



# DVCEE EXCELLENCE THROUGH EQUITY QUALITY PROGRAM REVIEW

May 10-21, 2021



COUNCIL ROCK  
SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SUCCESS FOR EVERY STUDENT EVERY DAY



Graduate School of Education  
**PennGSE**  
Delaware Valley Consortium *for*  
EXCELLENCE & EQUITY

**REPORT OF FINDINGS  
OCTOBER 2021**

October 6, 2021

To the Council Rock District and Community:

Our DVCEE Equity Through Excellence Quality Review Team wishes to thank and commend all the Council Rock District administrators, building administrators, members of the Board of Directors, support staff, teachers, counselors, parents/guardians, community leaders and of course the middle school and high school students who participated in this Excellence Through Equity Review process during the spring of 2021. We collectively valued and appreciated the open, positive, and professional attitude and support that was displayed by all.

The visiting team found the school board, administration, teachers, staff, students, and parents/guardians to be most cooperative and willing to openly discuss all aspects of the district's programs and practices, including both assets/strengths and challenges. Graciousness, openness, and hospitality were evident throughout the two-weeks of in-person and virtual interviews, making our work much easier and allowing us to collect extensive and valuable information from the key school and community stakeholder individuals and groups.

Over the course of 68 individual and group interviews that included 228 Council Rock stakeholders, our team of 16 school district professionals collected information in a variety of areas through interview and focus group protocols. These stakeholders provided detailed responses to specific questions that were developed by a Council Rock planning team in advance of our visit. DVCEE team members subsequently identified equity-focused needs and made practical Suggestions for Improvement by applying researched-based conclusions and their experience in the field to the data collected on-site, realizing of course that local context and priorities will ultimately determine local action.

We ask you to please keep in mind that the purpose of this review is to provide the district a framework for future and continued organizational growth relative to key equity concepts of access, opportunity, and inclusion.

We were pleased to have played a key role in your examination of the ongoing efforts to ensure excellence through educational equity in the Council Rock District. We wish you continued success in what is probably the most significant challenge for today and tomorrow – educating and preparing each and every child for future academic, work, and life success.

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# INTRODUCTION

In 2018-19 the Delaware Valley Consortium for Excellence and Equity (DVCEE) initiated a new service to our member districts that was designed to support the ongoing refinement of their educational equity improvement efforts. The ***DVCEE Excellence Through Equity Quality Review*** provides a focused and detailed examination of educational equity in school and district structure, policy, and practice.

*Educational equity is based on the principles of fairness and justice in allocation of resources, elimination of institutional barriers to access and opportunity, and creation of the real possibility of equality in positive academic and life outcomes for each student and between diverse groups of students.*

*It means that students' identities will not predict or pre-determine their success in our districts, in postsecondary education or in life.*

*It is based on a shared commitment to ensure that every student receives what they need to maximize that success, and that districts are committed to assure all students' equitable opportunity to access high level and engaging learning experiences, while actively eliminating institutional barriers in district and district policy and practice that limit or deny this access.*

This study was intended to provide a framework for future examination of critical policies, practices, and structures at the secondary level in the district that impact all students' academic and social-emotional growth and their future success. We hope this provides a helpful roadmap for continuous system improvement in the delivery of your education programs and the on-going development of impactful student learning experiences and inclusive school cultures.

In May/June of 2020 the Council Rock School District School Board passed a significant resolution to affirm and guide the district's future anti-racism and equity work:

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Council Rock School Board unequivocally stands firm in our collective responsibility to foster an equitable and inclusive environment for every student, staff member, parent, and community member. We commit to use our role as school board directors to recognize, respond, and speak out against injustice and racial inequity, to include violence, harassment, or bullying of any kind, in our school community. In support of this goal, the Council Rock School Board commits to the following action steps: 1.) Establish a CRSD Diversity and Inclusion Team inclusive of all District schools; 2.) Build upon effectiveness of existing school-based teams; 3.) Hold focus groups with recent graduates on preparedness for their next phase of life; 4.) Hold focus groups with current students, including students from underrepresented groups, on their experience in our schools and in our community; 5.) Have an external consultant conduct a diversity-focused curricular audit and/or an equity audit; and 6.) Create a systemic employee training program centered on diversity, equity, and inclusiveness.

In the Spring of 2021, at the invitation of Dr. Robert Fraser, Superintendent, and with the support of Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Susan Elliott, a diverse and experienced external team of educators and specialists was convened to complete a focused analysis of the status of educational equity in the district. The team was guided by the

specific request from Superintendent Fraser that the inquiry focus on the district's processes and procedures as they apply to student access, inclusion, and participation in the curriculum and academic programs in the middle and high schools in the district. The Excellence Through Equity Quality Review was also an effort to support and expand upon the Superintendent's SY 2020-2021 Objective Performance Standards that emanated from the Board's 2020 resolution.

The Excellence Through Equity Quality Review and identification of the visiting team was directed by Dr. Robert L. Jarvis, Director of DVCEE and the Penn Coalition for Educational Equity in the Graduate District of Education at the University of Pennsylvania. Consultants Mr. Arthur Mitchell, Dr. Michael J. Masko, and Mr. James M. Wigo, Sr. served as researchers and Ms. Dayna Muñiz also served as the key point person for managing logistics with the CRSD.

Participating external team members were identified from current Delaware Valley Consortium for Excellence and Equity member districts, the Bucks County Intermediate Unit, and regional student and family organizations, and represented a wide swath of expertise and experience relative to the defined goals of the study. The team members graciously gave of their time, talent, and extensive practical knowledge and craft wisdom to support their CRSD colleagues in the process.

Our research included in-person and virtual district and community interviews that were scheduled over a two-week period, district tours with principals, district document reviews, review and triangulation of student achievement and perceptual data, and an in-depth study of current equity-related policies, procedures, and practices.

Specific district demographic, outcome and placement data was requested from and provided by district leadership. (See Appendix C)

This Excellence Through Equity Quality Review focused exclusively on students' learning experiences at the **middle and high school levels** and was based on the following Focus Questions. These questions were developed in a 3-hour session with a group of district-identified Council Rock teachers and administrators in advance of the quality review process:

***Focus Questions: Equitable Access and Inclusion***

- How do Council Rock policies and practices ensure that all learners obtain unobstructed entrance, involvement, and full participation in programs and activities within Council Rock district middle and high schools?
- How do students feel about their district engagement/experiences and how does the system promote inclusive learning communities that encourages their sense of belonging and safety, and affirms their talents, backgrounds, and ways of living?

Core questions that were explored with all constituents:

- How are students placed into courses in middle school?
- How are students placed into courses in high school?
- What is your understanding of the difference between the different course levels?
- Which students are most challenged to be successful in our schools?

***Focus Question: Equitable Opportunity to Learn***

- How do Council Rock educators and district/school leaders create challenging learning opportunities such that every child, regardless of characteristics and educational needs, is given the requisite learning, social, emotional, psychological, and material supports to achieve the high academic standards of excellence that the Council Rock schools have set?

Core questions that were explored with all constituents:

- How do teachers communicate what is expected of each student?
- How does the Council Rock School District and its staff define success?
- How is it determined if a child needs additional support? How are services delivered and evaluated?

# **SECTION A - OBSERVED DISTRICT ASSETS AND STRENGTHS**

## **A Historically and Currently Highly Regarded School District in Pennsylvania**

By multiple accounts, the Council Rock School District has historically and is presently viewed as one of the top districts in Pennsylvania.

For the 2021 school year, there are 15 public schools serving 10,977 students in Council Rock School District. The Public School Review notes that the district's average testing ranking is 10/10, which is in the top 5% of public schools in Pennsylvania. Schools in Council Rock have an average math proficiency score of 71% (versus the Pennsylvania public school average of 45%) and reading proficiency score of 83% (versus the 62% statewide average). Asian students comprise 14% of the student body. Minoritized students at CRSD make up a smaller percentage of the student body when compared to the Pennsylvania public school average of 34% students from minoritized communities.

Both Council Rock North and South High Schools have been recently recognized by Newsweek and US News and World Report as top tier high schools in metro Philadelphia.

## **An Evolving District Vision and Commitment to Excellence Through Equity**

The district's strategic planning initiative was approved by the district board in 2019 and provides the beginnings of a framework for district improvement that is built around principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The plan, which runs from 2019-2023, includes a few critical action planning steps and strategies for nurturing the success of all CRSD students. It prioritizes the following goal areas: Student Wellness, Redefining Student Success, and District Safety and Security. Equity was embedded in the Student Wellness Goal. CRSD has been a valued and participating member of the Delaware Valley Consortium for Excellence and Equity since 2017.

This strategic plan offers starting points for addressing current equity-related challenges in the district. The district's commitment to improving upon current policies and practices for equity was evident from our early initial planning and conversations with district leadership and stakeholder groups. The original request from district leadership focused on developing a process for an audit of diversity in the curriculum. It was subsequently requested that the Quality Review team engage in a more broad-based study at this time.

In May/June of 2020, the CRSD School Board adopted a *Resolution Supporting The Development Of An Anti-Racist School Climate*. This resolution offers a firm commitment to equity and inclusive school environments, and offers a beginning frame for future district improvement (Appendix A)

Prior to the adoption of the strategic plan and the board's resolution, the district engaged in equity-focused work in 2017 with the support of the Peace Center and the Living Strong Consulting Group, who provided consultation, coaching support, and professional development to district and school leaders for "creating school environments where students feel safe, valued and heard." The lead consultant for that work shared on-going challenges and reflected on the need for "consistency and clear messaging and support from central office and more effective use of data to drive change and to address system policies and practices."

Also, in September of 2017, Dr. Fraser penned an important message of inclusion and respect to the Council Rock community affirming his and the district's commitment to equity:

Dear CR School Community:

As we embark on a new school year, I want to take an opportunity to send the unequivocal message to our school community, and most importantly to our students, that we are a school district who accepts and cares for each of our 11,165 students unconditionally. We embrace and value diversity, just as we embrace and value differences.

We look for and expect this culture to permeate our entire school community. That said, as we have learned the hard way, we are not immune to acts of hate. One assurance I will make as we venture into the new school year is that our schools are no place for actions or words that are racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, homophobic, or the like.

Parents, we ask for your help by monitoring the social media activity of your child or children. We are well into an era where students' online activity sometimes differs from and takes precedent over their offline behavior. Past incidents have brought about both school discipline and police attention, depending upon the circumstances. Perhaps worse yet, one's digital footprint can never be completely "erased" from the eyes of future employers and/or institutions of higher education. We all bear a level of responsibility in setting our students up for success in this regard, as we desire for no student to find themselves on the wrong end of a social media incident that can quickly go viral and take on a life of its own. And certainly, we never want victims of inappropriate online content.

I assure our students that no matter your race, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, or any real or perceived differences, we will love you and take care of you as one of our own. There is a safe place in the Council Rock School District for you. We are a community built upon common principles of kindness, love, respect, togetherness, and the decency to help out those who are in need. In fact, our 2017-18 district charity is a non-profit organization called Think Kindness, whose mission is to inspire measurable acts of kindness in schools and communities around the world. We look forward to a fantastic school year – for all students.

We appreciate the time and support you offer each of our students.

Thank you, kindly-  
Robert

## **District, Community & Co-Curricular Opportunities/Activities**

The district is steeped in its history and traditions. In many cases, students, parents,

teachers, and administrators with whom we talked viewed CRSD and the individual schools as the heart of the community, a central meeting place for learning, growth, networking, and social development. Several current stakeholders described a sense of “pride and belonging” to the district. The district’s status as the district of choice in the community comes in large part from its strong reputation for academic achievement and the rich number and variety of co-curricular activities and clubs that appeal to many students and address a wide range of interests.

### **Diversity and Inclusion**

While stakeholders across groups, including staff, parents, and students highlighted the limited student and staff racial/ethnic diversity of CRSD as a key challenge, they also recognized groups who “stood out from the masses.” A growing immigrant, non-English speaking population has added to the diversity of the community. Students with Russian/Ukrainian ethnic background make up the largest immigrant group in the district. There is increasing recognition of the district’s LGBTQ population. In the end and as might be expected, the diversity of CRSD student population is a direct reflection of the community’s changing population. As the demographics continue to shift, the district leadership strives to serve as a model of equity and inclusion for the greater community.

Council Rock North is a No Place for Hate School through the Anti-Defamation League. They have been recognized for their work on their annual cultural night as well as the school’s focus on teaching acceptance through literature. Faculty and staff at both high schools have collaborated with students to better understand the lived experience of students and the challenges they are facing. We encourage the district to continue growing their work in the student voice and leadership arena.

### **Teachers and Staff Relationships with Students**

There was evidence from our focus groups and interviews that the significant majority of CRSD teachers strive to build strong, albeit temporary, relationships with their students. We often heard such comments as “Teachers take kids under their wings every day.” Many teachers create welcoming, engaging, and safe places for their students. Students we spoke to stated that when in need of advice or support they tend to gravitate to teachers, coaches, or club moderators whom they know well.

The athletic coaches appeared to be highly regarded by student athletes for building strong personal relationships with students and their parents. Overall, coaches were perceived as nurturing and supportive of students.

### **A Wide Array of Curriculum Offerings and Instruction**

CRSD offers an extensive array of curriculum offerings, including Advanced Placement, Honors, and Academic level courses along with a comprehensive selection of traditional electives.

CRSD also offers a wide variety of clubs to meet every student's interest. The district participates athletically in the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association. Council Rock teams have historically been well represented in county competitions. Multiple stakeholders shared feelings of pride in the extensive opportunities afforded to students.

### **Special Education Support Services**

The district provides a full array of special education support services. The Special Education Program has a long-standing positive reputation that has influenced parents to seek placement in the program for their children with special needs. Other parents reported it as a critical factor in their decision to move into CRSD. We heard many positive perceptions from students and parents regarding the inclusive and supportive special needs classrooms and the educators teaching in those classrooms.

## **Section B - FOCUS QUESTION: EQUITABLE ACCESS AND INCLUSION**

How do Council Rock policies and practices ensure that all learners obtain unobstructed entrance, involvement and full participation in programs and activities within Council Rock schools? How do students feel about their school engagement/experiences and how does the system promote inclusive learning communities that promote their sense of belonging, and affirms their talents, backgrounds, and ways of living?

Probing questions that were asked to all constituents:

- How are students placed into courses in middle school?
- How are students placed into courses in high school?
- What is your understanding of the difference between the different course levels?

### **Nature of the Level System Grades 7-12**

#### Middle Schools:

Information from the district and our observations indicates that students are recommended for one of two general course levels, academic and honors: IEP and GIEP placement may constitute additional levels, depending on the nature of the students' needs and the number of students with similar needs.

The *Middle School Program and Planning Guide* conveys an inflexible structure and an overall tone of rigidity that seems unforgiving. Parents and students are cautioned about making decisions that might be a stretch for students and discourages attempts to move from academic to honors level classes. There does not appear to be an immediate offer of support to navigate the transition.

The distinctions between levels in many of the courses offered are not readily evident although there is an attempt to use language to draw distinctions. The only significant difference is in mathematics where the content of one course may prepare you for a pre-algebra course that does not exist in the math progression chart.

The *Middle School Program and Planning Guide* provides extensive information to students and families regarding their responsibilities but devotes little attention to how the district will help students achieve their academic goals. The current language in the document does not motivate parents or children to delve farther into the more challenging and potentially more rewarding levels of the advanced academic opportunities that are offered by the district.

The *Middle School Program and Planning Guide* devotes an entire section to

Keystone Exams as a graduation requirement. The Keystone Exam section in the HS document is completely different and would seem to indicate that the *Middle School Program and Planning Guide* has not been recently updated.

High Schools:

The high schools provide four general levels of courses with weighted grade point averages as follows:

	A	B	C	D	F
Advanced Placement (AP)	4.8	4.3	3.3	1.8	0
Honors	4.5	4.0	3.0	1.5	0
Accelerated	4.2	3.4	2.4	1.2	0
All Others	4.0	3.0	2.0	1.0	0

(Source: CRSD Parent Presentation 2021)

The *High School Program Planning Guide 2021-2022* describes Advanced Placement courses as follows:

*Advanced Placement (AP) classes are equivalent to university level courses. They are rigorous and are taught at an accelerated pace. Students will be expected to read and write in a critical fashion, analyze data, synthesize ideas, solve problems, and evaluate issues. Students should realistically expect a substantial amount of homework. Those who elect AP courses should be academically talented, highly motivated, and have a strong inclination for the subject.*

The *High School Program Planning Guide 2021-2022* describes honors courses as follows:

*Honors courses are designed to offer a greater depth of instruction at a faster pace. Placement into honors courses is based on exceptional performance or achievement in previous courses. Note that the teacher recommendation continues to be one of the strongest and most reliable criteria for honors placement. Standardized test scores can also serve as key indicators of ability to meet success in courses maintaining high scholarship standards. Finally, it is also important to recognize that honors courses place higher demands on a student's time. A demonstrated ability to work with a heavier than average academic workload is essential.*

Although the terms “accelerated” and “academic” are used in course titles throughout the *High School Program Planning Guide 2021-2022*, the guide contains no explanation of the nature of accelerated and academic courses, the difference between accelerated, honors, and all other courses, or the educational rationale for different course levels.

The *High School Program Planning Guide* includes the same paragraph from the

*Middle District Program and Planning Guide* that discourages moving levels:

*“Caution can be an important ingredient in the selection process. A student’s study habits and skills are not likely to change drastically over the summer or because of entering the next grade level. The schedule of courses should be challenging enough to encourage academic growth, but not so demanding that the student becomes overwhelmed and discouraged.”*

The following findings regarding the differences among course levels resulted from our interviews with students, parents and teachers and review of documents:

- Teachers communicate their expectations of students via presentations, explanations, and providing students with a syllabus for each class. High school students state that they have “a clear understanding of their teachers’ expectations as they relate to grades.”
- The course level determines rigor/expectations at which instruction takes place. Student participants reported that “.... different levels just feel different.”
- We found little evidence in our student focus groups regarding students being significantly challenged in middle and lower-level classes. Study participants expressed their perceptions of lower course levels offering: “.... very low expectations and everyone knows it.”
- An honors course is defined differently from an academic course because it is designed to be more challenging, and the cognitive/thinking requirements are at higher level. However, focus group participants shared that the essential difference among course levels is the number of assignments and pacing of instruction. The perception is that an honors level course has a faster pace, more depth, more homework, requires higher level skills and a strong work ethic. In contrast, academic level courses move more slowly and require less work. Some teachers conveyed that “hard work can get you anywhere.”
- Another difference between levels of the same course appears to reflect the removal of topics for lower levels. Honors courses appear to involve more independent work, a challenging level of reading, the ability to analyze, and demanding writing expectations.
- Participants shared that individual teachers appear to determine their own expectations for a particular level. One participant shared that: “...we all know the teachers to take if you want easy or if you’re okay with difficult.”
- We also heard from focus group participants that academic levels appear to have lower expectations of student learning and attainment and more frequently observed negative student behaviors and/or disengagement. One respondent put it thusly: “.... you can tell those classes just walking past the room...very disruptive.”
- The Advanced Placement Program description in the Planning Guide reflects a fixed mindset regarding students’ required skills, dispositions, and academic qualities.
- The Gifted program at the high school level seems to be relegated to social studies, not a GIEP.

- There was no mention of the alternative district settings or support for Social Emotional Learning (SEL).
- The Academic course level is perceived as being a “catch all.” We heard from numerous sources that teachers teach to the middle.
- Students perceive teachers of lower-level courses as providing students with an increased amount of help without students asking, and that students in Honors and AP courses should expect little teacher support if they are experiencing difficulty learning.

## **The Course Selection Process**

The high schools describe the course selection process as follows:

*Each year, CR high school students select a program of studies. This is an especially important task that involves some significant decisions and choices. It also is imperative that the courses selected are consistent with future educational and vocational goals. To be of assistance with this planning, the following activities are scheduled:*

- *Discussion in classrooms of course offerings in each academic area.*
- *Special presentations by teachers and department coordinators regarding specific courses and programs.*
- *An evening meeting for parents to give an overview of the educational program at the high school.*
- *Student conferences with counselors to discuss and select courses. Counselors are also available to discuss course selection with parents at their request.*
- *Caution can be an important ingredient in the selection process. A student’s study habits and skills are not likely to change drastically over the summer or because of entering the next grade level.*
- *The schedule of courses should be challenging enough to encourage academic growth, but not so demanding that the student becomes overwhelmed and discouraged. Students have four years in which to fulfill graduation and post-high district entrance requirements or gain entry-level job skills.*
- *Students choose a program in January/February and bring a copy home for parents to review and sign. In addition, a listing of requested courses is available in the Home Access Center. High school parents/guardians are advised to carefully read the below Guidelines for Program Planning and the Schedule Change Procedure. Course changes after the initial selections made in January/February become increasingly difficult to make. Therefore, attention to planning a program is extremely important.*

In essence, district documents and stakeholders’ comments describe a de facto traditional and highly tracked system.

There appears to be very few opportunities to exit the tracking system beginning in 6<sup>th</sup>

grade. As stated in the *Program Planning Guide* above, “*Placement into honors courses is based on exceptional performance or achievement in previous courses.*” The guide makes no mention of a student’s potential or of the supports that are available for students who wish to challenge themselves and extend their learning.

Nonetheless, there seems to be a strong level of comfort with the existing tracking system, because of the benefits it confers to some students. Although counselors record course selection data in their respective middle or high schools, principals and district leaders do not regularly track disaggregated course selection data longitudinally to determine the ability of students and groups of students to equitably access all curricula.

The following findings regarding the course selection process reflect our interviews with students, parents and teachers and a review of documents:

- The primary placement and recommendation factors are test scores coupled with teacher recommendations.
- Early placement decisions in elementary and middle schools are highly dependent on student performance on standardized tests.
- Parents can dictate placements with overrides and underrides.
- The override change policy discourages students and their parents from making changes or “they will suffer consequences.”
- Certain parents are more aware of how the system works and how to obtain benefits from the system for their children. Students agreed that it is “easy for parents to over-ride the recommendations to get what they want.”
- Parents often described their role as having to “fight” or “advocate” for their children for placement in advanced courses.
- Some parents expressed concern for other parents who do not or cannot advocate for their children, i.e., “...those who do not know how to work the system.”
- Some parents are discouraged to override. Focus group comments on this topic included the following: “You override at your own risk.” “I have an IEP and they said I should not take an honors course.” “You’re locked in.” “If you have the social capital, you can challenge your placement.” “The first child in a family is the guinea pig, and your younger children learn from your mistakes with the first child.”
- We observed that some students and their parents/caregivers are well versed in the Program Planning Guide and are more “course savvy” than others.
- Levels have an impact on students’ elective choices: Students in honors/accelerated course levels shy away from electives because many electives are not weighted for GPA calculations. Through our interviews and focus groups we found that grades and weighted GPA are of paramount importance to some students and their parents. Thus it seems that selection and sequence of course can be more grade than interest driven for some students.

- Placement decisions “are a life sentence”. If there is not a parental intervention a student will likely remain in the same track through the course of their school experience.
- Some teachers communicated rigidity in the placement process: “If you move up a level, you can’t move back down if you encounter difficulties.”
- Between February and May teachers have an opportunity to change their recommendations based on student performance, whereas IEP course level changes can take place at any time in the year.
- It is unlikely that a student will ever advance a level in mathematics, once placed in 7th grade. In general, 7th grade placement determines 8th and 9th grade course levels and subsequent high school placement opportunities.
- Students can change their mathematics course level and/or sequence only by completing a summer enrichment course that can be taken at parents’ expense.
- Students can gain course credit through private tutoring, and a culture of private tutoring exists; it renders the district-provided clinic offerings unappealing.
- Student registration for outside fee-based summer courses for credit is a known strategy to increase a student’s GPA and seems to emanate from high pressure and anxiety regarding students’ GPA. During our interviews, many students mentioned that Council Rock students are “grade grubbers” and “will stop at nothing to increase their GPA.”

## INCLUSION

The interview teams met with stakeholder groups and asked the individuals in the groups as to their experiences and/or perceptions of students’ sense of well-being and inclusion.

Probing questions included:

- Who are the students in the CRSD who find it most difficult to “fit in”? Why?
- Who are the students in the CRSD who tend to be most “invisible”?
- Does every student in the CRSD have at least one significant adult in the system they trust and that they to turn to for academic or personal support?
- Who are the students at CRSD who are most likely to feel “disrespected” by their peers, teachers, administrators?
- Are some students treated differently or more harshly than others relative to the school’s/district’s discipline practices? Why?
- How do CRSD students’ identities (gender, race/ethnicity, academic abilities, religion, first language, sexual preference) impact their school success, acceptance, and feelings of belonging?

In interviews with CRSD students of color, we heard that they experienced a low sense of social-emotional security at CRSD that is sometimes exacerbated by what students referred to as a lack of culturally responsive teaching and significant racialized bullying. “Teachers hear negative things said by students to other students but never address them,” and from some students’ perspectives those comments likely stem from unconscious bias. Additionally, some students shared that teachers can themselves make comments that are unknowingly insensitive or even insulting.

We came to understand that this year, a group of teachers at Council Rock South convened a focus group of diverse students, as a forum to better understand their experiences and their thoughts about changes to address issues they were facing. It is our understanding that a similar initiative is in place at Council Rock North and that committee of parents, students, faculty, and administration developed an equity statement for CR North.

Three themes emerged from the *We Are One* initiative that in many ways affirm the reflections of the students we interviewed. The following quotes reflect the findings from the *We Are One* student group and from the students we heard from in our interviews:

- **Learned Silence and Fear**
  - “There are many rules in this building, but not many protect us, and I just want to be heard and listened to”
  - In reference to fasting for a religious holiday- “teachers weren’t empathizing with me”
  - “Mental health is high stigmatized. CARES and Safe2Say are ineffective”
  - “I don’t like this feeling...I don’t want this pain to spread”
  - “I’ve been told to commit suicide by people on social media”
  - “I do not feel safe at school”
  - “People are scared about the GSA and nobody talks about LGTBQ rights”
  - “Socially, there is a lot of bullying in this school, some blatantly racist”
  - “Teachers are encouraged not to talk about controversial topics”
  - “We have an unspoken caste system here”
  - “Some teachers talk down to you- you should already know this”
  
- **Representation in the Curriculum**
  - “It’s (racism) not always intentional...it’s also due to ignorance”
  - “We don’t learn about anything going on outside of our world or community, but students are learning on social media”
  - “The use of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki was portrayed as a smart move, as a success, without considering the impact on me as an AAPI”
  - “We never hear about other cultures in social studies...it’s a very American and Eurocentric history.”
  - “It’s exhausting standing up as the vanguard of your culture”
  - “Someone showed me a meme that an English teacher shared to talk about modern English, and it’s a black person using African American

- Vernacular English, but the image was insulting”
- “In order to speak about equality and equity, you’re inevitably going to be political...race and gender issues will always be politics”
- **Equitable Consequences for “Bad Behavior”**
  - “There are so many microaggressions in this building. Just because you’re not in the KKK, doesn’t mean you’re not showing a sign of subtle racism”
  - “Honestly, that so “gay” is the favorite phrase of many young, white males in this building”
  - “There should be rules, people should follow those rules and there should be consequences if they are broken”
  - ‘Wearing a hijab makes me a target, and people think I’m weak because of it”
  - “Teachers don’t stop them and tell them it’s wrong”
  - “The district is scared to be an advocate for us”
  - “Rude things in hallways are so normal here”
  - “Dealing with some students I know is like trying to work with molding clay that has already hardened”

Teachers, administrators, and parents we spoke with talked about the “Council Rock Bubble” where students are given limited opportunities to connect and experience those coming from different backgrounds from themselves. In this vein, one teacher shared that, “our kids are myopic and have little sense of who they are”, and another expressed, “our kids don’t know who they are beyond academics and need to learn about others outside their community”.

Some teachers also expressed their own fears of talking about or addressing difficult and challenging topics that they know their students want to talk about. One teacher framed it as, “We need to walk on eggshells...the administration hears us but is not listening.” Council Rock staff participated in professional learning sessions with the Living Strong consulting group that addressed some of these issues, but we observed the need for sustained training. We commend the district for recognizing that continued support is needed and renewing their partnership with Living Strong. We believe continued focus on the development of staff around these issues will be beneficial.

Students we spoke with are very aware of other students’ socio-economic levels, mental health concerns, weight, appearance, clothes, cars, and special educational needs. Students gave multiple examples of micro-aggressions that they experienced and witnessed in classrooms as well as in less structured spaces such as the cafeteria, the halls, school buses and the public spaces.

Examples were provided by students who easily recounted having teachers who for a full year could not pronounce their South Asian names and who never tried to rectify their own deficiency in cultural responsiveness. Some students indicated that they simply gave up trying to become a “real member of the class.”

Some CRSD middle and high school students feel excluded in more than subtle ways and perceive that they have “their place in the school” by virtue of the curriculum in which they find themselves. Students described the school social strata as the “haves and the have nots” based on the AP/Honors to Special Education hierarchy.

At its worst, students struggling to learn or master the English language have been the target of harmful if not hateful statements from other students. The review teams’ interpretation is that much of students’ sense of social-emotional safety seems to revolve around academic placement and the achievement of better than average grades. The lowest leveled students not only struggle to learn but also struggle socially and find it difficult to “fit in”.

Some school counselors stated that they have little time to meet with students due to the burden of the number of students and the amount of crisis counseling that they are required to attend to. Students had little to say about the counselors except that some were helpful, and they were not seen overall as integral to supporting their school experience. When asked about who they saw as a support in times of need, it was almost unanimous that students saw their peers as the preferred confidant, contact, advisor, and problem-solver.

Such relationships beg these questions: Does every student at CRSD benefit from professional relationships, or are some students disengaged, alienated from learning and school life, and feel that they “do not belong?” What systematic and structured ways ensure that every student has the benefit of one significant and trusted adult, and that every student is provided academic, social, or emotional support when needed?

Some students did not see the application of the Discipline Code as arbitrary or capricious. Instead, the students experienced the discipline meted out by teachers and administrators as directly related to the academic level in which they exist. Some students saw South Asians as a lightning rod for discipline for some teachers while some staff are aware of the inequities in application.

## **Section C - FOCUS QUESTION: EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN**

The team's final questions revolved around the opportunities that students have available to them to learn. Namely the learning environment, teacher expectations, supports that are available for underachieving students and the district's definition of a successful student. The key focus question is as follows:

How do Council Rock educators and school/district leaders create challenging learning opportunities such that every child, regardless of characteristics and educational needs, is given the requisite learning, social, emotional, psychological, and material supports to achieve the high academic standards of excellence Council Rock schools have set?

### **Probing questions:**

- How do teachers communicate what is expected of each student?
- How does the Council Rock School District define success?
- How is it determined if a child needs additional support? How are services delivered and evaluated?

The responses to the inquiries about opportunities to learn were consistent. Most of the responses about communication of expectations by teachers cited the teacher providing a syllabus for direction but the first day of school, for many, was the last time any reference was made to it by the teacher. Generally, it was simply ...." pay attention as to what is going on in class and try to keep up as best you can."

The responses to the question of the district's definition of student success was overall consistent within and among shareholder groups. Teachers and administrators felt that they were concentrating on the development of whole child. They felt that they were aware of the social-emotional needs of their students and that they "work hard to make school and learning a happy experience". Students, on the other hand, felt that the curriculum, grades and the status of the college to which they could apply was the one and only definition of success used by the district.

One student was convinced that "the school gets a cut of the scholarship money given to us students. So, it benefits the school when we do well." Both the teachers, administrators and students feel the pressure applied by many of the parents of high achieving students, and the parallel stress and performance anxiety that many of these students' experience. They (parents) demand that their students be placed in the highest academic levels and, by way of pressure on the teachers, that they get good grades and, finally, that they qualify for acceptance at only the "best" colleges and universities.

Students who felt that they required support often disclosed that they felt more

confident going to an outside source. One student suggested that “some students don’t take advantage of adult relationships as they are scared of being judged.” If they are experiencing academic challenges/issues and parents have the resources, they likely will seek a private tutor. The Reading/Writing Workshop was perceived by many as a strength relative to receiving valued support. The extra help program offered by the schools, the Clinic, provides help at the level that students require.

The Student Assistance Program known as the CARES Program was referred to as “a running joke” among some students. They felt it lacked credibility and the students perceived confidentiality challenges as a barrier to participation. Some students indicated that any relationships they establish with faculty members are short lived and dissolve at the end of the course and classroom contact. Some perceived the counseling staff as “clerks during rostering season” and were not inclined to share their academic or personal needs with them. There seems to be a culture within the student body of more peer-to-peer counseling and advising for academic and personal concerns.

### **Differences in Student Experiences Relative to Different High Schools**

Overall, we found that CRSD is working diligently to provide equal resources and opportunities to each of the two high schools. There are some differences that only time will negate. Like most districts with multiple high schools, the challenges are many as the district seeks to provide each student population an equitable experience. Our interviews with faculty and students pointed to the challenges of normalizing the facilities and academic programs of the two schools. Student perceptions perhaps were the most pointed....” if you want a good education, you come to North. If you want to have fun, you go to South.”

### **Student Placement & Tracking**

It appears, as in most comprehensive high schools, that most ninth-grade placement decisions are made using data from mid-October/November in the 8th grade year. For the visiting team it raised the question, is there equitable access and inclusion for rising 9th grade students across all course levels?

We heard from parents, teachers, and students that the quantitative criteria for class placement begins as students enroll in CRSD and that, other than the “override process, there is not much “wiggle” room for students advanced course placements” if their scores or teacher recommendations place them at a lower level. We also heard that there are those parents who know the system and will apply the necessary pressure at the right time to assure that their student gets preferred treatment relative to roster selections and class levels.

Indeed, many students and staff shared with us the assumption that once a student is placed into a track, the student will most likely stay in that track. We found no evidence that CRSD collects disaggregated, longitudinal data on which/how many students move up or down a course level during their four years of high school, and

we found no evidence that CRSD educators regularly analyze the factors that promote or inhibit students moving out of and beyond their ninth-grade course placements.

We recognize that most high schools utilize a weighted GPA system, at least for Honors and Advanced Placement tracks. Nevertheless, we note that the inclusion of a weighted grading scale for all courses may be an inequitable practice that exacerbates inequities in different student's opportunity to learn by benefiting those in higher tracks and having the effect of disadvantaging students in lower tracks in three different ways: course title on transcript, grade point average, and class rank.

Finally, course level tracking limits many students' access to advanced courses and movement among course levels. Factors include:

- Many stakeholders perceive that the challenge of a course is equivalent to the student workload (amount of reading, number of assignments, amount of homework) in the course; that the amount of work that is required of students increases with the level of the course, with the least work required in Academic and the most in AP/Honors level.
- The current waiver process can discourage students from moving up course level. Students may be reluctant to challenge themselves by moving up a course level counter to a teacher recommendation because they are required to waive the right to move back down a level if they are struggling.

### **Master Schedule and Rostering of Students**

The visiting team's interviews revealed that access to courses is viewed differently by students, teachers, administrators, and parents. While most educators involved in course selection consider the process of course selection and rostering to be well-developed and functional, the process is not always clear to all students and parents. In particular, the following factors appear to create and perpetuate inequities in the course selection process:

- Course selection is dependent on teacher recommendations, the student choice, the parents, and the counselor. As mentioned before, many stakeholders cited the critical importance of parents advocating for their children's course placements for honors level placement.
- Parents of incoming students and many of those enrolled in the school describe course selection as something that they must "figure out" and must "fend for themselves." If parents are not knowledgeable or do not actively advocate for their children, advanced course placement decisions may not always be in the best interests of their own aspirations regarding their children's future education opportunities.
- Parents, and current students spoke of the counselors as being "inconsequential" in the rostering process. They perceive some counselors as "less engaged." It appears that the counselor role, due at least partially to large caseloads, has evolved to a primarily focus on managing student scheduling. Even here, the

counselors play only an intermediate role in course placement decisions after teacher recommendations. Successful counselors are seen as those whose students “get the greatest number of scholarships and admissions to selective colleges.”

- Some students and their parents are more knowledgeable and skilled at advocating on behalf of their students, and therefore, are served better by the current system. One sentiment shared was "You can get lost in the cracks." Many adolescents are reluctant, at best, to challenge the direction and adult guidance given around academic matters. That raises the question, how are students that don't have self-advocacy skills being taught, encouraged, or motivated by CRSD educators to advocate for their inclusion in more advanced or elective courses?
- CRSD educators shared a perception that some parents are often too busy to be involved or are not interested in being more involved, an assumption that needs to be explored. This suggests that current district practices may be a critical factor relative to the frequency and quality of parent participation in placement decision-making. There was also consensus among the professional staff that many parents are overbearing and demanding when it comes to placement, grades and college placement causing undo pressure on the entire system, mostly on their children.

Because the course selection process initiates with and is highly dependent on teacher recommendations there is a potential for implicit bias in the determination of a student's “potential” to succeed in higher level coursework. Teachers may not always be making course placement decisions using an informed “equity lens” and may not always have holistic and reliable information on each student's interests and potential for growth.

### **Support to Students in the ELD Program**

The ELD population represents a small but growing group in CRSD. Parents of students who are recent immigrants that are also in the English Language Development program report challenges with accessing services and securing the appropriate accommodations for their children. One parent shared that she has struggled to have school staff follow the accommodations listed in her student's LIEP. Additionally, she has had to notify the school of the supports that her child is eligible for during assessments such as Keystone exams. Unfortunately, despite her advocacy, her child was initially denied the extra time allowance during the Keystones and had to advocate for himself to obtain the additional time he needed. Training and direction from leadership is needed for staff to understand the appropriate services this population needs and is entitled to receiving.

## **OBSERVED STUDENT OUTCOMES AND COURSE PLACEMENTS**

### **High School Graduation Rate**

Graduation rates were provided for both North & South Council Rock High Schools and the data was very consistent from year to year and was reported using the standard PIMS reporting and certification form. Graduates and dropouts are disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender categories, Economically Disadvantaged, and English Learners, and Students with Disabilities populations. The schools have reported very little year-to-year variation between groups with the Economically Disadvantaged and Students with Disabilities groups having the largest number of dropouts.

It should be noted with some interest that the 2019-2020 the Expected Activity Certification Statement indicates that there were 886 graduates. Seven hundred and eighty-five (785) of the graduates reported that they had planned to attend a post-secondary school, college, and/or university in the fall of 2020.....that translated to 88.6%. A follow-up survey would be useful to determine the relative accuracy of the Certification Statement.

### **High School Final Grades**

The Council Rock High Schools reported their final grades with separate files for ELA, Electives, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Special Education. Grade options are A+, A, A-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, F, incomplete, no grade, P, and exempt grade. Consistent with the GPA data report, the final grades in both schools over a period of 4 years show that most of all students in all ethnic groups score between an A+ and C+ in all final grades. This information is consistent for both male and female students across the curriculum areas. While the data might be considered interesting, course grade data by teacher and leveled courses would be helpful in identifying trends and anomalies.

The final grade information is consistent with what we heard from students. There is a pervasive thought that “the achievement of good grades is everything.” It is the underlying definition of student success as it will lead to the goal of getting into the best colleges and universities. Some students defined the quest for top grades in the top courses as “grade grubbing” .....” whatever it takes.” Students appeared more interested in the compliance side of the course syllabus than the learning and competencies they would be able to demonstrate at the end of the course.

### **High School Honors/AP Course Enrollment**

The Council Rock School District has reported the number of students as well as the percentage of students (by school) enrolled in Honors/AP courses. The district also has provided a break-out of Honors/AP student seats filled by grade level. Each set of data is further delineated by ethnic/racial groups. For the purposes of this analysis, we choose to focus on the broader data and look at the 2 high schools and the Honors/AP enrollment during the 2020-2021 school year. The AP/Honors course enrollment data

below is broken down by reported race/ethnicity suggests that: 1) a relative overrepresentation of Asian students at both high schools, especially at North, 2) a relatively smaller underrepresentation of Hispanic students, and 3) a more significant underrepresentation of Black and Multi-Racial students in AP/Honors seats.

**Council Rock South**

2,013 student total  
3,479 Honors/AP seats

**White/Caucasian**

87.28% of the total student population  
85.25% of the Honors/AP seats  
1,757 students in 2,966 course seats

**Asian**

6.66% of the total population  
10.46% of the Honors/AP seats  
134 students in 364 course seats

**Hispanic**

3.53% of the total population  
2.90% of the Honors/AP seats  
71 students in 101 course seats

**Black/African American**

1.74% of the total population  
0.95% of the Honors/AP seats  
35 students in 33 course seats

**Multi-Racial**

0.60% of the total population  
0.29% of the Honors/AP seats  
12 students in 10 course seats

**Council Rock North**

1,588 student total  
2,888 Honors/AP seats

**White/Caucasian**

81.61% of the total student population  
74.31% of the Honors/AP seats  
1,296 students in 2,146 course seats

**Asian**

12.72% of the total population  
22.37% of the Honors/AP seats  
202 students in 646 course seats

**Hispanic**

3.27% of the total population  
2.08% of the Honors/AP seats  
52 students in 60 course seats

**Black/African American**

1.39% of the total population  
0.69% of the Honors/AP courses  
22 students in 20 course seats

**Multi-Racial**

0.69% of the total population  
0.17% of the Honors/AP seats  
11 students in 5 course seats

**GPA**

We have had the opportunity to review the 5-year GPA data provided by the Council Rock School District. The GPA data is broken out and provided by year, gender, and ethnicity. Data was provided for the 2 middle schools as well as for the 2 high schools. The GPA is represented in the report in increments of 2 points, i.e., 1.0-2.0, 2.0-3.0, 3.0-4.0, and 4.0-5.0. The ethnic categories include White, Hispanic, Asian, Black, Native Hawaiian, Multi-Racial, and American Indian.

The five-year charts are consistent. They record many students at both levels of the program (HS and MS) consistently scoring and maintaining a GPA between 3.0 and 5.0 with most of all students maintaining a GPA between 3.0 and 4.0.

The most significant finding relative to disproportional achievement among ethnic groups defined by grades was that the GPAs between 0 and 2.0 in the Hispanic groups were almost twice the percentage of the other groups. The middle school data for the Hispanic students was not significantly different from other ethnic groups.

We observed that the relatively high GPA for most of the high school population is consistent with the number of students enrolled in the weighted Honors and AP programs and the high grades achieved in those programs.

## SECTION D – SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

### ***EQUITABLE ACCESS AND INCLUSION, TREATMENT, AND OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN***

**Need: To expand communications and collaboration with the entire district staff to assess and address patterns of inequity that originate in grades K-8 and that persist through grades 9-12**

While we recognize the challenges that all districts face, CRSD Central Office needs to continue to take the lead on this issue. The district does not yet have an established structure for collecting and analyzing disaggregated data to guide the equity work. We found much of the data provided to us be available, but not yet organized/structured in a meaningful way that could help drive deeper reflection and discussion at the building and classroom levels.

#### ***Suggestions for Improvement:***

- Begin with developing a more consistent process for regularly collecting and analyzing and disseminating longitudinal disaggregated student data relative to performance, placements, school engagement and school culture/climate.
- Expand a cross-district working group designed to schedule, regularly review, and align the curriculum and instructional practices.
- Define clearer processes for the accurate and equitable monitoring of placement of students in your academic program that ensures increased access to high-quality, meaningful, and diverse learning opportunities for all students in their K-12 experiences.
- Review current decision-making processes, as well as the assessments and data used to place students, that may be unintentionally limiting student access to high level learning opportunities: We encourage framing this work as “making all decisions through an equity lens.”
- Regularly engage staff in data analysis of student movement among course levels and address questions such as: Should all levels remain? Where and why is student movement to high level offerings limited? To what degree are students’ education pathways fixed based on 7<sup>th</sup> and or 9<sup>th</sup> grade placement?
- Analyze and compare K-8 learning goals and desired outcomes, formative, and summative assessments, learning activities and resources, and instructional and grouping practices.
- Articulate and coordinate practices for identification, intervention, and support among the secondary schools.
- Identify a set of common best practices that address patterns of inequity among the schools.
- Schedule and conduct equity-focused walk-throughs that enable 9-12 teachers to observe teaching and learning K-8, and that enable K-8 teachers to observe

teaching and learning 9-12.

- Expand current and create new opportunities for shared professional learning across the district centering on:
  - Culturally responsive practices/pedagogy
  - Curriculum analysis and alignment across K-12
  - Differentiated instruction and assessment
  - Restorative disciplinary practices

**Need: To reevaluate course placement and leveling policies and procedures to encourage more students to access more rigorous academic pathways at CRSD.**

Current placement of students in courses is retrospective and primarily based on what students have done or demonstrated. However, we suggest that each student's course placement be forward looking in response to how each student wants to grow intellectually, how they are supported in understanding themselves-their evolving passions, purpose and potential, and how the CRSD system and educators will assist each student in meeting his/her growth goals and future aspirations.

We heard from multiple stakeholders of the need to examine the needs/potential for higher level learning of a significant number of secondary students- "the good kids in the middle". Many suggested that the highest performing and most challenged students are overall well-served in the CRSD, but there is also a significant number of students who could be engaging and achieving at higher levels given additional focused guidance, encouragement and support. It appears, as in many districts like Council Rock, that many in this group of students may not be highly interested or engaged in their learning and are basically satisfied to take academic track courses and get passing grades. A board member noted, "We have a lot of kids that would be great, but they don't know it."

Despite overall high ratings of the Council Rock high schools as cited earlier, one interesting anomaly is found in a Great Schools observation around the district's measures of students' overall growth/progress, it may be reflective of the relative "fixed mindset" of the system and what you observe with that large group of students in the middle.

The Great Schools Student Progress Rating measures whether students at this school are making academic progress over time based on student growth data provided by the Department of Education. Specifically, this rating looks at how much progress individual students have made on state assessments during the past year or more, how this performance aligns with expected progress based on a student growth model established by the state Department of Education, and how this school's growth data compares to other schools in the state. *They note that students at many of the schools in Council Rock are making about the same academic progress as the state average.* This could be an important finding to dig deeper into to relative to better understanding

the nature of your students' levels of engagement with school and learning.

***Suggestions for Improvement:***

- Begin to conceptualize the multiple pathways to post-secondary success beyond just participation in AP/Honors courses.
- Further develop a process for course placement that includes multiple measures of data (qualitative and quantitative).
- Collect disaggregated longitudinal data on which/how many students move up or down a course level during their years in the secondary school program.
- Regularly analyze the factors that promote or inhibit students moving out of their ninth-grade course placements.
- Identify the current barriers in content or instructional practice which discourage a broader, more inclusive set of students from accessing all parts of the curriculum.
- Expand all teaching staff professional development in differentiating instruction and assessment.
- Encourage teachers to collaboratively develop pathways for advancement rather than opportunities for exclusion.
- Reexamine the current philosophy driving course waiver policy. Establish, articulate, and fully support policy and practices for students who express a desire or are encouraged to take more challenging coursework.
- Explore barriers to access to high interest elective offerings as experienced by non-college-going/students with special needs/Academic track.
- Explore assessing all students' levels of engagement in learning per Schlechty (2002) five levels of student engagement.
  1. Authentic Engagement—students are immersed in work/activities with personal meaning and value (discussing a topic of personal interest)
  2. Ritual Compliance—the work/activity has little or no immediate meaning to students, but students are engaged because of extrinsic outcomes of value (earning high grades)
  3. Passive Compliance—students view work/activity as having little or no meaning, but participate/expend effort to avoid negative consequences (failing the course)
  4. Retreatism—students are disengaged from work/activity (observed texting on phone) and make no attempt to comply with work/activity but are not disruptive to others. Learning is unlikely to occur.
  5. Rebellion—students refuse to do the assigned task, act disruptive, and attempt to substitute alternative activities creating some-major disruption (viewing social media sites that distract students within viewing distance). Learning does not occur.

**Need: To create an environment where all parents are seen as integral to the decision-making process and are provided with the knowledge and opportunities for support to successfully advocate for their children.**

***Suggestions for Improvement:***

- Develop programming for parental information and engagement at the elementary and middle levels so that parents fully understand the pathways necessary for high school success. Parents need to have a clear picture of the significance of elementary and middle school course placement for the future course opportunities available to their students (e.g. the trajectory for HS math placement that begins with middle school courses).
- Ensure that guidance counselors are fully equipped to provide culturally responsive and equitable practices that produce deeper interactions with students, especially with respect to college, career, and life planning.
- Initiate and sustain expanded parent/caregiver support networks among CRSD parents so that informed parents can share knowledge and strategies for supporting their children's growth and development and navigating the system.
  - This could be done through parent cohort groups, especially for parents of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, so that parents who are adept at advocating for their children can share knowledge and strategies with other parents who may not have the knowledge or social capital.
- Help more parents learn to advocate for the children through a "parent buddy" system or "cohort family networks" among CRSD parents so that fewer parents will have to fend for themselves.

**Need: To enhance the course selection process so that all students and their parents are making the "right" choices regarding academic level and elective courses in the context of continuous progress toward their long-range aspirations and goals.**

***Suggestions for Improvement:***

Evaluate the effectiveness of the Counseling Model to ensure that all students are:

- Fully engaged in Career and Life Planning during their four years in high school.
- Creating a Course of Study Map and revising the Course of Study Map each year before the course selection process begins.
- Making course selection choices with a specific set of ends in mind.
- Equitably moving into higher academic tracks (Honors, Dual Credit and AP) over the course of their four years of high school.
- Have equitable and unencumbered access to college, career, and life planning opportunities and services regardless of the academic track in which they are placed.

Evaluate the effectiveness of the current Counseling Model to ensure that all school counselors are:

- Using students' course of study maps and career interest/pathways to address disproportional course selection choices by students and to advocate for greater inclusion of a greater diversity of students of in Honors and AP courses.
- Promoting students' progressive development of self-advocacy and resiliency skills
- Helping all students discover their opportunities for growth, passions, and purpose

**Need: To effectively gather, analyze and utilize disaggregated data to enhance student outcomes and close achievement and attainment gaps, focusing on process as well as product.**

***Suggestions for Improvement:***

Engage the expertise and interest of an expanded CRSD Equity Team to:

- Begin to regularly collect and monitor disaggregated data on racial, gender and economics. Use consistent formulas for assessing disproportionality.
- Consider these resources: Fergus, E. ***Solving Disproportionality and Achieving Diversity. A Leader's Guide to Using Data to Change Hearts and Minds***, Corwin, 2017 and Fergus, E. and Aram, R. ***Data Analysis Workbook: Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in Special Education***, Metro Center for Research on Equity, and the Transformation of School.
- Determine data sets that CRSD will use to determine the effectiveness of efforts to enhance student outcomes and close opportunity and achievement gaps. These data sets should be research-based and sensitive to equity-oriented changes in process and practice at CRSD.
- Track and monitor data over time to determine if equity-oriented interventions, policies, and practices are improving student outcomes, and to what extent.
- Share longitudinal student outcome data transparently on an ongoing basis with constituents, including students, parents, teachers, and the board of school directors.
- Engage in the collection and analysis of qualitative data that helps the school district to better understand the lived experiences of students as they navigate their time at CRSD.
- Require teachers to review and analyze qualitative and quantitative data in faculty meetings, department meetings and during in-service days. Teachers need to analyze real numbers, data, and trends and use their analysis to inform and change their instructional practices with the goal of reducing disproportionalities, enhancing student outcomes, and closing all achievement gaps.

**Need: To develop a comprehensive plan that makes clear the districts goals and aspirations and provides required personal and professional learning opportunities for all employees of the district to promote access, opportunity and inclusion.**

***Suggestions for Improvement:***

- All school leaders and administrators need to be fully engaged in professional learning about equity that is appropriately aligned to their role.
- Accountability in equity needs to be tied to specific job responsibilities and integrated as equity goals into individual performance plans.
- Clarify and develop a messaging campaign that provides ongoing communication centered on CRSD's vision of equity, inclusion, and diversity. The messaging should express a sense of urgency around "who we are, what we believe, our status and progress, what we need, what we aspire to become, and how we will get there."
- Provide all staff members with a consistent, outcome-oriented, ongoing, job-embedded focus on issues of equity and implicit bias, with ongoing review and evaluation of equity in process and outcomes as a visible product.
- Extend professional learning to all school community stakeholders to develop an equity and inclusion lens and provide specific training to all school community stakeholders in cultural responsiveness and proficiency, differentiation of instructional strategies, and trauma informed care.
- Provide baseline training in culturally responsive practices for all instructional and administrative staff. Provide on-going and integrated collaborative time for growth and development.
- Consider supporting a model that uses instructional coaches who are equity trained.
- Consider actively engaging your students in developing and leading staff professional development activities.
- Integrate an equity and cultural proficiency lens to administrative walk-throughs in classrooms. Define critical classroom "look-fors."
- Training for educators on how to outreach to and better communicate with diverse families.

Please refer to Appendix F in this report for additional resources for future suggested program planning and professional learning.

***REORGANIZING FOR EQUITY***

Our many interviews have revealed that CRSD staff have different understandings of the meaning of meaning of educational equity. In most cases, equity is understood as racial equality, to the partial or total exclusion of other markers of student identities, e.g., gender, disability, first language, home culture, economic status, etc. We encourage the district to establish a common language and understanding around the

concept of equity that encompasses the many dimensions of difference present in the CRSD community.

We also found the district in need of developing a comprehensive district-wide action planning process for integrating equity principles in policy and practice. This is a critical and most opportune time to conceptualize and develop a district framework for future policy, program, and policy development and refinement viewing decisions and activities through an “Equity Lens” given the district’s new comprehensive planning process this year. See Appendix D for more information.

We found that CRSD has many critical stakeholders (Students, Teachers, Administrators, Board Members and Parents/Caregivers) who we spoke with who are very interested and passionate about playing a part in helping to take the district to the next level in building and assuring school experiences that enhance the learning and social-emotional-cultural development of ALL students We encourage district leadership to leverage the interest in the community to incorporate a wide range of voices in the new plan. The district may also wish to consider contracting with skilled external organizational/equity consultant(s) to support the district in this process.

### **Board Development and Public Commitment**

At the foundation of this work, we believe that the Council Rock Board of School Directors, in collaboration with district leaders must play the critical role in supporting the development of policies to guide systemic excellence and equity in district practice. This will best be accomplished through policy and practice review through an equity lens that emphasizes equitable and impactful resource allocation, increased active engagement of the diverse communities and families it represents, enhanced open communications and planning with students and school staff, and the development of an embedded process for the continuous monitoring of disaggregated system-wide student performance, placement, and school climate/culture data.

We believe that effective school boards make a critical difference in supporting system efforts to improve and sustain high student performance and establish a solid foundation for all students’ future success in post-secondary education, work, and life They do this by working with the community, and the superintendent and his or her team to shape an authentic vision and mission for the district. From an operating frame of continuous improvement, they identify and support core values and beliefs that drive district policy and practice and that define expectations for the quality of every student’s learning experiences.

Your board will establish whether equity becomes a priority in your district community. The board will need to support the district leadership team in making necessary change happen through system goal setting, strategic and operational plans, and the development of accountability systems that measure and publicly report on indicators of success.

Having a strong excellence through equity focus supported by a thoughtful, deliberate, and strategic board policy framework will offer opportunities to sustain an excellence through equity-based agenda now and into the future for CRSD. When vision, policies and monitoring systems are aligned, it is far more likely that the right policies, practices, and expectations will become more deeply embedded in the daily operations of the district. That will promote and sustain excellence through equity commitments into the future.

We believe that school boards that intentionally lead for excellence through equity provide different levels of support to meet the most urgent student and staff learning and development needs and achieve improved academic performance and outcomes. Effective school boards are organized to “break the links” of longstanding barriers that adversely impact the success of all students, and fully accept the responsibility to lead for excellence through equity.

We suggest that the CRSD Board may benefit from engaging with a skilled organizational/equity consultant for the purposes of their own on-going professional learning. This will also benefit the board in coming to shared understandings of how the district will define and communicate to the community about educational equity, developing an initial statement/resolution of commitment, and possibly framing new district goals relative to achieving excellence through equity in Council Rock.

Developing a comprehensive district-wide action planning process that builds from this report, a new Board statement on equity, and elements of the Strategic Plan action plans should be a priority.

### **Developing A New Vision of Student Success Via a Portrait of the CRSD Graduate**

We found a relatively narrow notion of student success in our conversations across CRSD stakeholder groups. Student success appears to be viewed and measured via curriculum, grades, GPA and the quality of the college or university to which the student is accepted.

However, CRSD, like all districts, has an unprecedented opportunity to transform their K-12 education system to advance equity and to help every student succeed by establishing a new definition of success. As an important first step, CRSD policymakers and stakeholders will need to collectively clarify/identify the critical knowledge, dispositions, and skills students that will need to succeed in college, career, and civic life within and beyond the Council Rock community.

Today’s youth must be prepared to take on jobs that have never existed and to tackle challenges in a more complex and diverse society. Our economy is shifting focus from an industrial age to one which will require our future workforce to focus on intellectual and creative capacities to problem solve in an increasingly complex and diverse world.

All students need to develop lifelong learning skills providing the foundation for higher-level learning and working, including:

- self-management,

- effective communications,
- ethical decision-making
- productive social interactions that enable students to be successful in life, navigate new and diverse environments, and
- manage their own learning.

Additionally, students must cultivate strong habits of work, social and emotional skills, a growth mindset, metacognitive skills, and higher order/deeper learning competencies. The emphasis for future readiness is clearly shifting to a combination of applied knowledge and higher order skills in applied settings.

As the district had planned to do this past year, we strongly recommend engaging in a collaborative community process of redefining the portrait of the CRSD graduate that will represent the school district's vision for the 21st century learning skills, understandings, dispositions, and/or social-emotional competencies that all students will need to succeed in post-secondary education, the world of work, and life. The work of preparing students for the next level of curriculum or work, regardless of what that might be, is paramount to the development and integration of equity principles into everyday practice in the Council Rock School District.

Consider building off your current mission statement below:

*As a leader in educational excellence, and a vital resource in the community, the Council Rock School District is committed to children and will empower them with skills and knowledge through comprehensive, innovative, and diverse educational experiences, enabling them to achieve self-fulfillment and to become productive, responsible citizens who contribute to the world community.*

The end deliverable can serve as a public-facing north star for guiding the process of continuous improvement for excellence through equity. It could also be incorporated into an updated mission statement and the district's comprehensive strategic plan.

It is important to note that a district's Portrait of a Graduate is meant to complement your current academic programs and test scores as measures of preparedness. When considering skills and mindsets, the 4 Cs designed by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21)—critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication—can be a strong starting point. This popular framework also includes life skills such as flexibility, initiative, social skills, productivity, leadership, and literacy skills such as information literacy, media literacy, technology literacy.

We highly recommend that you also consider language that uncovers and honors shared core values of your diverse neighborhoods and constituents you serve, including the skills and traits that multiple community members take pride in and hope to pass on to their students and children.

While it does not replace a focus on academic achievement, the portrait demonstrates the school district community's commitment to investing in educational experiences that educate the whole child and prepare all students for success in what will be an increasingly diverse and complex district, community, society, and world.

## **Begin Your Equity Efforts Targeted on Inclusion and Belonging**

One key overarching theme we heard consistently from students we spoke to highlighted the need to continuously monitor and listen to the voices of all students to better understand their lived school experiences- especially of those students whose racial/ethnic and sexual preference identities are not fully accepted and validated in the current “Council Rock culture.” There is also a need to develop a more effective system of response by teachers, administrators, and students to the “everyday” instances of bullying and demeaning racial/ethnic, anti-Semitic, and anti-gay slurs among peers.

To bring about equity we believe that we must create learning spaces in our schools where all students regularly feel that they belong and that they are psychologically safe. Students need to feel appreciated, validated, accepted for who they are and treated fairly. These needs are foundational to learning. This study uncovered multiple indicators that for many students , across dimensions difference, there are challenges to fitting in, feeling connected, and feeling a strong sense of belonging and safety due to microaggressions and bullying behavior of peers, and at times, the insensitive responses from teaching staff.

We strongly suggest annual, on-going assessment via school climate surveys and focus groups, such as the “We Are One” initiative at South, to gauge school-wide culture and climate. This type of regular feedback from all students regarding their school experiences is invaluable and will help the district uncover challenges and affirmations to students’ identities, well-being, mental health and academic performance.

We suggest the work of Dr. Floyd Cobb and John Krownapple, *Belonging Through a Culture of Dignity: the Keys to Successful Equity Implementation* as a possible starting point for the assessment of your school climate and culture.

## **Develop a High Functioning District Level Equity Team**

We spoke with many stakeholders- from board members to students- who are passionate about playing a part in helping to take the district to the next level in nurturing and sustaining school experiences that enhance the learning and social-emotional-cultural development of ALL students. We encourage you to tap into that enthusiasm and expertise. We encourage the district, with the support of a skilled and trusted consultant, to bring a diverse and committed group together as soon as possible to tackle and organize for the next phase of your work.

Creating and nurturing the development of a highly functioning CRSD District Equity Team can help anchor, drive, and center your excellence through equity work. This team needs to be well supported and viewed in your system as a prominent and influential organizational structure, composed of both formal and informal leaders, and one that has primary responsibility for designing, coordinating, and organizing your district and school level equity-focused strategic planning efforts and initiatives.

We would recommend that this may be a most opportune time to reconceptualize and reconstitute the Equity/Diversity, Inclusion, and Cultural Competency Committee as a key organizing district structure for the work.

*A new CRSD District Equity Team needs to be steadfastly focused on supporting systemic change in policies, practices, and procedures that will lead to more equitable outcomes for all students and therefore a continuation of academic growth.* The team should serve as the engine for change, leading the way, highlighting system gaps and challenges, defining priorities, creating alliances of diverse stakeholders to help move the district in a common direction, and building the movement and momentum to make necessary change happen.

The District Equity Team can help move things from talk to action, from problems to solutions, and from episodic, reactive responses to critical racialized bias/injustice incidents to a well-coordinated systemic strategy. By developing concrete goals and priorities, along with actionable plans that include delineated and delegated tasks and timetables, your aspirations will more likely become reality.

By modeling the design and implementation of effective and accountable work, the CRSD Equity Team can help other teams at the building level and leaders to do the same. Expanding the team to include representation of critical stakeholders, i.e., students, alumni and community representatives will better position the group to develop an Equity Action Plan that includes measurable benchmarks and shared and meaningful results.

By developing more robust systems for disaggregated data collection and analysis that lays a foundation for proposing and managing change and tracking your progress, you can hold yourselves mutually accountable and keep yourselves focused on defining and meeting your equity-focused goals. This equity team can also work to develop a sustainable and systemic process for auditing curriculum offerings.

It will be important to regularly share with your school board, professional colleagues, and district communities what you are achieving and learning. In the process, you will be creating and nurturing a strong culture of learning and continued action to keep your eyes on the prize of educational opportunity for each and every student.

### **Potential Key Functions of a New CRSD Equity Team**

- Building alliances across diverse stakeholder groups (School Board, District Administrators, Building Leaders, Teachers, Student Support Staff, Students, Parents-Caregivers and Community Leaders)
- Catalyzing equitable systems change at the school level and in the diverse communities the district serves
- Organizing the design, priorities for, and implementation of an action/work plan integrated within the district's existing comprehensive strategic plan and new CRSD Board Equity Policy

- Cultivating and developing new student, teacher, and community leadership for equity
- Prioritizing relevant personal and professional learning and shared leadership
- Collecting/sharing/disseminating learning resources, skills, and tools for operationalizing equity in practice
- Communicating about educational equity across schools, departments, and management levels
- Evaluating curriculum offerings and supporting colleagues as they develop curriculum that reflects the experiences of all students
- Collecting and analyzing data for driving change and documenting, measuring, and evaluating progress
- Championing racial and social justice in the district and celebrating and sustaining success
- Developing strategies for accelerating student learning and eliminating opportunity, expectation, achievement, and attainment disparities

Please see Appendix D: District *Organizing Your School District For Equity* for more detailed considerations and next steps.

The initial focus questions that the CRSD teams helped to develop (see Appendix B: Excellence Through Equity Quality Review Focus Questions) provided the opportunity for our external team to become involved in rich inquiry, research, and dialogue with critical district stakeholders. *It is suggested that these questions/probes continue to be used as prompts in on-going future reflection, student and parent/caregiver focus groups and planning/goal setting.*

As we began to identify the district’s needs and draft our Suggestions for Improvement, it became apparent that the focus questions around access and inclusion and equitable opportunities to learn were highly interconnected and tied to an overarching need to develop a comprehensive district-wide equity-focused action planning process in some of the targeted areas below.

### **District Staff Diversity**

We heard from many stakeholders regarding the extreme underrepresentation of educators of color in the district. We understood the term “staff” in the tables provided to refer to permanent district staff.

From 2018-2019 to 2021-2022 the total number of full-time equivalent staff in the school district increased from 1,361 to 1,366. The percentage of staff identified as “White” remained at over 98% over these three years.

#### **CRSD Staff Ethnicity for 2021-2022**

Asian	9
Black or African American	12
Hispanic	8

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (not Hispanic)	1
Not reported	10
Other	8
White	1,350
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,398</b>

\* Data provided by CRSD. This number represents the number of staff members hired regardless of their status (full-time vs part-time).

For the 2020-2021 school year, we found that all but one building had one or more teacher of color on staff. We encourage the district to utilize recommended resources and suggestions in Appendix F to enhance the recruitment and retention of educators and administrators of color.

# APPENDIX A – BOARD RESOLUTION

May/June 2020

**WHEREAS**, we are deeply saddened and outraged by the recent killing of George Floyd and violence against black men and women. The subsequent protests have shined a spotlight on the harmful effects of racism and inequality. Furthermore, the public response has highlighted the racial trauma that our black students, families, staff, and communities have not only endured for centuries but continue to face today.

**WHEREAS**, we must recognize that racism and hate have no place in our schools and society. However, we must understand that racism is systemic, and it is unconsciously and consciously rooted into our institutions, policies, and practices. Consequently, we acknowledge that we must look at our own school policies and practices through an anti-racist and equity lens to address traces of racism and inequity that still exist within our own school community.

**WHEREAS**, we must center the voices of staff, students, families, and communities who have historically endured discrimination and marginalization. Their lived experiences and stories require attention, require respect, require empathy, and most importantly require action. Therefore, it is essential that we establish an expectation that a diversity of students, families, and community members, specifically those that have been ignored, discriminated against, and marginalized, are heard and included on substantive school and district issues.

**WHEREAS**, we must better educate ourselves and seek to educate the community on the historical and current impact of racism and discrimination on our students, families, and communities, as well as understand our role in perpetuating such inequity. Through continuous professional development and opportunities for honest dialogue and listening sessions, we hope to build partnerships in the community focused on overcoming racism and other barriers. By doing so, we can create opportunities to ensure that each child has the tools and supports needed to thrive.

**WHEREAS**, we must advocate to advance civil rights and cultivate an anti-racist school climate necessary to meet the needs of ALL students in our care. Our students, no matter their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, language ability, disability, and other identities, deserve to feel safe, to feel seen, and to feel affirmed.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Council Rock School Board unequivocally stands firm in our collective responsibility to foster an equitable and inclusive environment for every student, staff member, parent, and community member. We commit to use our role as school board directors to recognize, respond, and speak out against injustice and racial inequity, to include violence, harassment, or bullying of any kind, in our school community. In support of this goal, the Council Rock School Board commits to the following action steps: 1.) Establish a CRSD Diversity and Inclusion Team inclusive of all District schools; 2.) Build upon effectiveness of existing school-based teams; 3.) Hold focus groups with recent graduates on preparedness for their next phase of life; 4.) Hold focus groups with current students, including students from underrepresented groups, on their experience in our schools and in our community; 5.) Have an external consultant conduct a diversity-focused curricular audit and/or an equity audit; and 6.) Create a systemic employee training program centered on diversity, equity, and inclusiveness.

Adopted this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2020.

Signed,

Board President



# APPENDIX B - REQUESTED DISTRICT AND SCHOOL LEVEL DATA AND DOCUMENTS

## District and School Level Data

1. District demographics total and broken down by school over past 5 years including:
  - student race/ethnicity, gender, free/reduced lunch, identified for special education or 504 (with breakdown by disability), ELL
  - administrators, teachers, pupil services support staff, classroom assistants by race/ethnicity, gender, years of experience
2. Local measures of student achievement by school by race/ethnicity, gender, free/reduced lunch, identified for special education or 504, ELL
3. State measures of student achievement by school by race/ethnicity, gender, free/reduced lunch, identified for special education or 504, ELL
4. SAT participation and performance by high school by race/ethnicity, gender, free/reduced lunch, identified for special education or 504, ELL
5. HSGPA by high school by race/ethnicity, gender, free/reduced lunch, identified for special education or 504, ELL
6. High school graduation rates by high school by race/ethnicity, gender, free/reduced lunch, identified for special education or 504, ELL
7. College going rates (2 and 4 year) by high school by race/ethnicity, gender, free/reduced lunch, identified for special education or 504, ELL
8. Students Identified as Gifted and Talented by school by race/ethnicity, gender, free/reduced lunch, identified for special education or 504, ELL
9. Discipline Referrals by infraction, Suspensions (in and out of school), Expulsions by school by race/ethnicity, gender, free/reduced lunch, identified for special education or 504, ELL
10. Students taking “honors/advanced”) courses in the middle schools and high schools by race/ethnicity, gender, free/reduced lunch, identified for special education or 504, ELL
11. Students taking at least one AP course by high school by race/ethnicity, gender, free/reduced lunch, identified for special education or 504, ELL
12. Percent of students successfully completing Algebra 1 by end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade by race/ethnicity, gender, free/reduced lunch, identified for special education or 504, ELL
13. Perceptual Surveys/Reports with Disaggregated Data
  - School climate or student satisfaction/wellness surveys
  - Parent satisfaction surveys
  - Alumni surveys
  - Teacher surveys
14. Individual students’ extracurricular involvement, i.e., clubs, athletics
15. Data on which individual students might be First Generation Collegegoers.

## District Documents

- Curriculum review cycle for the past 5 years and future 5 years.
- Program of Studies and planned course outlines by subject and grade level
- Student/Parent Handbooks
- Course selection procedures and related information for students and their parents
- Discipline policies and procedures
- Current District/School strategic or comprehensive plans
- Annual Board Goals over past 5 years
- Reports to the Board or community and any policies, actions on equity by the school board

# APPENDIX C - FOCUSED INQUIRY QUESTIONS

## Focus Questions: Equitable Access and Inclusion

How do Council Rock policies and practices ensure that all learners obtain unobstructed entrance, involvement and full participation in programs and activities within Council Rock schools?

How do students feel about their school engagement/experiences and how does the system promote inclusive learning communities that promotes their sense of belonging, and affirms their talents, backgrounds, and ways of living?

### Core questions:

- How are students placed into courses in middle school?
- How are students placed into courses in high school?
- What is your understanding of the difference between the different course levels?

### Access Probes

- What is the nature of the current level system in the middle schools and high schools? What is the educational rationale for the 3 different levels (academic, accelerated, honors)? In your experience, do these levels impede a student's ability to access all curricula?
- What is the nature of the espoused course selection and placement process?
- How do course selection and placement policies and practices impact students?
- Who is involved and when does it take place?
- Who are the decision makers?
- How do teachers make decisions regarding their recommendations for course placement? What factors and variables do they consider or not consider?
- What tools, strategies, and knowledge do teachers use to ensure access and inclusion for all students?
- How do students and their parents access relevant information about student achievement, program placement and participation?
- Who provides this information?
- How is student progress assessed and what role do student assessments play in course placement?
- How do students/ parents/teachers/counselors/principals perceive and describe the course selection and placement process? Do students in different levels perceive the process differently?
- What happens if students/parents disagree with course placement recommendations or decisions?
- In what ways are students included in and excluded from challenging coursework? What conditions provide access to the best quality learning that Council Rock offers?
- What challenges/obstacles/fears do students/ parents/teachers/counselors/principals identify for some individuals and/or groups of students that impact access into both academic and co-curricular programs?
- What barriers do some students experience relative to engaging in co-curricular activities/programs?
- How do the policies and procedures you've described align with the Mission and Vision of the Council Rock School District?

### Inclusion Probes

- Who are the students in the CRSD who find it most difficult to “fit in”? Why?
- Who are the students in the CRSD who tend to be most “invisible”?
- Does every student in the CRSD have at least one significant adult in the system they trust and that they turn to for academic or personal support?
- Who are the students at CRSD who are most likely to feel “disrespected” by their peers, teachers, administrators?
- Are some students treated differently or more harshly than others relative to the school’s/district’s discipline practices? Why?
- How do CRSD students’ identities (gender, race/ethnicity, academic abilities, religion, first language, sexual preference) impact their school success, acceptance, and feelings of belonging?

## **Focus Question: Equitable Opportunity to Learn**

How do Council Rock educators and school/district leaders create challenging learning opportunities such that every child, regardless of characteristics and educational needs, is given the requisite learning, social, emotional, psychological, and material supports to achieve the high academic standards of excellence Council Rock schools have set?

### **Core questions:**

- How do teachers communicate what is expected of each student?
- How does the Council Rock School District define success?
- How is it determined if a child needs additional support? How are services delivered and evaluated?

### **Equitable Opportunity to Learn Probes**

- How does the Council Rock School District define success? What does success in Council Rock look like, and who lives on the margins of success? Who are perceived to be the most successful students at CRSD? Why?
- How do teachers communicate expectations about a child’s ability to succeed?
- How do educators’ perceptions of student ability impact student opportunity and achievement?
- What learning, social, emotional, psychological, and material supports do Council Rock educators identify as necessary for providing equitable opportunities to learn? Are these supports provided equitably?
- What are students’ and parents’ perceptions of the learning, social, emotional, psychological, and material support that Council Rock educators provide to students? Are these supports provided equitably?
- Do all students know how to and feel safe/comfortable in accessing these supports?
- What are reasons certain students are not able to access the supports that they need?
- Does the Council Rock curriculum and school/classroom cultures reflect the ideals of the district and the diversity of the school district population?
- To what extent is the Council Rock curriculum perceived as relevant to changing student demographics and critical student learning outcomes necessary for future success??
- To what extent is the Council Rock curriculum race, gender, and class bias-free?
- What evidence indicates that students’ home languages are valued, acknowledged, and integrated into instruction.
- In your view, has the instructional staff been provided with adequate professional development in the areas of effective instructional practices and strategies?

- What differentiated instructional practices do teachers use to make the curriculum comprehensible and accessible to every child?
- What instructional strategies or practices do teachers use to expand or create opportunities to learn at high levels for all students?

# APPENDIX D - ORGANIZING YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR EQUITY

Dr. Robert L. Jarvis, Director of the Penn Coalition for Educational Equity Catalyst@GSE Graduate School of Education  
University of Pennsylvania  
January 2020

## THE QUEST

*The Ultimate Equity Challenge for All School Systems is to Assure That Each and Every Student We Serve, Regardless of Background, is Exposed to High Level and Engaging Learning Experiences and is Provided Access to Supports That They Will Need in Order To Thrive in Today's and Tomorrow's World.*

- Creating safe and inclusive learning communities where the equal worth and inherent dignity of each student is honored and where all students' sense of belonging and success is promoted and sustained
- Nurturing everyone's resilience and sense of individual and collective efficacy (confidence and competence) in order to effectively address the challenges of student learning and healthy social-emotional and cultural development
- Eliminating the predictability of achievement and attainment disparities defined by students' backgrounds
- and/or identities and eliminating discriminatory policies and practices
- Clarifying the nature/root causes of our attainment-achievement-opportunity to learn/expectation gaps
- Challenging our assumptions about our students' "potential"
- Challenging "the way we've always done it" and the status quo
- Increasing access, opportunity, inclusion and support to our most challenged learners, and assuring all students get opportunities to access the best of what our school district has to offer
- Seeing ourselves and our schools as passion and dream facilitators for all of our students
- Making ethical and effective decisions through an equity lens from the boardroom to the classroom
- Increasing our focus on our students' strengths/assets vs. deficits
- Building toward long-term sustainability: imbed principles of equity into policy and everyday practice and monitoring progress and accountability

## SOME KEY FONDATIONAL UNDERSTANDINGS FOR CREATING MORE EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

- It's a process, not a program.
- It's about a continuous process of individual, school and district and community self-reflection, improvement and renewal.
- It's about moving from a deficit to strength-based frame of reference as we view our students.
- It's about suspending our judgements about our children's "capacities/potential".
- It's about a deep belief in the capacity of each and every one of our students to be able to engage at higher levels of intellectual engagement...mindset.
- It's about raising the bar for the adults in the system, and refusing to accept mediocrity in teaching, learning and care for all students.
- It's about doing "whatever it takes" to assure students' opportunities to learn at high levels in engaging and meaningful work.
- It's about clarity of shared vision and purpose transformed to sustained shared action.

- It's about shared, courageous and transformational leadership at all levels.

## **BEGINNING STEPS**

- Starting and continuing with on-going deep individual and organizational self-reflection on how we “do school” and how it benefits
- Moving beyond “diversity”: developing shared definitions, language and understandings of equity among all stakeholders- what does equity look like in action?
- Reflecting on foundational pillars of justice, access, opportunity, inclusion, belonging
- Building adult to adult and adult to student relationships grounded in fundamental values of dignity, trust, respect, empathy, love
- Viewing equity as both a process and an outcome
- Integrating equity in all academic and non-academic program and policy decision-making
- Connecting the equity-focused work to and reframing as necessary the current district vision/mission
- Developing a Board Commitment Statement and Board Goals

## **DEVELOPING A COMPELLING AND HOPEFUL VISION FOR LEARNING IN THE DISTRICT FOCUSED ON ELEVATING THE CURRENT AND FUTURE SUCCESS ALL STUDENTS**

- Recognizing who benefits by current structures, program and policies and who doesn't
- Reimagining schools of excellence through equity- “the ideal school”
- Reimagining engaging and meaningful curriculum and learning
- Rethinking, expanding and affirming our notions of students' “success”- in school and in life (developing a Portrait of the Graduate)
- Beyond standards, what do we really want all of our system's graduates to know, understand, value and be able to do? Exploring and highlighting critical learning outcomes that foster all students' success in navigating an increasingly more uncertain and more diverse world
- Engaging all stakeholder's (especially students') voices and their diversity of life and school experiences and perspectives
- Identifying our students who are “wounded” by their school experiences and how/why

## **DEVELOPING A COMPELLING RATIONALE FOR WHY EQUITY AND WHY NOW**

- Understanding the current and historical context of the district: racial/ethnic demographics, economics, social-political-religious values
- Defining the moral, social, economic purposes/imperatives...opportunity to access the “American Dream”
- Addressing the challenges of balancing tensions between individual self-interest and the collective good
- Addressing what's in it for me/us collectively?
- Recognizing long histories of systemic or institutional bias, discrimination, racism, classism, sexism, ableism....
- Identifying potential and expected sources of resistance to change grounded in knowledge, power and privilege

## **BEGIN MAKING ORGANIZATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL STUDENT DECISIONS THROUGH AN EQUITY LENS**

While there are strong arguments for basing decisions on standards that maintain consistency for all students and staff, educational equity principles suggest a strong need for considering that we base our decisions on serving the best interests of each individual or unique population of students who have

historically underachieved in our system.

How do district and school leaders choose from options to make the most fair and ethical decisions that are in the best interests of these students?

Every day critical short and long-term decisions are being made at every level of our school system that are impacting individual children and district/school policies and practices that influence these students' outcomes. How might we become more mindful about our decision-making processes and what decisions/actions may be reinforcing our current observed inequities?

In making decisions from the organizational, e.g. resource allocation, curriculum, discipline code/ policy, to the individual student level, e.g. program or course placements, discipline consequences, academic and personal interventions and supports, it is imperative that before finalizing our decisions that we *consciously* reflect upon both the intended positive and potentially adverse outcomes of our decisions.

What are the critical decision points in our deliberations about policies, programs or practices that impact our expected organizational or equitable student outcomes?

- Board Policies
- Student Codes of Conduct/Discipline
- Curriculum Review and Implementation
- Instructional Design and Delivery
- Standards, Content, Learning Resources
- Assessments
- Student Program or Course Placements
- Special Education
- Gifted Education
- Honors Level or Advanced Placement
- Support Programs/Services
- Human Resources (Recruitment, Hiring Retention Processes and Practices)
- Staff Supervision, Performance Evaluation and Professional Development
- Financial and Material Resource Distribution
- Human Capital Distribution (Teacher, Administrator, and Support Staff Assignments)

Some critical overarching and equity-focused reflective questions to consider prior to making any critical decisions might include:

- In what ways will this decision open or close doors of opportunity, access or inclusion for individual students or groups of students?
- Who will most likely benefit by this decision?
- Have we considered potential unintended consequences of our decision?
- Are there individuals or groups that may be negatively impacted by this decision and how?
- Which decisions/actions will best advance more equitable outcomes for all students?
- What alternative decision/action options might produce different outcomes?
- Have we intentionally engaged the stakeholders, including students, parents/caregivers, educators who are most impacted by the decision? Have all voices been heard and considered before making the decision?

## **BEGIN BUILDING A DISTRICT EQUITY/INCLUSION/BELONGING TEAM (COUNCIL/TASK FORCE/COALITION/COMMITTEE)**

Equity needs to be thought of as both an aspirational and operational framework—a process and a destination. Creating a Core District Equity Team will help anchor, drive, and center the work. A District Equity Team is a primary leadership team, including both formal and informal leaders, responsible for

designing, coordinating, and organizing district and school level equity learning, plans and activities and is focused on systems change that leads to more equitable outcomes for all students.

The EquityTeam can serve as the engine for change, leading the way, highlighting system gaps and challenges, creating alliances of diverse stakeholders to help move the district in a common direction, and building the movement and momentum to make necessary change happen and sustain that change.

### **Key Functions**

- Building alliances across diverse stakeholders
- Catalyzing equitable systems change in the schools and in the community
- Organizing the design, priorities for and implementation of an action/work plan integrated within the district's comprehensive plan
- Cultivating and developing new leadership for equity and active community engagement
- Building system capacity for personal and professional learning and leading
- Sharing/disseminating learning resources, skills, and tools for operationalizing equity
- Communicating about educational equity across schools, departments and management levels
- Collecting and analyzing data for driving change and documenting, measuring, and evaluating progress
- Championing racial and social justice in the district and celebrating and sustaining success
- Accelerating student learning and eliminating opportunity-expectation-achievement and attainment disparities

### **Desired Characteristics of Individual Equity Team Members and Team Composition**

- Commitment to equity and social justice with passion and energy to encourage others;
- Emerging knowledge of equity and race issues, with analytical skills for systems thinking;
- Collaborative in working across differences and organizing for collective results;
- Formal or informal leadership experiences and emerging ability to be a visible and vocal champion for equity;
- Communication skills (speaking and listening) to be a liaison and ambassador to a variety of internal and external audiences;
- Creativity to think outside the box to craft forward-thinking, innovative strategies;
- Facilitation and training skills to engage in challenging conversations about race/class/gender, discrimination, bias;
- Flexibility to work across departmental barriers and roles;
- Humility and curiosity to continually learn and engage in self-reflection;
- Skill in building relationships, internally and externally, that can be leveraged to expand engagement;
- The resilience to engage in deep, challenging, and long-term work.

The Equity Team needs to be representative of many different facets of the districts and the different students, families and neighborhoods or communities it serves, and at the same time needs to be manageable in size to work productively and efficiently. Some considerations for achieving a representative Equity Team:

- Diversity across race/ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual orientation and other important markers of identity
- Diversity across schools, departments, or other key units of the district.
- Diversity in leadership, both emerging and experienced, including those who display non-traditional leadership qualities and those who don't usually get the opportunity to share their voice in this way.
- Diversity across work levels, functions and authority, including administrative staff,

classroom teachers, support staff, students and parents/community representatives

### **Roles, Duties and Expectations of Equity Team Members**

It is good to delineate and clarify at the outset of a new member's tenure on the Equity Team so that all members, and their supervisors, are aware of the commitment involved.

Potential expectations might include:

- Champion and advocate for racial and social justice and model the organizational values
- Represent their schools, departments at leadership meetings and communicate messages from the Team to their own school/ department.
- Participate in all Team meetings and activities, as well as sub-committees or work Teams
- Provide leadership, facilitation, coaching, and technical assistance to school-based equity teams
- Coordinate, track, and report district/school equity action plans, successes and improvements
- Continually learn and support system-wide professional learning.
- Meet with students, parents/caregivers, especially those whose voices may not be considered, and encourage their thoughts, perceptions and solutions.
- Take advantage of opportunities to build personal and professional knowledge and skills, including leadership, strategic planning, effective communications, complex problem-solving, application of equity assessment tools for planning and decision-making, and in-depth analysis of racism and racial justice.

### **Options for Creating an Equity Team**

The district leader can designate an appointed team of leaders to coordinate the initiative, which might likely initially include members of the district management team-including school board members. While this approach is more top-down than other approaches, it can also help ensure that the management has deep investment, direct access, and high confidence in, those they've chosen to lead.

Another approach is to have each department or unit director and school principal select one or two representatives to be on the Equity Team. This will ensure broad and equal representation across the system. But a drawback can be that the full Team may not end up with an ideal mix of diversity by race, gender, experience level, and other important characteristics. In this case, it is important for the district leader to analyze overall demographics and skills of potential members to make any adjustments needed.

A third approach could be to put out an invitation to all employees, students and parents/community members to nominate themselves or others to serve on the EquityTeam. Once you receive the nominations, you can screen and interview candidates to arrive at a desired diverse balance of participants for the full Team. With this approach, you may get some unlikely or surprising candidates, which can be an asset. They may be colleagues who have a real passion for racial equity and are ready to step up. This more bottom-up approach may yield a very dedicated, diverse, and perhaps even younger, group of new equity leaders, even though they may not have as much positional power and influence as those who would typically be selected from the top.

There are different trade-offs with each approach, but all of them can work. You'll need to select the approach you think will work best since each district has its own unique history, structure, and power dynamics that need to be considered and navigated. Once the Equity Team is established, initial activities often include some community building, visioning, and team development training.

### **First Steps in Building the Equity Team**

- *Explicitly defining the Equity Team's purpose*: a shared commitment and spirit of collaboration in creating more high quality and equitable outcomes for all of the students
- Defining the team's leadership roles/scope of responsibilities and decision-making in support of movement toward excellence and equity in district policy and practice
- Defining a shared leadership and accountability structure and process
- Creating safe spaces for honest personal and organizational reflection: trust, respect, dignity and authentic conversations
- Clarifying understandings of the language of equity and recognizing it in practice
- Defining guiding conceptual frameworks from the literature
- Assessing current reality relative to the vision and planning for change
- information and data gathering and synthesizing
- examining board and school policies (written and unwritten) through an equity lens
- reviewing curriculum offerings through an equity/cultural/diversity lens
- generate and review disaggregated district and school level data by race/ethnicity, gender, SES or other markers of students' identities
  - Outcomes
    - student state and local academic assessments- AP and PSAT/SAT participation and performance
    - student grades/GPA
    - attendance rates and patterns
    - high school graduation rates
    - college-going rates/attending first college of choice
    - college persistence and success
  - Process
    - enrollment patterns in advanced placement, international baccalaureate, honors, gifted, math and science courses
    - enrollment patterns in "lower ability" groups, remedial programs, special education
    - discipline referral rates and consequences
    - extracurricular involvement
    - first generation college-going
    - out of school supports- mentoring, tutoring
    - technology access
  - Student And Parent/Caregiver Perceptions Of Their Experience With Our Schools
    - surveys/questionnaires
    - interviews/focus groups
    - shadowing students
- Examining/challenging our assumptions about what we see/hear in the data
- Getting more information if necessary and getting to root cause(s) of discrepancies between our vision and reality defined by the data
- Avoiding jumping to solutions/interventions before the problem and its root cause(s) are defined
- Establishing our theories of action/change: If we do this, this is the result/outcome we expect.
- Recommending/establishing short and long-term SMART goals/targets, strategies, impact evaluation process and timelines with responsibilities

### **Team-Building And Learning**

Before you delve into the work of advancing equity, it's important to take some time for members to get to know each other and build relationships within your Equity Team. When people know and understand each other, it can help get you through some of the difficult conversations and challenges that are an inevitable part of doing equity work.

Sharing stories, sharing a meal, and building in some social and festive time together can go a long way towards humanizing each other, breaking down stereotypes, and building cohesion.

Building in ongoing training and learning together is also key. Don't assume people are on the same page when it comes to understanding racial equity and social justice. Everyone has a unique identity, history and perspective. Some foundational training together—where you learn basic concepts, definitions, tools, and strategies for addressing equity—will help you have more constructive and productive conversations.

### **Maximizing Impact**

Equity Teams can help move things from talk to action, from problems to solutions and from episodic reactive responses to well-coordinated systemic strategies. By developing concrete goals and priorities, along with doable plans, with delineated and delegated tasks and timetables, aspirations can become realities.

By modeling the design and implementation of effective and accountable work, the District Equity Team can help other Equity Teams at the building level and leaders to do the same. A Core Team that authentically represents the diversity of the district is well positioned to develop an Equity Action Plan that includes measurable benchmarks and meaningful results.

By tracking your progress, you can hold yourselves accountable and keep yourselves focused on meeting your goals. Periodically share with your colleagues and community what you are achieving and learning. In the process, you can create a community and culture of learning and action, with your eyes on the prize of educational and social equity and justice.

# APPENDIX E - DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

## Ethnicity By LEA

Ethnicity	Current Year Count	Current Year%	Prior Year Count	Prior Year %
American Indian / Alaskan Native	14	0.13%	13	0.12%
Asian	976	9.30%	983	9.12%
Black or African American	133	1.27%	137	1.27%
Hispanic	352	3.35%	361	3.35%
Multi-Racial	167	1.59%	120	1.11%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander(not hispanic)	11	0.10%	12	0.11%
White	8,841	84.25%	9,152	84.91%

## Ethnicity by School

School Number	School Name	Student Count	% By School	Student Count	% By School	Student Count	% By School	Student Count	% By School	Student Count	% By School	Student Count	% By School	Student Count	% By School
		American Indian / Alaskan Native		Asian		Black or African American		Hispanic		Multi-Racial		Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (not hispanic)		White	
1088	Churchville El Sch	0	0.00%	19	3.58%	1	0.19%	12	2.26%	9	1.69%	1	0.19%	489	92.09%
5096	Council Rock HS North	5	0.31%	202	12.72%	22	1.39%	52	3.27%	11	0.69%	0	0.00%	1,296	81.61%
7749	Council Rock HS South	3	0.15%	134	6.66%	35	1.74%	71	3.53%	12	0.60%	1	0.05%	1,757	87.28%
9999	Council Rock SD	0	0.00%	4	30.77%	1	7.69%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	8	61.54%
1086	Goodnoe El Sch	0	0.00%	107	14.74%	6	0.83%	25	3.44%	24	3.31%	0	0.00%	564	77.69%
7208	Hillcrest El Sch	0	0.00%	19	4.07%	3	0.64%	15	3.21%	14	3.00%	1	0.21%	415	88.87%
4680	Holland El Sch	0	0.00%	37	8.24%	7	1.56%	12	2.67%	10	2.23%	2	0.45%	381	84.86%
8447	Holland MS	1	0.11%	54	5.91%	16	1.75%	34	3.72%	5	0.55%	1	0.11%	802	87.84%
7657	Maureen M Welch El Sch	0	0.00%	41	8.10%	5	0.99%	15	2.96%	10	1.98%	0	0.00%	435	85.97%
7432	Newtown El Sch	1	0.16%	100	16.23%	7	1.14%	17	2.76%	24	3.90%	0	0.00%	467	75.81%
6453	Newtown MS	2	0.23%	106	12.43%	12	1.41%	39	4.57%	7	0.82%	0	0.00%	687	80.54%
1087	Richboro El Sch	0	0.00%	22	6.09%	2	0.55%	9	2.49%	3	0.83%	0	0.00%	325	90.03%
5308	Rolling Hills El Sch	0	0.00%	12	3.15%	5	1.31%	15	3.94%	11	2.89%	2	0.52%	336	88.19%
1130	Sol Feinstone El Sch	2	0.29%	89	12.75%	6	0.86%	14	2.01%	24	3.44%	1	0.14%	562	80.52%
8469	Wrightstown El Sch	0	0.00%	30	7.92%	5	1.32%	22	5.80%	3	0.79%	2	0.53%	317	83.64%

**Gifted By School**

School Number	School Name	Prior Year Gifted (GY)	Prior Year Total Enrollment	Prior Year Gifted %	Current Year Gifted (GY)	Current Year Total Enrollment	Current Year Gifted %
1088	Churchville El Sch	18	538	3.35%	15	531	2.82%
5096	Council Rock HS North	122	1,605	7.60%	132	1,588	8.31%
7749	Council Rock HS South	108	2,021	5.34%	101	2,013	5.02%
1086	Goodnoe El Sch	49	775	6.32%	37	726	5.10%
7208	Hillcrest El Sch	31	483	6.42%	25	467	5.35%
4680	Holland El Sch	26	458	5.68%	18	449	4.01%
8447	Holland MS	70	950	7.37%	71	913	7.78%
7657	Maureen M Welch El Sch	27	561	4.81%	16	506	3.16%
7432	Newtown El Sch	54	672	8.04%	40	616	6.49%
6453	Newtown MS	100	814	12.29%	96	853	11.25%
1087	Richboro El Sch	13	359	3.62%	13	361	3.60%
5308	Rolling Hills El Sch	7	405	1.73%	6	381	1.57%
1130	Sol Feinstone El Sch	56	759	7.38%	38	698	5.44%
8469	Wrightstowm El Sch	25	368	6.79%	23	379	6.07%

**EL Profile**

**Year:** 2020-2021  
**Snapshot:** Oct 1, 2020  
**LEA:** Council Rock SD - 122092353  
**AUN:** 122092353

Monitored Students by Gender and Grade Level			
Student Grade Level	Male	Female	Total
002	0	1	1
003	4	4	8
004	7	10	17
005	9	15	24
006	11	12	23
007	6	6	12
008	3	2	5
009	2	3	5
010	3	5	8
011	4	0	4
012	2	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>110</b>

<b>EL Students by Native Language (Count does not include EL Students if field 45 = 98)</b>	
<b>Native Language</b>	<b>Students</b>
0190 - Arabic	1
0660 - Bulgarian	2
0860 - Chinese (Mandarin)	16
1390 - Faroese	2
1440 - French	1
1480 - Friulian	1
1570 - Georgian	5
1720 - Gujarati	2
1790 - Hebrew	4
1830 - Hindi	2
2360 - Kirghiz	1
2410 - Korean	9
2630 - Lithuanian	1
2840 - Malayalam	2
3660 - Polish	9
3670 - Portuguese	6
3830 - Russian	78
4140 - Slovak	1
4260 - Spanish	8
4380 - Tajik	1
4400 - Tamil	2
4420 - Telugu	2
4450 - Thai	1

<b>EL Students by Native Language (Count does not include EL Students if field 45 = 98)</b>	
<b>Native Language</b>	<b>Students</b>
4620 - Turkish	5
4710 - Ukrainian	26
4760 - Uzbek	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>194</b>

**Low Income Counts By School**

School Number	School Name	Low-Income Student Count	Total Enrollment	Percent of Enrollment From Low-Income Families
1088	Churchville El Sch	64	531	12.05%
5096	Council Rock HS North	166	1,588	10.45%
7749	Council Rock HS South	276	2,013	13.71%
9999	Council Rock SD	0	13	0.00%
1086	Goodnoe El Sch	65	726	8.95%
7208	Hillcrest El Sch	51	467	10.92%
4680	Holland El Sch	47	449	10.47%
8447	Holland MS	115	913	12.60%
7657	Maureen M Welch El Sch	46	506	9.09%
7432	Newtown El Sch	55	616	8.93%
6453	Newtown MS	78	853	9.14%
1087	Richboro El Sch	37	361	10.25%
5308	Rolling Hills El Sch	62	381	16.27%
1130	Sol Feinstone El Sch	29	698	4.15%
8469	Wrightstown El Sch	39	379	10.29%
<b>Summary</b>		<b>1,130</b>	<b>10,494</b>	<b>10.77%</b>

# APPENDIX F - DVCEE SUGGESTED EQUITY READINGS AND RESOURCES FOR K-12 TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

## **DISTRICT AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP FOR EQUITY AND CULTURAL PROFICIENCY**

Arriaga, T. and Lindsey, R. ***Opening Doors: An Implementation Template for Cultural Proficiency***, Corwin, 2017.

Blankstein, A., Noguera, P. and Kelly, L. ***Excellence Through Equity: Five Principles of Courageous Leadership to Guide Achievement for Every Student***, ASCD, 2016.

Bunyasi, T. and Smith, C. ***Stay Woke: A People's Guide to Making All Black Lives Matter***, New York, University Press, 2019.

Burris, C. and Garrity, D. ***Detracking for Excellence and Equity***, ASCD, 2008.

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Cobb, F. and Krownapple, J. ***Belonging Through a Culture of Dignity: The Keys to Successful Equity Implementation***, Mimi, and Todd Press, 2019.

***Equity-Centered Capacity Building Network: Essential Approaches for Excellence and Sustainable School System Transformation*** (ECCBN), 2016.  
<https://capacitybuildingnetwork.org/>

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Lindsey, D. et. al. ***Culturally Proficient Coaching: Supporting Educators to Create Equitable Schools***, Second Edition, Corwin, 2020.

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Michael, A. ***Raising Race Questions: Whiteness and Inquiry in Education***, Teachers College Press, 2015.

Ross, H. ***Everyday Bias: Identifying and Navigating Unconscious Judgments in Our Daily Lives***, Rowman, and Littlefield, 2020.

Steele, C. ***Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do (Issues of Our Time)***, W.W. Norton, 2011.

Stevenson, H. ***Promoting Racial Literacy in Schools: Differences That Make a Difference***, Teachers College Press, 2014.

Tatum, B. ***Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations About Race***, Basic Books, 2017.

Wilkerson, I. ***Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent***, Random House, 2020.

### **SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN POVERTY, RESILIENCE AND TRAUMA SENSITIVE SCHOOLS**

Romero V. et.al. ***Building Resilience in Students Impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences: A Whole- Staff Approach***, Corwin, 2018.

Budge, K. and Parrett, W. ***Disrupting Poverty: Five Powerful Classroom Practices***, ASCD, 2018.

Desautels, L. and McKnight, M. ***Eyes Are Never Quiet: Listening Beneath the Behaviors of Our Most Troubled Students***, Wyatt-MacKenzie, 2019

Fisher, D., Nancy Frey, N. and Savitz, R. ***Teaching Hope and Resilience for Students Experiencing Trauma: Creating Safe and Nurturing Classrooms for Learning***, Teachers College Press, 2020.

Gorski, Paul ***Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty: Strategies for Erasing the Opportunity Gap***, Teachers College Press, 2017.

Henderson, N. and Milstein, M. ***Resiliency in Schools: Making It Happen for Students and Educators***, Updated Edition, Corwin, 2002.

Jensen, E. ***Poor Students, Rich Teaching: Seven High-Impact Mindsets for Students From Poverty (Using Mindsets in the Classroom to Overcome Student Poverty and Adversity)*** Revised Edition, Solution Tree Press, 2019.

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Mason, C. et. al. ***Mindfulness Practices: Cultivating Heart Centered Communities Where Students Focus and Flourish (Creating a Positive Learning Environment Through Mindfulness in Schools)***, Solution Tree, 2019.

### **USING DATA TO ASSESS DISPARITIES AND ADDRESS DISPROPORTIONALITY**

Bernhardt, V. ***Using Data to Improve Student Learning in School Districts***, Routledge, 2017.

Fergus, E. ***Solving Disproportionality and Achieving Equity: A Leader's Guide to Using Data to Change Hearts and Minds***, Corwin, 2017.

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<https://www.educatingforamericandemocracy.org/our-vision/>

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<https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families>

***Common Sense Education Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity Resources for Classrooms***  
<https://www.common sense.org/education/top-picks/diversity-equity-and-inclusivity-resources-for-classrooms>

***American Indians In Children's Literature***  
<https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/>

***Pollyanna Racial Literacy Curriculum for Grades K-8 & Parent/Guardian Companion***  
<https://pollyannainc.org/#Mission>

**Crossing Borders Education Diversity Curriculum Resources**  
<https://crossingborders.education/education/diversity-curriculum-resources/>

**The Largest Multicultural Children's Book Publisher In The United States.**  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/>

**Diverse Book Finder** <https://diversebookfinder.org/>

**Facing History and Ourselves Anti-Bias Curriculum Resources**  
<https://www.facinghistory.org/about-us>

**Herstory Writers Workshop** <http://www.herstorywriters.org/>

**Rethinking Schools Resources** <https://www.rethinkingschools.org/>

**RIDES Diversity in the Curriculum Resources** <https://rides.gse.harvard.edu/curriculum>

**Teaching For Change** <https://www.teachingforchange.org/teaching-change-2017>  
<https://www.teachingforchange.org/teaching-resources>

**Social Justice Books Guide for Selecting Anti-Bias Children's Books**  
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**Learning for Justice Curriculum Resources, Frameworks, and Social Justice Standards**  
<https://www.tolerance.org/frameworks>

**Zinn Education Project, Teaching People's History** <https://www.zinnedproject.org/>

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Muhammad, G. **Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy**, Scholastic, 2020.

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### **FACILITATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS IN SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS**

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**Let's Talk: Facilitating Critical Conversations With Students**  
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**Speak Up: How to Respond to Everyday Prejudice, Bias and Stereotypes**  
<https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/TT-Speak-Up-Guide.pdf>

**Speak Up: Responding to Everyday Bigotry**  
<https://www.tolerance.org/publication/speak/speak>

**Faced with the Real World, Will You Speak Up?** <https://tolerance.org/blog/faced-real-world-will-you-speak>

**Online Hate: Unfriend or Speak Up** <https://www.tolerance.org/blog/online-hate-unfriend-or-speak>

**A Time to Speak: A Speech by Charles Morgan** <https://tolerance.org/activity/time-speak-speech-charles-morgan>

**United We Stand** <https://tolerance.org/activity/united-we-stand>

**The Courage to Speak Up** <https://www.tolerance.org/blog/courage-speak>

Facing History and Ourselves, **Preparing Students for Difficult Conversations**  
<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/facing-ferguson-news-literacy-digital-age/preparing-students-difficult>

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Michael, A. **Raising Race Questions: Whiteness and Inquiry in Education**, Teachers College Press, 2015.

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Vogelsang, J. and McGee, S. **From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces: A New Way to Frame Dialogue Around Diversity and Social Justice**  
<https://www.qc.cuny.edu/Academics/Centers/Democratic/Documents/Handbook%20for%20Facilitating%20Difficult%20Conversations2.pdf>

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<https://stoneandheen.com/sites/tbook.hairpin.org/files/Diffcon%20Small%20Group%20Study%20Guide.pdf>

## **TEACHING DIVERSE LEARNERS**

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