highlighted in the *notes from the field* during the root cause sessions team members shared there was not a systematic approach in collecting discipline referrals; the only data collected was data that led to suspensions and those that needed to be reported to the state.

Even with the limited discipline referral and suspension data received from the district, disciplinary disparities exist. For 2018-19 based on the district level data received, overall the disciplinary level referrals and suspensions patterns demonstrated disparities across racial/ethnic student groups, e.g., a higher number of Black and Latino/a students were suspended in comparison to the White students and Asian students (see table 5b). Black students in the district were 6.83 times more likely to receive a disciplinary referral and Latino/a students were 2.61 times more likely to receive a disciplinary referral in comparison to the rest of their peers. White students and Asian students were less likely to receive a disciplinary referral with relative risk ratios of 0.45 and 0.48, respectively (see table 5a). As previously mentioned, Black students in the district were 6.30 times more likely to be suspended, whereas Latino/a students were 2.64 times more likely to be suspended in comparison to the rest of their peers. White students and Asian students were less likely to be suspended with relative risk ratios of 0.46 and 0.48, respectively (see table 5b). Similar patterns were prevalent in the 2019-20 discipline data. Black students were 3.31 times more likely to receive a disciplinary referral, whereas Latino/a students

were 2.47 times more likely to receive a disciplinary referral in comparison to the rest of their peers. White students and Asian students were less likely to receive a disciplinary referral with relative risk ratios of 0.55 and 1.04, respectively (see table 5c.). As previously mentioned, Black students in the district were 4.25 times more likely to be suspended, whereas Latino/a students were 2.84 times more likely to be suspended in comparison to the rest of their peers. White students and Asian students were less likely to receive a suspension with relative risk ratios of 0.46 and 0.98, respectively (see table 5d.) The discipline referral and suspension data by school is available on the Westport Public School website.

**Table 5a. District Level Referral Data (2018-19)**

<i>Race</i>	<i>District Composition</i>	<i>Count of Incidents (Students counted multiple times)*</i>	<i>Count of Students Referred (Students counted once)</i>	<i>Risk index of Students Referred (Students counted once)**</i>	<i>Relative risk of Students referred (Students counted once)</i>
American Indian	0.04%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00
Asian	6.62%	1.86%	3.26%	0.82%	0.48
African American or Black	2.35%	14.29%	14.13%	10.00%	6.83
Latino/a	6.44%	21.12%	15.22%	3.93%	2.61
White	79.89%	58.39%	64.13%	1.34%	0.45
Multiple	4.65%	4.35%	3.26%	1.17%	0.69

*\*total referrals given, students who received multiple referrals were included multiple times*

*\*\*total students who received referrals regardless of the number of referrals received*

**Table 5b. District Level Suspension Data (2018-19)**

<i>Race</i>	<i>District Composition</i>	<i>Count of Incidents (Students counted multiple times)*</i>	<i>Count of Students Suspended (Students counted once)**</i>	<i>Risk index of Students Suspended (Students counted once)</i>	<i>Relative risk of Students Suspended (Students counted once)</i>
American Indian	0.04%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00
Asian	6.62%	1.90%	3.30%	0.82%	0.48
African American or Black	2.35%	13.92%	13.19%	9.23%	6.30
Latino/a	6.44%	21.52%	15.38%	3.93%	2.64
White	79.89%	58.86%	64.84%	1.34%	0.46
Multiple	4.65%	3.80%	3.30%	1.17%	0.70

*\*total suspensions given, students who received multiple suspensions were included multiple times*

*\*\*total students who were suspended regardless of the number of suspensions received*

**Table 5c. District Level Referral Data (2019-20)**

<i>Race</i>	<i>District Composition</i>	<i>Count of Incidents (Students counted multiple times)</i>	<i>Count of Students Referred (Students counted once)</i>	<i>Risk index of Students Referred (Students counted once)</i>	<i>Relative risk of Students referred (Students counted once)</i>
American Indian	0.04%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00
Asian	6.65%	5.41%	6.90%	1.13%	1.04
African American or Black	2.19%	6.76%	6.90%	3.42%	3.31
Latino/a	6.91%	18.92%	15.52%	2.44%	2.47
White	78.94%	66.22%	67.24%	0.93%	0.55
Multiple	5.28%	2.70%	3.45%	0.71%	0.64

**Table 5d. District Level Suspension Data (2019-20)**

<i>Race</i>	<i>District Composition</i>	<i>Count of Incidents (Students counted multiple times)</i>	<i>Count of Students Suspended (Students counted once)</i>	<i>Risk index of Students Suspended (Students counted once)</i>	<i>Relative risk of Students Suspended (Students counted once)</i>
American Indian	0.04%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00
Asian	6.65%	4.84%	6.52%	0.85%	0.98
African American or Black	2.19%	8.06%	8.70%	3.42%	4.25
Latino/a	6.91%	20.97%	17.39%	2.17%	2.84
White	78.94%	62.90%	63.04%	0.69%	0.46
Multiple	5.28%	3.23%	4.35%	0.71%	0.82

Alongside discipline outcome data, in order to address discipline disparities, districts need to examine the policies that exist that often work to maintain the disparate outcomes. This includes analyzing the code of conduct and discipline referral form to assess how the code of conduct is being applied in practice (Gregory et al., 2017; Losen, 2015). Districts who engage in reviewing and overhauling their discipline policies and practices show reduction in their disparate discipline outcomes (Losen, 2015). Further, the review process must include meaningful parent, student, and community involvement in the creation and application of school and district policy to build effective schools with positive and inclusive learning environments (Advancement Project, n.d; Gregory et al., 2017).

### **Root Cause Process: Code of Conduct Review**

One of the central policies that was examined during the root cause process with the district root cause team was the district’s code of conduct to assess how discipline policy when implemented is leading to disproportionate discipline referrals and suspensions. In this process

NYU Metro Center's IESC requests the district share the code of conduct for the root cause team to review.

The root cause team reviewing the code of conduct included board of trustee members, parents, and district staff. They reviewed the code of conduct for two hours, using the questions listed in Appendix F as a guide. In this review of the code of conduct *the perspective of the district root cause team is central*. They are best equipped to offer the context to the code of conduct, including the purpose, development, and implementation. The findings below include the strengths and limitations revealed through the code of conduct review, and next steps to build on the strengths and address the limitations. The team highlighted the following strengths: 1) the code of conduct overall addresses the legal issues, state statutes, and policies; 2) the intent of the code of conduct was to create a respectful environment where students are empowered to learn and achieve, although the team stressed that the intent as listed above does not align with the purpose of it because of the subjective language that exists in the code; and 3) in general, the code of conduct allows for flexibility in consequences.

The team identified the following limitations: 1) the code of conduct is very general and has subjective language (e.g., disruptive); 2) the code of conduct does not promote restorative practice within the disciplinary realm; 3) the code of conduct is reactive, in particular it does not consider specific school climate and goals, and does not include anything on restorative action or relationship building; 4) the code of conduct is inconsistently applied based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, level of parent involvement, etc.; 5) no regular purposeful revision exists for the code of conduct; and 6) there are two different middle school code of conduct sections instead of one middle school level conduct for both.

The teams reviewing the code of conduct further highlighted gaps in implementation of the code of conduct: 1) reflective, restorative practice, problem-solving conferences are inconsistent. They exist in some classrooms and not in others; 2) the code does not capture the common practices that occur in the elementary classroom responsive classroom and RULER in particular, and 3) there is lack of support and professional learning for paraprofessionals who are often responsible for students in the most unstructured situations.

Moving forward, as the district revises the code of conduct the following should be addressed, including removing ambiguous and subjective language, offering language that centers equity and the recognition of cultural variation in behavior. The code should also include updates on the consequences associated with discipline incidents, and specific incidents that lead to particular consequences, and it should lay out age appropriate responses to discipline. The revisions should include various stakeholders' voices from social identity differences, in particular students and families of color (Advancement Project, n.d.). The code of conduct should center restorative approaches and lay out specific restorative practices (Gregory et al., 2017). Additionally, the code of conduct should highlight how Westport staff, students, and families develop an understanding of the code of conduct to effectively implement it.



## **Discipline Referral Form Analysis**

Another important process in the equity study was to analyze the discipline referral forms. This process allows for assessing how the code of conduct is being implemented procedurally and in practice. In this process, NYU Metro Centers' IESC requested the district share the discipline referral forms for the root cause team to review.

The root cause team was asked to complete an analysis of the discipline referral forms. Members of the team who reviewed the discipline referral form included board of trustee members, parents, and district staff, and school staff representing two elementary schools and the middle schools. The root cause team reviewed the discipline referral forms for two hours and addressed the questions in Appendix G. The district root cause team reviewing the discipline referral form was paramount as they were best equipped to offer the context of the purpose and usage of the discipline referral form. It is important to note that the analysis may not reflect all of the processes/procedures that the district/schools follow. The overall finding highlighted by the team reviewing the forms was that the form is not uniform across the district; the elementary schools have a form to document what happened, while at the middle school level no standard form is used. Below are additional findings from the team's review, including the strengths and limitations.

Through this process it was revealed that strengths of the referral forms include: 1) they are well worded and descriptive, and 2) offer space to include interventions/supports for students. The gaps of the referral form and process include: 1) lack of understanding among staff of the usage and purpose of the discipline referral form; 2) lack of consistency in the usage of the discipline referral form to collect data; 3) not having a school level system in place to document referral data; 4) the impact when the form isn't used as it affects having necessary information needed to further support students; and 5) having limited knowledge on cultural differences and student backgrounds and not making assumptions based on that; grappling with behavior based on individual vs. cultural variation as a result of limited knowledge.

Moving forward there should be a system to document discipline referrals across schools. The district should consider a universal district wide discipline referral form that builds in developmental appropriateness based on age, includes a space to describe the incident, supports that have been offered to students and a space for reflection. Include options on the form for restorative practices that are available to resolve the incident. The form should also align with the code of conduct. Finally, there should be an area for student demographic information to be added on the form. The process should include a clear process when the form is used by teachers, staff and administration, including discussing the purpose of the form.



## **Responsive to Intervention: Academic and Behavior Supports Review**

A Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) approach offers districts a systematic way to track data and provide prevention and intervention services that reduce exclusionary responses to student behavior. The emphasis is on providing access to support when students exhibit behaviors that are not in line with school rules and expectations (Ramey, 2015). Additionally, a multi-tiered system of support stresses that when students exhibit challenging behavior it is often connected to academics (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016), including implementing foundation tier 1 rigorous high quality differentiated responsive instruction (Gregory et al., 2017). As highlighted in *Recommendation 2* behavior and academic pathways must be in conversation with one another, particularly as the district seeks to address racial disparities and offer comprehensive support services across both pathways.

An analysis of the Response to Intervention plan for Westport was conducted to assess the level of tiered support, determine how students are referred and assess if the interventions are culturally responsive, identify how interventions are progress monitored and how they are monitored for implementation fidelity. The team analyzing the RtI plan tier 1, 2, and 3 reflected representation from the district and schools. In this review of the RtI plan *the perspective of the district root cause team is crucial*. They are best equipped to offer the context to the RtI plan for academics and behavior, including the purpose, development, and implementation. The teams reviewed the RtI plan and leveraged their expertise in implementing the interventions as they addressed the following questions: 1) What is the purpose of the intervention? 2) How are students identified for this intervention? 3) What is the frequency and dosage of the intervention? 4) When is it offered to students and who is responsible for its delivery? 5) Are the interventions tailored to support the experiences of culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse students? 6) Is the individual implementing the intervention aware of or trained to work with diverse populations? 7) How is the intervention monitored for implementation fidelity? 8) What data is used to assess intervention effectiveness? While it is not a fully exhaustive list, Appendix J provides a sense of the wide spectrum of supports and interventions students are offered in the district. Further, Appendix K highlights key gaps based on the root cause team's analysis of academic and behavioral interventions across all grade levels.

Overall the district plan outlines the differentiated interventions across the three tiers, e.g., high quality core instruction in tier 1, small group interventions in tier 2, and increased individualization in tier 3. That said, a more robust training of teachers and support staff is needed to better understand how academic and behavioral pathways intersect and how students, particularly historically marginalized students, are systematically supported across both pathways. In particular, what students move through intervention supports quickly and to the path of special education (Kramarczuk Voulgarides, Fergus, & King Thorius, 2017; Klinger et al., 2005). Moreover, current interventions are not grounded in culturally responsive sustaining education. There is a critical need for foundational staff training in CR-SE alongside training and support in CR-SE-based interventions. The need for culturally responsive interventions, specifically starting at tier 1, should be acknowledged in the district's RtI plan and should be the responsibility of all educators offering intervention services. Culturally responsive interventions can lead to eliminating disparities that currently exist in the district by recognizing the reality of cultural variation in learning and behavior (Artiles, 2015; Gregory et al., 2017; Harry & Klinger,



2014). Training teachers to be more culturally responsive starting at tier 1 minimizes the risk of students unnecessarily being pushed into more intensive tiers and special education assignments. Finally, given what the academic benchmark data, academic programming, and special education classification above highlights, it is critical to develop fidelity tools for interventions, monitor progress through the collection, analysis and usage of disaggregated data, and evaluate effectiveness of interventions/programs.

Without overhauling a data collection process, analysis and data usage, disparities in the experiences and outcomes of students and families remain unaddressed. The recommendation of overhauling of data systems, must include a data system that will allow for monitoring discipline referral, suspension and academic data including data collection, checking, and an analysis process that can be disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, IEP/Non-IEP, ENL/Non-ENL. The data then is continually used to inform action planning. Furthermore, the district needs to train leaders, teachers, and staff in using and analyzing disaggregated data.



## Recommendation 4: Invest in Ongoing Professional Learning and Development

Districts who are responsive to students and families of difference have clear process goals and outcomes to support leaders, faculty and staff in ongoing professional learning that respond to student and family needs. In their commitment to responding to social identity differences (race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, ability, religion, nationality, etc.), they continuously learn about implicit bias with attention to identifying and challenging their own biases, and identifying and addressing implicit bias in the school community (NYSED, 2019). A central theme that emerged from the root cause team when they were identifying the root causes of inequities in the district were the pervasive implicit biases that existed. For instance, the team stressed the preconceptions that exist in schools about marginalized students and families (e.g., assuming that all Black students are poor and will get in trouble, deficit thinking that exists in the district for students of color and different abilities). The equity study process it was discovered that a districtwide, systematized, ongoing professional learning and development structure was lacking. The need for professional learning for staff also came to light from parents/caregivers who spoke of the lack of preparedness the district and staff have in addressing diversity, equity and inclusion. Students further spoke of the ways that teachers were not prepared to adequately address and/or facilitate DEI conversations. Students stressed that *Connections* in the high school and kindness and diversity initiatives in middle school have been efforts to engage DEI, but they have not had their intended impact.

### Parents/Caregivers and Student Perspective

Parents/caregivers and students spoke of the district's lack of responsiveness to students across social identity differences. They have been disappointed how biased-based incidents have been handled and would like the district to move with a responsive plan, rather than being reactive when biased-based incidents occur. Further, they underscored the lack of priority that the district has given to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. As such, this creates the condition where families of color do not feel welcomed.

I've been disappointed actually in my experience because I thought it's Westport public schools. We have all of the resources, what I thought to be a progressive town. I am dismayed that DEI gets buried in the scoop. Black History Month is celebrated with a worksheet on Martin Luther King. It takes parents emailing the district to say there were



swastikas in Staples that requires a district wide email of condemnation. Like that it's just things are reactive, instead of proactive and it's 2021. Like, we have to be having these conversations at the kindergarten level because the kids see it. They can see it, they hear it, they talk about it, why are we hiding this stuff in our schools. I thought, if any district could do it, Westport could. I've been so dismayed that our district hasn't been more proactive with [this] and has, in fact, said no, in many cases.

In the Westport schools I have been more than dismayed, but shocked by how much pushback on every level. The town sort of provides like on all of the mark this idea of who Westport thinks they are as a town. Is [it] shockingly so progressive? Yet all of the markers like with the suspensions it's all there. If you know the story my heart is like I'm so sorry and yet I have 20 other stories that I could share. And generations of stories of people of color moving to the town and then sending their kids to private schools, because that felt safer for their kids. I'm worried that my child is going to perpetuate this, is being raised in a way where she's going to have to unlearn. I think about moving to New York City. I think about moving to Norwalk....I'm not worried about science and math. I want her to be a human being who doesn't go around with this myth of White, that she is somehow better than. I worry about just the history books, is she doing any critical thinking around race. I asked her and she's in middle school right now so I have a lot of separate conversations with her. Unfortunately, she's like we can talk about this again mom, it's hard, also with the middle schools to not have it reinforced in school. I work, so I'm busy all the time. She's getting a decent education, but in other areas she's getting a really horrible education.

I would say, I have two boys and they feel like sometimes their gender gets in the way. Like they might be interpreted as mischief makers and they're labeled because of that. I think they do feel that sometimes they might be treated unfairly because they're boys. I think that's been what I hear from them the most. My kids do like to joke around and they do like to have fun. That's just being a kid. I think they think it's that layer of when you're a boy that you know that's misinterpreted, like. For instance, I can give an example, my boys were really big on military history at a very young age, one of them loved knights and he drew a knight in art class. Knights have swords and it was immediately interpreted because he's a boy that drawing a knight and a sword meant that he was into violence. I don't know how that leap jump from drawing a knight was interpreted that way. I think sometimes stereotypes, whatever type stereotypes and biases that people have may interfere with actual attention to who the child is and how they're seeing [them]. I think I would say there are a lot of stereotypes and prejudices in this case it's gendered.

Concerning the anti-Semitic incident, I think they did something after the fact for a couple weeks. But, then it kind of went away. I think the same thing with you know the advocacy for gay rights. I just know there's no consistency to it there. It's not something that occurs throughout the year. [It] is cause and effect and then there's a reaction.

Particular identity groups that sometimes the teacher will then like lean on the students in the classroom that are from that group. Because they don't want to speak out of turn they think maybe the person who's talking about Black people they feel like let me ask the



Black student or the Jewish student about Hanukkah. I don't think that's always appropriate...get to the point where we don't have like only during Black History Month [that] we talk about Black people and only during pride months that we talk about LGBTQ. We've used pronouns you know if that started getting more normal to have people use their pronouns I think that would just would maybe carry over to other identity groups to just talking about [them].

Some of the curriculum feels White centered, particularly around Social Studies. Though that being said I do feel like the Social Studies teachers that at least my kids have had interesting topic conversations sort of feels like beyond just like what they're supposed to do on paper. They have come home and like discussed that, I found that to be quite interesting. Then one other thing I'll comment on, which was what I was thinking of this year [was] centered on LGBTQ and pride was sort of the theme that they were kind of bringing across all the schools.

The ways that the district does not have a plan on how to respond to social identity differences are exemplified with how families of color are treated. Both parents/caregivers of color and White parents/caregivers shared stories of how parents/caregivers of color were marginalized in the district.

Having my children out of district like I said it's a blessing and a curse because I have to go places where I'm an 'other'. I cringe when I have to go pick up things from Westport because I don't know what's going to happen. I don't bring my children with me to go pick up things from Westport because I don't know what's going to happen. And that it already feels horrible to be an other. But to feel like no one is acknowledging the fact that there are others, that is what is disheartening.

My son was in special education and that it would be administrators not taking parents or some parents seriously on goals that we wish to include in an IEP plan. I kind of felt that he's not producing and he's not growing as he's supposed to be in a special environment [to grow]. And, as I started to realize this, and I started to speak on it. A lot of things that I wanted to change in the IEP as his parent, it was kind of like we're not even gonna listen to you like at all. The advocate [being] involved changed [that] all of a sudden. It's all in the same areas, we're doing this, and this is happening. It was just a little upsetting that I had to take it to higher levels, instead of just understanding. And it just needed to be addressed, and maybe not wanting to hear, thinking that I don't know what's best for my child.

Similarly, students acknowledged the measures that the school community has taken in order to address issues of marginalization and lack of awareness. They often spoke about measures such as the implementation of *Connections* class in high school and kindness and diversity initiatives in middle school. In recognizing these initiatives students also expressed a desire for measures that go further and are more effective.

A lot of times I think teachers try to have important and thoughtful conversations, but they either don't really know how to deliver the material or like the classes aren't really



engaged and they don't know how to engage the class. Recently we've been doing some lessons about race and things like that, and I think they're really important lessons, but I think sometimes it even makes the teacher uncomfortable, which then affects the conversations because then the students don't really know how to handle it. I've heard teachers who've said that they don't really know how to properly deliver some of this material.

It's just the students don't really care about it so they're not really having thoughtful conversations and the teachers don't always know how to deliver it.

I don't feel like it's accomplishing what their meaning for it to accomplish because the questions they asked like they're clearly trying to start a deep conversation but none of the students are connected enough with the students and the teacher, although we've been with them for a while. A lot of times we don't feel connected with them, yet, and so, trying to start conversations feels very surface level and they're not actually interested in sparking conversation. They just are being told what to ask.

[Connections] hasn't had much of an impact. It just feels like just a hassle to cut time out of your other classes and go to a different classroom to do something that most of the students find kind of useless. When we first heard about Connections, I think we're kind of excited and curious to see what it was. I think they just didn't execute very well, like, I think, in theory, it's a good idea, it just feels very forced.

Yeah, I think Staples tries really hard. I mean like we have Connections, which is kind of like a homeroom sort of thing to bond with a group of students in your grade. And I mean no one really says anything in my Connections class and I basically talk to my friends, but it's clear that they're trying to set something up that will help us.

We're not a diverse enough school both population wise and education wise. We don't learn about a lot of things, a lot of classes are curriculum oriented so a lot of topics that are going on currently are ignored and skipped when we should be having these discussions and learning with an educator in the room. We need to learn more because you can only do so much with, for example, acids and bases and pH like there's so much more than we need to be learning that that I would love to learn more about. For example, we have a Connections class. It's like 20 minutes once a week. My Connections teacher struggles to speak English, so I don't get anything. Also, my entire Connections class doesn't want to talk about anything. So, I don't get to speak about anything and that time is meant for like these discussions that were meant to be having.

Parents/caregivers offered insight on the steps they want to see the district take to proactively respond to differences across social identity markers.

After we decided to move here, but before we actually moved here my daughter had found some newspaper articles about racial incidents and student accounts of those. [I] was really shocked. We talked about it and I got here and read some of the essays. And really found it shocking that these things hadn't been discussed head on. Not addressing



these directly and honestly with the student body shows a degree of tolerance that's unacceptable. So that's one thing I think when Team Westport hosts an essay contest and multiple stories are told about negative experiences that should be addressed at the high school. These are stories that are happening in the high school. It shouldn't just be addressed by the Westport library that's completely unacceptable to me. And those are the types of things that could be discussed in a school assembly. I'm not saying like zero tolerance, but next to zero tolerance that these things need to be addressed, discussed openly. That I think is a big shortcoming. I'd also like to see the school acknowledged, like the town just acknowledged the fact that this was at one time an Indigenous community of Native Americans. I think that's something that the school needs to address as well, just more acknowledgement of historical context. But, as far as like students day to day, I think it's really just having conversations out in the open and less tolerance for racial bullying or gender.

Like as a subject matter whether it's you know teaching about the Holocaust, or the Civil Rights Movement or LGBT as part of a curriculum. I think it's there and it's important it's taught, but I think you know we've talked about there's been incidents at school and the school then reacts for a period of time with speakers and meetings. But there's no and this is meant more at the high school level potentially, but there's no game plan to address the civil issues out there today.

Students expressed feeling ignorant about issues of marginalization and they wanted to learn more about how to address it when they see it.

Something I dislike is definitely the way the curriculum works, I think it definitely leaves a lot of things out in terms of current what's going on. Like issues about LGBTQ stuff or race, I feel like there's a lot of issues that aren't really addressed at the school. They're kind of glossed over almost so everyone kind of knows it exists, people know stuff has happened, obviously, but it's not really talked about as much.

It's predominantly White culture and it's a lot of sheltered people talking about things, I have no idea what's going on.

I think we just didn't know how to call [another student who said something offensive] out because it was something that we weren't used to doing. We don't ever learn how to address something like that, like we said we should stand up, but we don't know how.

I mean [race] it's one of the bigger problems that it just is not addressed at all. I think the one time we started really talking about it was an eighth grade when we learned about slavery, actually read the civil rights movement and a bit of slavery, [that's when] we started learning about that. But that's as far as it goes. Maybe there is one mention of something that happened today when we're watching CNN or something. I mean it's just not addressed and I think that it doesn't really come up. I feel like a lot of times, people are scared to bring it up, because they don't know how to talk about it because it's not something we're taught. We're not taught how to talk about [it] or research anything.



## Districtwide CR-SE Assessment

A central aspect of the equity study process was to complete the districtwide CR-SE assessment with the root cause team during the training sessions. The CR-SE District assessment utilizes the CR-S indicators listed from the NYSED Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education (CR-SE) framework highlighting the beliefs, policies, procedures and practices critical to building and fostering culturally responsive and sustaining district and school environments. The domains in the assessment include: 1) student-centered welcoming and affirming environments, 2) high expectations and rigorous instruction, instructional guidance, 3) inclusive curriculum and assessment, 4) ongoing professional learning and support to build staff capacity, 5) family and community ties, and 6) school leadership. The root cause team members completed the CR-SE assessment, followed by discussing the total score of the indicators together and identifying gaps. For domain 4, *ongoing professional learning and support to build staff capacity*, the team completing this part of the assessment, scored the district at 23%, the lowest score of the 6 domain areas (see Appendix H for specific questions and Appendix I for scoring). Additionally, the team also revealed that there are pockets of educators and initiatives that have come about organically for professional learning, but no clear vision or plan or districtwide messaging about the professional learning efforts.

Any district aiming to create Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts must develop a plan on how they will continue to develop their leaders, teachers, and staff - a plan that is responsive to ongoing student and family needs, and centers equity. Parents/caregivers spoke to the lack of a plan to proactively respond to the needs of students and families across differences. Students shared their beliefs on teachers' lack of capacity to facilitate/engage conversations centered on DEI. The disparities in discipline, academics and special education classification also bring to light the need for ongoing professional learning for educators. Without having a proactive professional learning plan inequitable experiences and outcomes will persist.



## Conclusion

Any committed effort that centers Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) must equip educators with professional learning that explicitly supports educators' capacity in implementing culturally responsive sustaining practices, including understanding their own implicit bias, and how the impact of sociocultural and sociopolitical factors, such as race, ethnicity, language, ability and culture, influence learning outcomes. Further, school communities engaging DEI work embrace "a cultural view of learning and human development in which multiple expressions of diversity (e.g., race, social class, gender, language, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, ability) are recognized and regarded as assets for teaching and learning." (NYSED, 2019). For students to thrive in school communities they must feel welcomed and affirmed in their social identity differences to experience belonging, academic engagement and learning. Leaders, teachers, and staff are central to creating spaces that are affirming and validating. To that end, leaders, teachers and staff must receive ongoing professional learning to design and implement policy, procedures, and practices that promote conditions that:

- Affirm racial and cultural identities and fosters positive academic experiences and outcomes
- Develop educators' abilities to connect across differences
- Empower educators as agents of social change
- Contribute to an individual's engagement, continual learning, growth mindset, and more effective practice through the cultivation of critical thinking and cultural proficiency
- Create and implement policies, practices, and procedures that are equitable

The concept of equity is synonymous with fairness and justice. To be achieved and sustained, we think of equity as structural and systemic as opposed to isolated and individual. An equitable system maintains policies, practices, and procedures in collecting, and analyzing disaggregated data to inform and address inequitable experiences and outcomes. Equity as a robust system and dynamic process reinforces and replicates equitable ideas, shared power, resources, strategies, conditions, habits, and outcomes. In order to increase access to programming for every student, a reframing of mindsets, policies, practices and procedures are warranted. Developing a more culturally responsive school district cannot be done with baby steps, an approach which often trades the possibility of equity for a privilege-sustaining illusion (Gorski et al., 2022). Transformative equity work requires culturally responsive-sustaining



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education to be the plate, the foundation by which all other initiatives sit on top of - this will be the critical push for the Westport Public School district.



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# Appendix



## **Appendix A: Focus Group Sample and Analysis Process**

### **Student Focus Group**

Student focus groups were conducted from June 9, 2021 to June 14, 2021. Twenty-eight students were asked to participate in the student focus groups and twenty students participated. Students were asked to describe their school communities and what they have observed within them (see Appendix B for Interview Protocol) in order to gain a deeper understanding of the student experience in Westport Public Schools. The focus group transcripts were read multiple times to identify reoccurring themes. These themes are broader but they are all layers of one larger theme which is the cost of education at Westport. The themes are as follows: 1) a quality education 2) competitive school environment 3) conscious tradeoffs 4) consequences of a competitive culture 5) power dynamics between students and teachers 6) marginalization of students, and 7) microaggressions and ignorance of what is outside the “bubble”.

### **Parent/Caregiver Focus Group**

Parent/caregiver focus groups took place between June 14 to June 16, 2021. A total of 39 parents/caregivers were invited to participate in the focus group, ultimately, there were 23 parent/caregivers that completed the focus group interviews. There were parent/caregiver representatives across grade levels and representing each school throughout the district. Several of the parents shared that their children had been attending Westport since kindergarten and for some even moved to Westport for their child to attend the district. Parents/caregivers were asked a series of questions (see Appendix C for Interview Protocol) to gain a deeper understanding of the district’s overall responsiveness to families along with issues of equity/inequity in the district. They were also asked similar open-ended questions to hear the thoughts and experiences of families as district stakeholders. The focus group transcripts were read multiple times to uncover common patterns that were shared across multiple parents/caregivers. The following consistent themes were identified across multiple parents/caregivers. The patterns listed below are general common patterns, and the specificity connected to these themes are offered below with direct quotes that demonstrate what parents/caregivers shared. 1) quality education; 2) fortunate; 3) trade-off/cost of a high quality education, and 4) inadequately prepared to address diversity.



## Appendix B: Student Interview Protocol

- 1) What does it feel like being a student at \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of District)?
- 2) What do you like about being a student at \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of District)?  
  
Probe: a. Tell me about one of your best experiences in school.
- 3) What do you dislike about being a student at \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of District)?  
  
Probe: a. Tell me about one of your worst experiences in school.
- 4) How would you describe your school culture?
- 5) What does successful mean to you?
- 6) Who in your school makes you feel successful?
- 7) Who in your school doesn't make you feel successful?
- 8) How do adults treat students at your school?
- 9) Who is treated well at your school? Who is not treated well at your school?  
a. Probe: what students are treated differently at your school because of who they are, what they look like or act?
- 10) When do issues of RACE come up at school? Describe how.  
Follow-Up:
  - a. Describe a personal experience
  - b. How did that make you feel?
    - i. Ask questions around intersectionality (e.g., race, gender, race/IEP, etc if they don't come up in responses.)
- 11) What can your school do better?
- 12) If a new student was coming to \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of District), what would you tell them about your school?
- 13) What else would you like to share with me that I didn't ask you about?

Thank you all for sharing your thoughts and participating.



**Appendix C: Parent/Caregiver Interview Protocol**

- 1) What does it feel like being a parent/family/caregiver of a student at \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of District)?
  - a. What does it feel like being a parent/family/caregiver of a student at \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of School)?
  
- 2) What do you like about being a parent/family/caregiver of a student at \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of School)?

Probe: a. Tell me about one of your best experiences with the school.
  
- 3) What do you dislike about being a parent/family/caregiver of a student at \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of School)?

Probe: a. Tell me about one of your worst experiences with the school.
  
- 4) How does the principal/school leader engage you in your child’s school?
  - a. **Follow-Up:** Does the school proactively reach out to you to be a part of your child’s education or is it something you have to start?
  
  - b. **Follow-Up:** Does the school honor/listen to/acknowledge the knowledge and expertise that you have?
    - i. **If so, how? If not,** how don’t they honor/listen to/acknowledge your knowledge and expertise?
  
- 5) How does the principal/school leader/teachers/staff at this school promote family and community engagement in the school, especially from families of racial, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds that have historically been excluded?
  
- 6) Is the principal/school leader at the school committed to sharing decision making and power with families and the community.
  - a. **Follow-Up:** If yes, how so? **Follow-Up:** If no, why do you think they are not?
  
- 7) Does your child’s principal/school leader/teachers/staff talk to you like an equal



and value your experiences, ideas and opinion?

a. **Follow-Up:** If yes, how so? Follow-Up: If no, why do you think they do not?

8) When do issues of RACE come up at school? Describe how.

Probe: a. Tell me about a personal experience

9) What can your child's school do better?

10) If a new parent was coming to \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of School), what would you tell them about the school?

11) What else would you like to share with me that I didn't ask you about?

Thank you all for sharing your thoughts and participating.

**Appendix D: Annual Report Card Grades****2018-19: (Grades 6-12)**

Table 6a. English (Students Passing and Failing a Course)

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who completed</i>	<i>Composition of Students passing the course</i>	<i>Composition of Students failing the course</i>	<i>Relative Risk Ratio of Students passing</i>	<i>Relative Risk Ratio of Students failing</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	-	-
Asian	6.30%	6.30%	10.00%	1.00	1.65
Black	2.00%	1.90%	20.00%	0.97	12.55
Latino/a	5.80%	5.80%	10.00%	1.00	1.81
White	82.30%	82.30%	60.00%	1.00	0.32
Multiple	3.70%	3.70%	0.00%	1.00	0.00

Table 6b. Math (Students Passing and Failing a Course)

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who completed</i>	<i>Composition of Students passing the course</i>	<i>Composition of Students failing the course</i>	<i>Relative Risk Ratio of Students passing</i>	<i>Relative Risk Ratio of Students failing</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	-	-
Asian	6.30%	6.30%	5.30%	1.00	0.82
Black	2.00%	2.00%	0.00%	1.01	0.00
Latino/a	5.80%	5.70%	21.10%	0.98	4.37
White	82.30%	82.30%	68.40%	1.01	0.47
Multiple	3.70%	3.70%	5.30%	1.00	1.45

Table 6c. Science (Students Passing and Failing a Course)

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who completed</i>	<i>Composition of Students passing the course</i>	<i>Composition of Students failing the course</i>	<i>Relative Risk Ratio of Students passing</i>	<i>Relative Risk Ratio of Students failing</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	-	-
Asian	6.40%	6.50%	0.00%	1.00	0.00
Black	2.00%	1.90%	14.30%	0.97	8.28
Latino/a	5.80%	5.80%	0.00%	1.00	0.00
White	82.20%	82.10%	85.70%	1.00	1.3
Multiple	3.70%	3.70%	0.00%	1.00	0.00



**Table 6d. Social Studies (Students Passing and Failing a Course)**

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who completed</i>	<i>Composition of Students passing the course</i>	<i>Composition of Students failing the course</i>	<i>Relative Risk Ratio of Students passing</i>	<i>Relative Risk Ratio of Students failing</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	-	-
Asian	6.30%	6.30%	0.00%	1.00	0.00
Black	2.00%	2.00%	0.00%	1.00	0.00
Latino/a	5.90%	5.80%	11.10%	1.00	2.01
White	82.20%	82.10%	88.90%	1.00	1.74
Multiple	3.70%	3.70%	0.00%	1.00	0.00

**2019-20: (Grades 6-12)**

**Table 6e. English (Students Passing and Failing a Course)**

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who completed</i>	<i>Composition of Students passing the course</i>	<i>Composition of Students failing the course</i>	<i>Relative Risk Ratio of Students passing</i>	<i>Relative Risk Ratio of Students failing</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	-	-
Asian	6.30%	6.30%	0.00%	1.01	0.00
Black	1.70%	1.80%	0.00%	1.01	0.00
Latino/a	6.30%	6.20%	14.30%	0.99	2.49
White	81.30%	81.30%	81.00%	1.00	0.98
Multiple	4.40%	4.40%	4.80%	1.00	1.09

**Table 6f. Math (Students Passing and Failing a Course)**

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who completed</i>	<i>Composition of Students passing the course</i>	<i>Composition of Students failing the course</i>	<i>Relative Risk Ratio of Students passing</i>	<i>Relative Risk Ratio of Students failing</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	-	-
Asian	6.30%	6.40%	0.00%	1.01	0.00
Black	1.70%	1.60%	10.50%	0.97	6.86
Latino/a	6.20%	6.20%	15.80%	0.99	2.83
White	81.40%	81.40%	73.70%	1.00	0.64
Multiple	4.40%	4.40%	0.00%	1.01	0.00



Table 6g. Science (Students Passing and Failing a Course)

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who completed</i>	<i>Composition of Students passing the course</i>	<i>Composition of Students failing the course</i>	<i>Relative Risk Ratio of Students passing</i>	<i>Relative Risk Ratio of Students failing</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	-	-
Asian	6.30%	6.30%	5.90%	1.00	0.94
Black	1.70%	1.70%	11.80%	0.97	7.57
Latino/a	6.40%	6.30%	17.60%	0.99	3.14
White	81.20%	81.30%	64.70%	1.01	0.42
Multiple	4.40%	4.50%	0.00%	1.01	0.00

Table 6h. Social Studies (Students Passing and Failing a Course)

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who completed</i>	<i>Composition of Students passing the course</i>	<i>Composition of Students failing the course</i>	<i>Relative Risk Ratio of Students passing</i>	<i>Relative Risk Ratio of Students failing</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	-	-
Asian	6.30%	6.30%	7.10%	1.00	1.14
Black	1.90%	1.80%	7.10%	0.99	4.03
Latino/a	6.40%	6.30%	21.40%	0.99	3.99
White	81.10%	81.20%	64.30%	1.01	0.42
Multiple	4.30%	4.40%	0.00%	1.00	0.00



**Appendix E: Extracurricular Activities Participation**

**2018-19: Sports, Music and Arts Participation**

Table 7a. Sports

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who participated</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in one Sports activity</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in two Sports activities</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in three or more Sports activities</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Asian	4.80%	4.96%	4.30%	5.24%
Black	2.11%	1.85%	2.25%	3.14%
Latino/a	4.98%	5.25%	4.92%	3.66%
White	85.66%	85.91%	85.45%	84.82%
Multiple	2.46%	2.04%	3.07%	3.14%

Table 7b. Music

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who participated</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in one Music activity</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in two Music activities</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in three or more Music activities</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Asian	10.64%	11.44%	8.96%	0.00%
Black	1.77%	2.18%	0.00%	0.00%
Latino/a	7.10%	7.08%	8.96%	0.00%
White	78.27%	76.84%	80.60%	100.00%
Multiple	2.22%	2.45%	1.49%	0.00%

Table 7c. Arts

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who participated</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in one Arts activity</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in two Arts activities</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in three or more Arts activities</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Asian	3.09%	2.97%	3.46%	2.70%
Black	3.34%	2.86%	4.09%	8.11%
Latino/a	5.94%	6.29%	5.03%	5.41%
White	86.00%	86.16%	85.85%	83.78%
Multiple	1.63%	1.72%	1.57%	0.00%



## 2019-20: Sports, Music and Arts Participation

Table 7d. Sports

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who participated</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in one Sports activity</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in two Sports activities</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in three or more Sports activities</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Asian	5.22%	5.38%	4.78%	0.00%
Black	2.52%	2.22%	3.41%	0.00%
Latino/a	5.22%	5.73%	3.75%	0.00%
White	84.26%	83.86%	85.32%	100.00%
Multiple	2.78%	2.81%	2.73%	0.00%

Table 7e. Music

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who participated</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in one Music activity</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in two Music activities</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in three or more Music activities</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Asian	12.10%	12.96%	11.43%	5.88%
Black	1.94%	2.16%	0.95%	2.94%
Latino/a	5.62%	4.63%	5.71%	14.71%
White	77.11%	76.54%	79.05%	76.47%
Multiple	3.24%	3.70%	2.86%	0.00%

Table 7f. Arts

<i>Race</i>	<i>Racial Composition of Students who participated</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in one Arts activity</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in two Arts activities</i>	<i>Composition of Students who participated in three or more Arts activities</i>
AI	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Asian	4.31%	4.44%	3.73%	6.25%
Black	2.16%	1.92%	2.71%	3.13%
Latino/a	5.60%	5.40%	5.76%	9.38%
White	85.60%	85.71%	85.76%	81.25%
Multiple	2.33%	2.52%	2.03%	0.00%



**Appendix F: Code of Conduct Analysis**

<p>How does the code of conduct align with your overall district culture and mission?</p>	<p>Mission: Mission Statement for Westport Public School is <i>To prepare all students to reach their full potential as life-long learners and socially responsible contributors to our global community. We achieve this by fostering critical and creative thinking and collaborative problem solving through a robust curriculum delivered by engaging and dedicated educators. We are committed to maintaining an environment that supports inquiry and academic excellence, emotional and physical well-being, appreciation of the arts and diverse cultures, integrity and ethical behavior.</i></p> <p>The Code of Conduct relates to the dominant culture: e.g., - “behave in a manner that is not <b>disruptive</b> to the educational process.” “Dress so as not to interfere with the work of the school or create a safety hazard” There are many laws associated with the code of conduct that Connecticut state law requires.</p> <p>The code of conduct is not well known or used in the classrooms. It doesn’t capture the components of RULER or responsive classroom that so many of our teachers utilize to address student conduct on a daily basis.</p> <p>The code of conduct does seem to align with the overall mission of the schools, but when looking at culture being beliefs and practices there are certain items that are lumped together that don’t seem to align, for example cursing and viewing inappropriate images are lumped together. Illegal behavior is lumped with non-illegal actions- i.e., smoking and dress code violation.</p>
<p>How was the code of conduct created?</p>	<p>The team reported not being sure who created the code of conduct.</p>
<p>Was there parent, student, and community involvement in the creation of the code of conduct?</p>	<p>The team reported not being sure if parents, students and community were involved in the creation of the code of conduct.</p>



<p>How often is the code of conduct revised?</p> <p>Who is involved in making the revisions to the code of conduct?</p>	<p>The HS team shared that updates are made each summer to the code of conduct by the Principal/Assistant Principals. Additional policies are added, but the team is unaware if there is a consistent process for updating or removing items that are no longer relevant.</p> <p>BOE Policy Committee is involved in the revisions of the code of conduct.</p>
<p>What is the purpose of the code of conduct?</p> <p>What are the goals of the code of conduct?</p>	<p>The purpose of the code of conduct is to maintain a safe environment for learning so children can access learning, establish behavioral expectations and establish an overarching philosophy and approach to discipline.</p> <p>The goals of the code of conduct include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Effectively communicate a clear set of expected student behaviors, infractions and consequences to students, parents/guardians, and staff, in an easily understood, concise format.</li> <li>2. Allow for consistent and predictable resolution of behavioral infractions.</li> <li>3. Reinforce Core Values (see page 17).</li> </ol>
<p>Does the code of conduct consider how culture shapes variation in behavior?</p>	<p>No, the code of conduct does not consider how culture shapes variation in behavior.</p>
<p>How does the code of conduct move past punishment and into support?</p>	<p>The code of conduct does not move past punishment into support. All consequences, in practice, are inconsistent - some continue to use responsive classroom logical conferences and conflict resolution, but this has grown more inconsistent in recent years.</p> <p>There is one part in the code of conduct that mentions a student can't be suspended until there is an informal hearing with administration.</p> <p>The code of conduct discusses a reintroduction, but no reference to restorative options. It does have tiered consequences, but it is still punishment focused.</p>
<p>Does the code of conduct move away from exclusionary discipline and use</p>	<p>The elementary school does move away from disciplinary discipline. The aim at the high school to use suspension as a last support. There is a tiered system of infractions where only the most egregious infractions</p>



suspension as a last resort?	warrant most significant disciplinary measures. The administrators aim to use less exclusionary consequences when possible.
Is there a progressive ladder of support embedded into the code of conduct and aligned to the disciplinary responses?	Under ISS on page 20, some supports are listed. This information should be highlighted as part of the underlying purpose and guiding principles, beliefs, etc. for the entire code of conduct at the onset of the document. It's possible that in practice that more support interventions are implemented than what are identified in the code of conduct.
For each infraction, is there a range of possible discipline responses that can be used?	Yes, each infraction has a range of potential discipline responses available including-In School or Out-of-School Suspension--Informal Hearing, Expulsion--Formal Hearing or Suspension/Expulsion of Special Education Students.
Does the code of conduct make space for restoration and relationship building?	No, the code of conduct does not have restoration and relationship building as part of it. Restorative practices are not discouraged, but there isn't the promotion of these measures nor has there been significant professional development or training in restorative practices. Any restorative practices that are put in place are at the discretion of the administrator.
How does your school use the code of conduct – how is it used by teachers? -how is it used by school administrators?	<p>At the elementary level the code of conduct is not really used by teachers. They usually create their own classroom charter or set of rules that they expect their students to abide by. Responsive Classroom approaches for “discipline” practices are used and the RULER program.</p> <p>At the secondary level, teachers are considered responsible for referring students to the administration regarding any possible disciplinary issues. The administration is responsible for collecting any necessary data, conducting the investigation, meeting with the student(s), issuing disciplinary consequences, and coordinating with staff with the code of conduct as a regular reference.</p>
How does your school ensure that all staff members have the same understanding of the code of conduct?	<p>The school of conduct is on the website, school's handbooks, and sexual harassment video.</p> <p>At the secondary level in the past, some pieces of the code of conduct, including academic integrity and attendance, have been reviewed through homeroom/Connections early in the school year, and when student handbooks were printed, they would sign off once having read the expectations. However, students and staff do not have a full understanding of expectations.</p>



<p>How do students and families receive the code of conduct?</p>	<p>Students and families receive the code of conduct in the handbook, which is online. It is posted on the district website and on each school building’s website.</p> <p>At the secondary level, in past years, it was reviewed in homeroom/Connections, and students signed a document indicating that they received the handbook. This practice has not been used this 2020-2021 school year.</p>
<p>How does your school ensure that every student understands the code of conduct?</p>	<p>At the secondary level, the code of conduct is online and Connections teachers show students where to find it. The whole code is not reviewed, the focus is primarily on attendance and plagiarism.</p>
<p>What ambiguous language or language that is open to interpretation exists in the code of conduct?</p>	<p>There is ambiguous language in the code of conduct, including infractions that are lumped together that don’t make sense. For example: refusal to obey a member of the school staff, law enforcement authorities, or school volunteers, or disruptive classroom behavior. Disruptive classroom behavior does not seem on par with refusing to comply with a law enforcement officer.</p>
<p>Is there language in the code of conduct that leads to criminalizing students?</p>	<p>There is no language that leads to criminalizing students at the elementary level. At the secondary level, there is language about not wearing “gang-associated apparel.”</p>
<p>Does the code of conduct reflect age appropriate responses to discipline?</p>	<p>The code of conduct does not spell out age appropriate responses to discipline. It is very broad and not by age or grade level.</p>
<p>Does the code of conduct include relevant protections from state and federal law on the rights of students with disabilities and the responsibilities of the school in these cases?</p>	<p>Yes, there is language to protect students with disabilities in the code of conduct document, not on the website.</p>
<p>Does the code of conduct clearly spell out due process, including a process of</p>	<p>The code of conduct does spell out due process for student suspensions and hearings.</p>



appealing suspensions?	
Does the code of conduct clearly indicate under what conditions law enforcement may become involved?	The code of conduct does indicate under what conditions law enforcement may become involved. Police referral is listed corresponding to several disciplinary transgressions (e.g., weapon).
Does the code of conduct allow discretion to be used in consequences on a case by case basis?	The code of conduct does provide a range of possible consequences for each infraction.  <i>On page 17 where it states , “it is recognized that traditional consequences have not always brought significant changes in behavior for all students. Within the confines of this policy, it is recognized that latitude and discretion may be necessary in affecting change with certain students.”</i>
Does the conduct of conduct clearly spell out what can lead to detention, ISS and OSS? And the number of days of detention, ISS and OSS?  Provide examples.	What warrants detentions in the code of conduct is not as clear, but some specific information regarding OSS and ISS is. There is flexibility based on individual situations.
Does your code of conduct lead to equal or equitable outcomes?	There is a great deal of inconsistent application in the code of conduct.
How is the code of conduct distributed?	The code of conduct is distributed through the district website.



**Appendix G: District and School Discipline Referral Analysis**

<p>What is the purpose of the discipline referral form?</p>	<p>The purpose of the referral form at the elementary level is to provide information to the administrator of what happened. The form contains information of what happened, where it happened, who was the referring teacher, and if the student is engaged in RtI or has an IEP.</p> <p>At the middle schools, no standard form is used. The alternatives offered include: 1) lunch detention; 2) explanatory note as to what happened; central detention (after school detention); 3) reflection report to parents; 4) bus incident reports and video; and 5) for serious infractions that violate district rules and require further investigation, there are clear processes for documentation.</p>
<p>When is this form used?</p>	<p>At the elementary school level, the form is used sporadically to look for trends and patterns. Teachers sometimes use it to refer students, but it is not used consistently. There also are no clear criteria for when kids are referred to an administrator.</p> <p>At the middle school level, there is no formal process. Some teachers may use a reflection form for students to recognize/understand why a certain behavior may have been unacceptable/unsafe and to inform the parents/families.</p>
<p>How does your school use this form? -How is it used by teachers and how is it used by school administrators?  -When are teachers and staff trained on the purpose and usage of this form?</p>	<p>At the elementary school level there is an internal document that is used.</p> <p>It is used by teachers to document an incident for the administrators. Administrators use the document to begin the conversation with the student. The administrator uses the forms as cumulative data for reflection on the year. When a conversation is had with students, there are nuances that are not included in the document. The form is shredded at the end of the year. Teachers were trained when the form was first rolled out. The team stressed that training should be revisited.</p>
<p>What are the possible outcomes when this form is used?</p>	<p>At the elementary school level, the form is used to reflect on areas of need and how staff can better assist students; Outcomes can be anywhere from modifications for individual students to suspension to adjustment of behavior management strategies.</p>
<p>When is the form entered into a data system?</p>	<p>At the elementary level the form is never entered into a data system.</p> <p>At the middle school, there is no data system for referrals.</p>



<p>Do the behavior infractions and consequences in the form align with code of conduct?</p>	<p>At the elementary school level there isn't a clearly articulated code of conduct except for what is in the board policies. Further, there are no standardized behavior-consequence flow processes.</p>
<p>What ambiguous language or language that is open to interpretation exists in this form?</p>	<p>There are no definitions on the form.</p>
<p>Does the form include space to list interventions/supports that have been offered to students to address behavior?</p>	<p>At the elementary school level there is space to include interventions/supports for student behavior.</p>
<p>Does the form require that administrators, teachers and staff include student demographic information (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, IEP/Non-IEP status)?</p>	<p>The form does require that IEP status be included, but not race/ethnicity and gender.</p>



## Appendix H: CR-SE Assessment Questions

### Ongoing Learning and Support to Build Professional Staff Capacity

*Ongoing professional learning is rooted in the idea that teaching and learning is an adaptive process needing constant reexamination (Moll et al., 1992; Gay, 2010). It allows learners to develop and sharpen a critically conscious lens toward instruction, curriculum, assessment, history, culture, and institutions. Learners must be self-directed and take on opportunities that directly impact learning outcomes. - NYSED Framework*

<b>Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education Indicator:</b>	<b>Continuously Responsive and Sustaining</b> Always happening, as a foundation for teaching and learning <b>(2)</b>	<b>Partially Responsive</b> Happens in pockets, mostly by select individuals <b>(1)</b>	<b>Nonresponsive</b> Actions maintain inequitable outcomes <b>(0)</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Evidence /Notes</b>
Provide supports, opportunities, and resources that build stakeholders' capacity to implement CR-S practices.	Cultural responsive and sustaining education is a clear priority in the district, one that is supported with time, resources and opportunities for all staff to learn - through adequate training - and implement CR-S practices.	Cultural responsiveness comes up frequently as a district priority, but only select schools have developed the capacity for intentional training.	Culturally responsive pedagogy does not exist in district messaging nor in practice in the majority of schools in the district.	0	
Train and build the capacity of instructional leaders to support teachers in delivering instruction that is rigorous, student-centered, and promotes students as agents of positive social change.	District and school-level instructional leaders receive ongoing training and support, with a particular focus on supporting teachers to develop the critical thinking and consciousness of students.	District and school-level instructional leaders receive ample support and training, however the focus is not always centered on developing students as agents of positive social change and often focuses on rigor without a culturally conscious lens.	District and school-level instructional leaders are often left to develop and carry out training and support of teachers without adequate time and resources necessary for their own development.	1	
Support staff in embedding grade-level, standards-aligned resources that emphasize cultural pluralism; social justice; and	District and school leaders have embedded systems of support to provide staff resources that ground content standards with a belief and approach	District and school leaders offer school staff standards-aligned resources with a culturally responsive framework but the	School staff do not carry out content delivery with culture nor social justice in mind.	1	



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<p>current events into curriculum across content areas.</p>	<p>that is welcoming and affirming to all cultural and social identities and cultivates learning spaces that intertwine these beliefs into curricula.</p> <p>These are resources from a wide range of mediums that connect to varying learning styles.</p>	<p>support to implement these resources is often limited, which leads to gaps in the ultimate delivery.</p>			
<p>Coach teachers to deliver high-quality instruction that enables students to grow as independent learners, think critically, make meaning of new concepts in multiple ways, and apply learning to meaningful, real-world situations.</p>	<p>District and school leaders have created and fostered systems of ongoing coaching and support for teachers around CR-SE practices. All teachers are full participants in a feedback cycle and have timely, periodic check-ins and coaching conversations to continue to grow their ability to deliver instructional content that pushes student critical thinking.</p>	<p>Instructional leaders in the district and school are assigned teachers to support and coach - often the teachers that are new and/or are producing the lowest academic student data. Coaching check-ins can be infrequent.</p>	<p>The coaching of teachers rarely happens in the district and when it does happen, it is mistaken for more evaluative observations and check-ins.</p>	<p>1</p>	
<p>Partner with teachers to audit curriculum, materials, and school or classroom libraries to assess: whether they properly represent, value, and develop students' cultures; presence of implicit bias; or omission of cultural (race, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, nationality, ability) perspectives.</p>	<p>District and school leaders partner with teachers to periodically and systemically run full audits of all school materials to ensure appropriate representation of diverse cultures and perspectives.</p>	<p>Teachers are active participants in the auditing of materials and resources in schools - looking for a diversity in culture and perspective, however this often becomes a one off job and is not built into a systematic practice.</p>	<p>Curriculum and materials are not reviewed to ensure proper representation or a diversity of perspective.</p>	<p>1</p>	



<p>Provide opportunities for teachers and leaders to receive trainings on topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, such as: critical self-reflection, disproportionality, anti-bias, developing racial literacy, combating racism and microaggression, etc.</p>	<p>Trainings are available for all teachers and leaders around issues of equity, bias and critical self-reflection, including PLCs that operate as continued learning spaces to further unpack issues and develop racial literacy. This work is part of an ongoing district initiative to offer training to all staff members - an initiative that is messaged clearly from the superintendent down.</p>	<p>The district and select schools have made trainings/PLCs on equity, bias and critical self-reflection available and many schools are in the process of training staff. However, The district has not effectively messaged taking part or knowing about the availability of the trainings.</p>	<p>Training/PLCs around issues of equity, bias and critical self-reflection are not made available in the district to teachers and leaders. Some staff members may have looked outside the district/their school to do this work.</p>	<p>0</p>	
<p>Create learning communities (i.e., professional learning communities, book study, discussion groups, online webinars, and digital subscriptions) for teachers to engage in topics that directly address educator and student identities and understand and unpack privilege.</p>	<p>Each school in the district has professional learning communities established to provide space and support for staff members to further engage in equity work, specifically creating a space to challenge and reflect on how their identities impact their students and families.</p> <p>There is ongoing financial and training support for these PLCs to continue.</p>	<p>Select schools have developed a strong culture of internal professional learning without much district support. Participants in the PLCs engage in equity conversations and build self-reflective skills.</p> <p>However, many staff members do not participate in these discussions.</p>	<p>If professional learning communities exist at a school in the district, they are focused on academic content areas without a culturally responsive lens.</p>	<p>0</p>	
<p>Identify and address implicit bias in the school and community environment.</p>	<p>Staff members have been trained to understand implicit bias and how it impacts students, families and colleagues.</p> <p>There is also a culture that has been developed where addressing implicit bias is not only allowed, but welcomed and will be addressed in the</p>	<p>Select staff and school leaders have been trained in implicit bias.</p> <p>That said, rarely is implicit bias addressed and actively responded to.</p>	<p>There is no underlying understanding nor practice of addressing implicit bias in the district.</p>	<p>1</p>	



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	district/school community.				
Disseminate existing, or develop new, self-assessment tools and resources for educators to assess and reflect on their implicit biases.	Research-based tools and resources are readily available and used throughout the district that allow staff members to reflect on their own implicit bias.	Apart from select professional learning communities in the district, there is not a system in place that challenges all employees to reflect on their implicit bias.	There are no policies or practices in place that challenge staff members to reflect on their own implicit bias.	0	
Support teachers in building capacity to leverage community context in curriculum.	<p>Teachers use practices that connect the community with curriculum across all content areas.</p> <p>A strong curriculum is one that celebrates and engages with the outside community.</p> <p>Time and resources are offered to build teacher's capacity to make these connections.</p>	<p>There is an underlying belief that community context is important and teachers that are able to make the connection to curriculum are celebrated.</p> <p>However, the training and resources needed for everyone to do so is not always readily available.</p>	Community context only comes up in isolated discussions or field trips loosely connected to the curriculum.	0	
Use data and research to identify teachers with strong CR-S practices and racial literacy skills and allow time/space for them to share their practices with other district teachers.	<p>The district finds and highlights teachers that are leading with a culturally responsive foundation using a classroom observation/visit tool.</p> <p>There are systems in place for school and classroom visits and discussions where these teacher leaders can share and model best CR-S practices.</p>	The district will spotlight teachers who are strong in CR-S practices, but struggles to systematize the sharing of these practices across schools.	Teachers who have strong CR-S practices are not highlighted in the district.	0	

On-going Learning and Support to Build Professional Staff Capacity Percentage Score: total score of   5   /22 =  23% %



**Appendix I: CR-SE District Assessment Results**

<i>Summary of Total Score for Each Indicator Domain</i>		
<i>Total Score for Each Indicator Domain (From Above)</i>	<i>Total Score</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Student-Centered, Welcoming and Affirming Environment	11/32	34%
High Expectations and Rigorous Instruction	8/16	50%
Instructional Guidance: Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment	10/28	36%
Ongoing Professional Learning and Support to Build Staff Capacity	5/22	23%
Family and Community Ties	13/26	50%
School Leadership	9/28	32%



**Appendix J: Tier 1, 2, and 3 Interventions and Supports**

<b>District and School Interventions</b>		
<i>Tier 1</i>	<i>Academic</i>	<i>Behavior</i>
	<i>Elementary:</i>	
	Decoding intervention/ fluency/comprehension	RULER
	Math numerical fluency	Responsive Classroom
	Writing fluency/encoding	SEL in PE
		SEL in Music & Art
	<i>Middle School:</i>	
	Workshop instruction approach	
	Varied assessment models	
	Small group conferencing	
	Literacy coach sessions	
	Student choice in text	
	Re do/Re test	
	<i>High School:</i>	
	Coaching	
	RTI referral	
	Consult teams	
	Learning centers and extra help with teachers	
<i>Tier 2 and 3</i>	<i>Academic</i>	<i>Behavior</i>
	<i>Elementary:</i>	
	Tier 2 Literacy	Behavioral consultation
	Tier 2 Math	Individual and small group counseling
	<i>Middle School:</i>	
	RTI Math	Behavior incentive plans
	RTI Literacy	Individual & small group counseling (Tier 3)
	RTI Academic support	Functional Behavioral Assessments(FBAs)/Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPS) (Tier 3)
		<i>Middle School:</i>
	<i>High School:</i>	
	RTI Behavioral support (BIPS)	
	Academic support class	Counseling, small group or individual
	Wellness seminar	
	Meeting with PPS staff	
	Nurse/Guidance	



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	Pathways (Tier 3)	
	Effective School Solutions (for 21/22 year) (Tier 3)	
	Bridge (9th/10th grade) (Tier 3)	



**Appendix K: Tier 1, 2, and 3 Interventions and Support Gaps**

**Intervention Gaps**

*The gaps listed below were identified by Root Cause participants as they engaged in the intervention inventory process.*

Tier 1	<p><i>Across K-12:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There has been very little training for teachers about the RtI process, making it difficult for staff to understand how and when interventions are needed and how to balance when interventions are requested versus when they are identified internally based on student need.</li> <li>● Interventions and supports are not explicitly tailored to support culturally, racially and linguistically diverse student populations.</li> <li>● Teachers need to be trained to understand what culturally responsive interventions look like.</li> <li>● There is a need to integrate social emotional learning interventions with a deeper focus on diversity, equity and inclusion and include more student voice in the process.</li> <li>● Responsive classroom is not being used universally due to lack of ongoing professional development and support.</li> <li>● There is a need for better data collection to measure whether interventions are effective.</li> </ul> <p><i>School Level Specifics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● At the elementary level, there is a lack of clear criteria outlining how students move up the tiered support system (from T1 to T2 to T3) and how students are able to move down (from T3 to T2 to T1).</li> <li>● Discrepancies exist at the middle school level in particular in regard to the entry criteria for a student to have behavior supports.</li> <li>● At the high school level there is a lack of communication between the RtI team and teachers.</li> <li>● At the high school level, there are no interventions specific to reading, writing or math that are not a special education service.</li> </ul>
Tier 2 and 3	<p><i>Across K-12:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There is a lack of clear criteria outlining how students move up the tiered support system (from T1 to T2 to T3) and how students are able to move down (from T3 to T2 to T1).</li> </ul> <p><i>School Level Specifics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There is currently no elementary writing intervention at the tier 2 or 3 level.</li> <li>● At the middle school level, there is a need for better understanding of the difference between tier 2 and tier 3 behavior supports.</li> </ul>

**Appendix L: 2018-19 and 2019-20 Westport Staff by Race and Years in Service**

<b>Employee Breakdown by Race</b>								
<i>Category</i>	<i>Race</i>				<i>Percentage</i>			
	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Latino/a</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Latino/a</i>	<i>White</i>
ADMIN -261 DAY DEPT CHAIR	0	0	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
ADMIN-ATHLETIC DIRECTOR	0	0	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
ADMIN-COOD/DEPT CHAIR 208	0	0	1	11	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	1.3%
ADMIN-EL ASST PRINC 202	0	0	1	3	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	0.3%
ADMIN-EL ASST PRINC 208	0	0	0	5	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
ADMINISTRATORS	0	0	0	22	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.5%
BUS MONITOR	0	3	0	9	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%	1.0%
CUSTODIAN	0	16	20	12	0.0%	44.4%	37.0%	1.4%
CUSTODIAN - NON UNION II	0	1	1	7	0.0%	2.8%	1.9%	0.8%
DIRECTOR OF TECHNOLOGY	0	0	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
HEALTH ASST	1	0	0	7	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
MAINTAINER	0	0	1	7	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	0.8%
MEDIA SPEC/LIBRARIAN	0	0	0	10	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
NURSE	0	0	0	15	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
NURSE SUPPORT SUPERVISOR	0	0	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST	0	0	0	8	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
PARAPROFESSIONAL	0	1	1	55	0.0%	2.8%	1.9%	6.3%



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PHYSICAL THERAPIST	0	0	0	2	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
SCHOOL COUNSELORS	0	0	0	15	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS	0	0	0	20	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%
SECRETARIES	2	0	1	32	11.8%	0.0%	1.9%	3.7%
SECRETARY - NON UNION I	0	0	0	2	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
SECRETARY - NON UNION II	0	0	0	3	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
SECURITY GUARD	0	0	0	9	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%
SOCIAL WORKERS	1	0	0	3	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
SPED PARAPROFESSIONAL	3	5	9	94	17.6%	13.9%	16.7%	10.8%
SPEECH/LANG PATHOLOGIST	1	0	1	14	5.9%	0.0%	1.9%	1.6%
STUDENT MONITOR	0	1	0	3	0.0%	2.8%	0.0%	0.3%
SUPERINTENDENT	0	0	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
SUPPORT SUPERVISOR	1	1	0	9	5.9%	2.8%	0.0%	1.0%
TEACHERS CURRIC/INSTRUC	0	0	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
TEACHERS REG ED	6	3	6	251	35.3%	8.3%	11.1%	29.0%
TEACHERS SPECIAL AREAS	2	2	9	120	11.8%	5.6%	16.7%	13.8%
TEACHERS SPECIAL EDUC	0	1	0	61	0.0%	2.8%	0.0%	7.0%
TEACHERS SUPPORT	0	2	1	43	0.0%	5.6%	1.9%	5.0%
TECH ASST. NON UNION 2	0	0	1	2	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	0.2%
TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANT	0	0	1	7	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	0.8%



<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
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<b>Employee Breakdown by Years in Service</b>						
<i>Category</i>	<i>Years in Service</i>			<i>Percentage Years in Service</i>		
	<i>0 - 5</i>	<i>6 - 10</i>	<i>Over 10</i>	<i>0 - 5</i>	<i>6 - 10</i>	<i>Over 10</i>
ADMIN -261 DAY DEPT CHAIR	0	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
ADMIN-ATHLETIC DIRECTOR	0	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
ADMIN-COOD/DEPT CHAIR 208	4	2	6	1.1%	1.5%	1.3%
ADMIN-EL ASST PRINC 202	2	0	2	0.5%	0.0%	0.4%
ADMIN-EL ASST PRINC 208	1	2	2	0.3%	1.5%	0.4%
ADMINISTRATORS	7	4	11	1.9%	3.0%	2.3%
BUS MONITOR	0	5	7	0.0%	3.8%	1.5%
CUSTODIAN	21	8	19	5.7%	6.0%	4.0%
CUSTODIAN - NON UNION II	0	2	7	0.0%	1.5%	1.5%
DIRECTOR OF TECHNOLOGY	0	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
HEALTH ASST	3	3	2	0.8%	2.3%	0.4%
MAINTAINER	1	1	6	0.3%	0.8%	1.3%
MEDIA SPEC/LIBRARIAN	3	1	6	0.8%	0.8%	1.3%
NURSE	4	4	7	1.1%	3.0%	1.5%
NURSE SUPPORT SUPERVISOR	0	1	0	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST	0	5	3	0.0%	3.8%	0.6%
PARAPROFESSIONAL	29	5	23	7.9%	3.8%	4.8%
PHYSICAL THERAPIST	0	2	0	0.0%	1.5%	0.0%
SCHOOL COUNSELORS	9	1	5	2.5%	0.8%	1.1%



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SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS	11	4	5	3.0%	3.0%	1.1%
SECRETARIES	13	0	22	3.6%	0.0%	4.6%
SECRETARY - NON UNION I	0	0	2	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
SECRETARY - NON UNION II	1	1	1	0.3%	0.8%	0.2%
SECURITY GUARD	8	0	1	2.2%	0.0%	0.2%
SOCIAL WORKERS	3	1	0	0.8%	0.8%	0.0%
SPED PARAPROFESSIONAL	69	5	37	18.9%	3.8%	7.8%
SPEECH/LANG PATHOLOGIST	7	3	6	1.9%	2.3%	1.3%
STUDENT MONITOR	2	0	2	0.5%	0.0%	0.4%
SUPERINTENDENT	1	0	0	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%
SUPPORT SUPERVISOR	6	0	5	1.6%	0.0%	1.1%
TEACHERS CURRIC/INSTRUC	0	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
TEACHERS REG ED	87	43	136	23.8%	32.3%	28.6%
TEACHERS SPECIAL AREAS	27	17	89	7.4%	12.8%	18.7%
TEACHERS SPECIAL EDUC	33	9	20	9.0%	6.8%	4.2%
TEACHERS SUPPORT	10	4	32	2.7%	3.0%	6.7%
TECH ASST. NON UNION 2	1	0	2	0.3%	0.0%	0.4%
TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANT	3	0	5	0.8%	0.0%	1.1%
<b>Total Employees</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>