

COMPREHENSIVE EQUITY AUDIT  
ST. MARY'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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# PART I

## CONTEXT

In this section, please find:

- An overview of the audit process including background and methodology
- Important district context and background

# INTRODUCTION

There is currently an active discussion in schools and districts regarding how to ensure that each and every student has equitable access to a high-quality education. Schools and school districts are uniquely situated to impact both educator and student views and actions related to equity. However, without thoughtful planning, clear objectives, and an honest assessment of the current situation, districts will be less likely to achieve educational equity for each and every student.

The purpose of this report is to share the results of a comprehensive equity audit that Insight Education Group's audit team conducted in St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS). The team met with stakeholders from the district and larger community in order to gain as many perspectives as possible and to confirm trends identified through examination of multiple data sets. The audit included an analysis of district student achievement data, graduation and discipline data, district staffing, professional development, and stakeholder perceptual data.

Data shows that students in the United States face significant disparities in educational opportunity and outcomes. This is especially true for students of color and students from low-income communities. (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2016; Reardon, 2014). When considering disparities in educational opportunity and outcomes, it is important to also consider access, a third variable that we consider to be the critical bridge between the first two. It is our belief that the pressing challenge facing schools and districts is to provide all students with both equitable opportunity and access to high-quality educational experiences in order for them to achieve successful life outcomes.

The equity audit team has developed this report in alignment with our Racial Equity Framework. It includes recommendations that are aligned to each domain in the framework for the superintendent and his team's consideration. This report addresses the current district landscape pertaining to equity and presents an important opportunity for district leadership to develop a plan to implement the recommendations in an aligned, coherent and intentional manner. It is recommended that the district take time to study and make sense of the findings and recommendations to develop a plan to stage the necessary work efficiently and effectively in order to improve outcomes for each and every student in SMCPS.

# SAINT MARY'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Overview

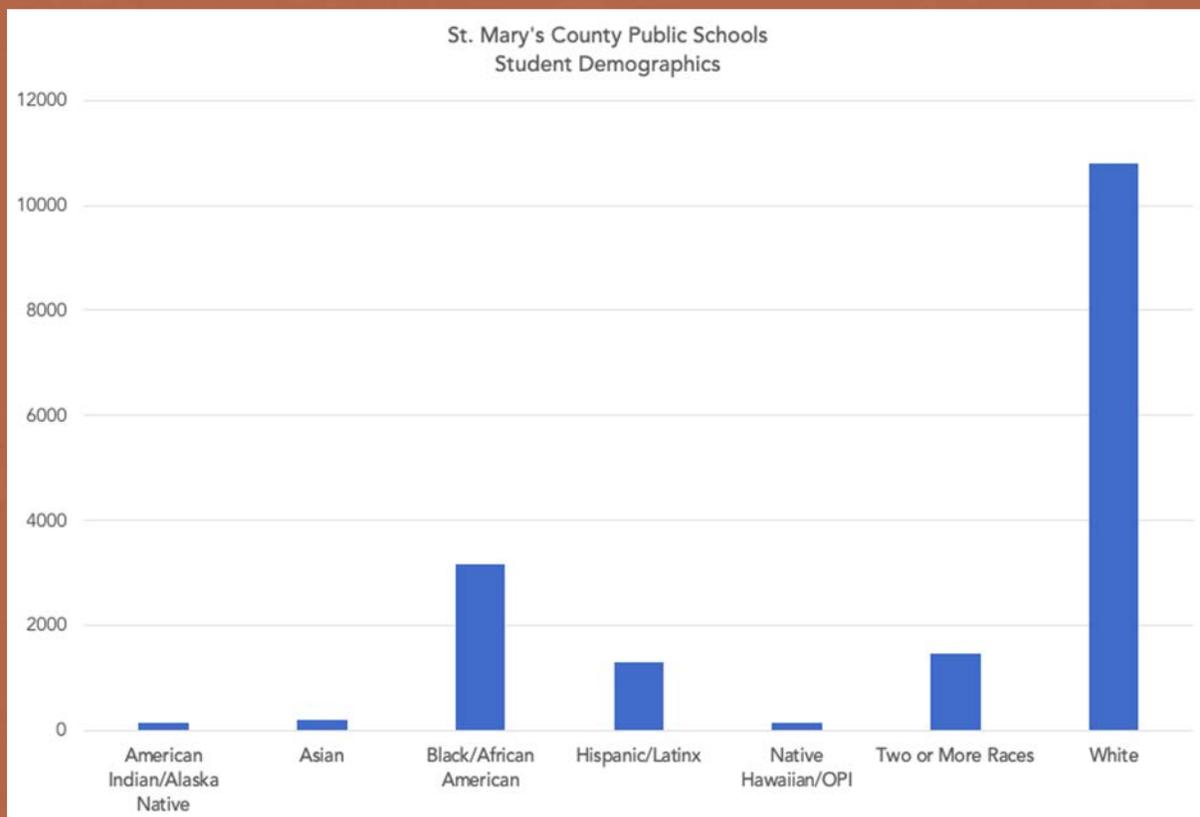
In the fall of 2019 Maryland State Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Karen Salmon, requested the repeal of Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.01.05 and the adoption of COMAR 13A.01.06 Educational Equity which established equity as a priority for all Maryland local school systems as well as the Maryland State Department of Education (NAACP MD, 2019). With the adoption of COMAR 13A.01.06 all local school systems of Maryland were to develop policies and regulations that provided every student equitable access to a rigorous education along with associated resources that supported maximum academic success and social-emotional well-being development. In response to the newly adopted regulation and guidance provided by the Maryland State Department of Education, St. Mary's County Public Schools circulated a request to agencies across the nation seeking support for SMCPS in conducting a system-wide needs assessment to identify opportunities for growth as it relates to providing all students with an equitable education. St. Mary's County Public Schools and Insight Education Group formed a partnership in June 2021, where Insight and its audit team members began the work of shepherding an equity focused, system-wide needs assessment of SMCPS. The purpose of the Equity Audit was to (a) review SMCPS practices and policies; (b) find areas of strength and growth as it related to equitable practice in SMCPS; (c) recommend future equitable practices for SMCPS leaders and staff; and (d) outline guidance for engagement activities with a future Citizens Advisory Council for Educational Equity.



## DISTRICT CONTEXT

St. Mary's County Public Schools in Maryland served approximately 18,000 students in 2019-2020. With 28 school sites, SMCPs offers an array of educational opportunities for students as young as 3 years old through half-day or full-day Head Start programs to those preparing for post-secondary options through educational pathway programs. In all, SMCPs consists of 18 elementary schools, 1 public charter school, 4 middle schools, 3 high schools, 1 career and technology center, and 1 alternative setting school. As a local school system, SMCPs serves a demographically diverse student population in race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, English Language Learner status, and students being served through special education programming. The student population at SMCPs can be broken down into the following by race and ethnicity: White (63%), Black or African American (18%), two or more races (approximately 9%), Hispanic/Latinx (approximately 8%) and Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (OPI) are each less than 2%. At the time of the Equity Audit, SMCPs's Title I enrollment, at the elementary level, was 13.5% and students receiving free or reduced meals was approximately 35%. An illustration of student demographics by race is provided in Figure 1. titled, "St. Mary's County Public Schools Student Demographics."

Figure 1  
St. Mary's County Public Schools Student Demographics



# METHODOLOGY

## DATA COLLECTION

Insight Education Group conducted an Equity Audit in SMCPS between June 2021 and October 2021. The team met with stakeholders from the district and larger community to gain as many perspectives as possible to determine district trends using an equity-focused lens by collecting multiple datasets.

In this section of the report, we will review the foremost components of our methods surrounding the Comprehensive Equity Audit for SMCPS. To begin we will provide a detailed overview of the data collection process. We will share data analysis techniques employed to inform our understanding of trends occurring in SMCPS, both in strengths and areas for future improvement.

The Insight audit team worked closely with the district to amass a robust set of district data and documents for review in the initial phase of the Equity Audit as well as to engage stakeholder groups throughout the data collection process during the first semester of the 2021-2022 school year.

The data collection process included the following activities to assess district beliefs, policies, and practices in relation to equity:

- Review of graduation and discipline data
- Evaluation of student achievement data
- Review of district documents
- Assessment of district finances
- Stakeholder surveys
- Focus groups



## *DISTRICT DATA*

Graduation rates supported audit team members' appraisal of how frequently, consistently, and to what percent SMCPS students graduate. Audit team members also reviewed previous academic achievement data in English and mathematics found on the Maryland State Department of Education website for 3rd and 8th grade students to survey the academic performance of SMCPS students by various demographic subgroups. These two critical developmental points allowed team members to detect relatively persistent gaps in academic performance between peers in terms of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English Language Learner status, and special education classification.

Team members reviewed discipline data to understand discipline related trends in terms of frequency, school site, type of infraction, and punitive responses to student infractions. Moreover, Insight evaluated discipline data by infractions attributed to groups of students demographically.

## *DISTRICT DOCUMENTS*

In addition to preliminary quantitative datasets provided by SMCPs, the audit team conducted an evaluative review of district documents to establish additional trends involving equitable beliefs, practices, and policies maintained by the district. The audit team evaluated district artifacts within the scope of five domains outlined by the Insight Equity Framework. The five domains are outlined as follows and will be described in further detail with relevant research in latter sections of this report: 1) Structures, Systems, and Resources; 2) Culture and Community; 3) Equity in the Educator Workforce; 4) Professional Learning and Personal Growth; and 5) Curriculum, Instruction, and Learning.

The Insight audit team reviewed district organizational charts and strategic planning documents to evaluate the structures and systems in place at the district level utilized to provide an equitable education for all St. Mary's students.

Insight audit team members reviewed the SMCPs website, social media sites, and outgoing communication to the community, such as published Board meeting notes, to evaluate trends aimed towards building a culture and community grounded in equity within the district. Additionally, team members reviewed district discipline policies and student codes of conduct for punitive actions and escalation practices as well as any biased or discriminatory language.

To assess SMCPs's educator workforce with a focus on racial equity in the recruitment, retention, placement, and promotion of district educators, Insight audit team members supplemented SMCPs school leader and SMCPs staff demographic data with data made available via survey descriptive statistics. Furthermore, audit team members reviewed professional learning opportunities extended to SMCPs educators to foster a sense of professional growth and learning as well as district recruitment cycles.

Lastly, the district provided assessment calendars, access to state-wide achievement archives, as well as accelerated course information to evaluate equitable policies for student education relative to equitable access to programs and opportunities.

## *STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS*

In partnership with Insight's audit team, SMCPS invited a diverse stakeholder group to complete a survey evaluation of equity within the district as well as the assessment of equitable practices and policies exhibited throughout the district. Survey questionnaires ranged in length from 25 questions to 40 questions depending on which stakeholder group the participant maintained membership. The six stakeholder groups included: central office staff, school leaders, school district staff, non-school based district staff, family and caregivers, and students. In the first section of each survey, respondents provided descriptive information including personal demographics: race, age, gender, length of professional career, and school affiliation.

After completing this demographic section, participants were asked to respond to equity specific questions related to the district and district schools. In this portion of the survey respondents recorded their answers on a 4-point Likert scale. Participants responded to a statement prompt and recorded their level of agreement with the statement. An example student participant would respond to the statement, "My school prioritizes equity." In response, the student participant indicated their agreement using the following: "1" strongly disagree, "2" disagree, "3" agree, and "4" strongly agree.

The third section of the stakeholder survey was qualitative in nature. Participants were asked three to five questions, depending on their respective stakeholder group, centered on equity in the district.

Responses provided by participants were securely acquired, stored, and managed by the Insight audit team. Respondents participated on a voluntary basis and were assured that their confidentiality throughout the data collection and reporting process would be upheld.

## *FOCUS GROUPS*

SMCPS recruited stakeholders from multiple groups to engage in focus group sessions with Insight audit team members. During the recruitment process, SMCPS invited potential group members from the following stakeholder groups: high school students, families and caregivers, as well as school community members. Forty-eight invitations across the three stakeholder groups were delivered and confirmed by attendees although no participants attended the focus groups with the exception of eight community stakeholders.

Focus groups were facilitated by Insight team members held virtually via Zoom tele-conferencing platform with attendees. Two community stakeholder focus groups were held with a total of eight participants across both group sessions. Focus groups were approximately 60 minutes in length.

During the focus groups, participants were provided the opportunity to share their lived experiences in the district. In particular, focus group participants conveyed the district's definition of equity as well as their understanding of equity as communicated by the school district in beliefs, policies, and practices. All focus groups maintained a standard operating procedure where group members were led in a discussion guided by the same set of questions across all groups facilitated by audit team members.

For ethical and integrity reasons, participants were notified their participation in the focus group was voluntary and should they choose to no longer participate, they were at liberty to terminate their involvement. Participants were assured their identifying information and views expressed during the focus group would remain confidential. As such, audit team members would anonymize all details during the reporting process.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Insight audit team members conducted data analysis in three stages. In one stage, audit team members employed descriptive statistical analysis to data sets provided by the district where analysts documented trends in school profiles, student demographics, discipline rates, and academic indicators. Insight analysts also coded the qualitative data sets derived from district artifacts during this stage of analysis.

During a second stage, Insight analysts conducted survey response analysis across all stakeholder surveys in relation to the five domains of the Equity Framework first with descriptive statistics followed by inferential statistics. All participant responses were coded and cleaned prior to analysis whereby all responses were de-identified using numeric demographic codes, response codes, and responses containing missing data not at random were removed prior to analysis. In Table 1, responses by stakeholder group are provided as well as the percentage of responses with missing data and the total participant number denoted by *n*. As part of this stage of analysis, Insight analysts utilized the statistical software package SPSS to evaluate differences in mean scores of respondents by subgroups.

Lastly, analysts began qualitative data analysis for focus groups as well as researcher field notes and memos (Emerson et al., 2011). Analysts employed an iterative coding cycle to documents and texts where they executed coding cycles until saturation was reached (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Saunders et al., 2018). Audit team members collaborated during the data analysis phase of the equity audit to ensure inter-rater reliability was achieved among team members for each of the noted district trends, findings, and recommendations. Of note, audit team members triangulated data sources to support all discussed trends, findings, and recommendations from the equity audit of SMCPS.

# PART II

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, please find:

- A description of the overall assets of the district found through the review process
- Findings and recommendations for the district grounded the five domains of the Insight Racial Equity Framework.

# OVERALL ASSETS

For each focus area, the report provides an overview of relevant research and/or best practices, an analysis of the current structure, specific areas for improvement, and recommendations to achieve improvement. Prior to delving into areas in need of improvement, it is important to highlight some overall assets observed during the SMCPS Equity Audit process. It will be essential to understand these assets and their relationship as to how the district is considering equity work, and how these assets might be leveraged to enact change more quickly.



## LEADERSHIP

The district's 2020-2021 *Consolidated Strategic Plan* provides a statement signaling attention to equity and access: "As we work to provide educational opportunities for all students, a key element in our planning process is ensuring that learning is both available and accessible for all students. Our planning and implementation will give special attention to diversity, equity, developmental level, connectivity, and inclusion goals. The particular access and support required for one student or group may be different from that needed by others. All plans will be reviewed through an equity and inclusion lens."

Additionally, the district identified an executive leader to serve in the role of Chief of Equity, Engagement, and Early Access, indicating the need to have a senior staff member leading this important work.



## CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

As outlined more specifically in Domain 2 below, there were indications that some families and caregivers felt comfortable in their children’s schools and that they were able to engage school leadership and staff in conversation. This asset provides a solid foundation to continue to build on and to ensure that all families come to feel the same way.



## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND PERSONAL GROWTH

As evidenced in Domain 4 below, staff members at all levels in the organization expressed interest in developing their understanding of equity and expanding their skills in providing equitable opportunities for students. Staff members who recognize their growth areas and are interested in developing those areas of need will prove a tremendous asset as the district begins its journey toward developing mindsets and practices related to equity.

## RESEARCH



### DOMAIN 1

## STRUCTURES, SYSTEMS, AND RESOURCES

Operations, finance, and organizational structure can feel very technical in a school district. But what sits under those technical components is a belief system and understanding of the impacts of bias on adults and students. A growing body of scholarship emphasizes the critical role of district leadership in ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities for students. Districts must intentionally design organizational structures and routines that support the success of historically underserved students, otherwise schools may “function as sites of oppression” rather than places of opportunity (Irby et al., 2019).

A district’s commitment to equity relies on fundamental systemic change throughout the organization, as well as the anti-racist beliefs and actions of individual educators and leaders (Welton et al., 2018). Furthermore, districts must explicitly centralize equity in their school improvement plans to ensure that resources are equitably distributed to students in both policy and practice (Starr, 2018; Gorski, 2019).

At the foundation, strategic planning (a district process of establishing goals and the strategies that will be employed to achieve those goals) should explicitly name race and equity as a priority in the organization. Goals must be meaningful and represent access and opportunity, not just absolute achievement, in order to ensure equitable support of all students. In order to achieve this, district goals, as well as their measurable targets, must be developed collaboratively with leaders and stakeholders.

Upon the foundation of strategic planning sit the technical decisions and systems that comprise budgeting; the allocation of resources; access to clean, healthy and updated facilities, access to technology hardware, software and internet; quality. Food and nutrition programs; and safe and effective transportation. Therefore, this domain addresses both the degree to which the school board and senior leadership team have and continue to develop racial competence and use that to plan strategically, make technical decisions and create structures and systems that promote equity.

There is a clear and direct link between student achievement and access to material and nonmaterial resources such as effective teachers, high-quality instructional materials, academic rigor, and learning-ready facilities (Travers, 2018). The allocation of these resources at the macro level can alleviate or exacerbate inequities across an organization. Research suggests that districts and school boards often do not direct resources to students with equity in mind, resulting in intra-district disparities in teacher assignment, curriculum, and building quality (Darden & Cavendish, 2011). Cheatham, Baker-Jones, and Jordan-Thomas (2020) suggest that districts can demonstrate their commitment to racial equity by “intentionally allocating their resources more flexibly based on the changing needs of individual students” through strategies such as reconfigured funding formulas and differentiated instructional designs.

## ST. MARY'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS' FINDINGS

An important aspect of the structures, systems, and resources that allow a district to ensure equitable practices and improved outcomes for each student is a clear message that equity is important to all members of the district. Frequently, this is represented through an equity plan, including the district's vision for equity, that all stakeholders are aware of and understand. In our review of data in SMCPS, it became evident that stakeholders were unclear about the district's definition and vision of equity and any current practice related to equity. When community stakeholders were asked to share SMCPS's definition of equity **one stakeholder explicitly stated, "I do not know the district's verbiage, I will let [alternate focus group member] share it!"** Similarly, in another community stakeholder focus group, **when asked to share or define the district's messaging around equity, one member said, "If there is a vision, it is not widely distributed because it is not evident to the community."** A second group member shared, **"It [district's definition of equity] is not well known or visible."**

This uncertainty experienced by district stakeholders was also evident in qualitative survey responses. One district staff member stated, "A proper definition of the goal [is needed to improve equity in the district]. I believe many adults do not know the difference between equality and equity. I see these terms used interchangeably often by adults including teachers and administrators."

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1.1

### Develop a District Equity Team (DET) to serve in an advisory capacity to ensure equitable practices are enacted in the district

- Enlist the Chief of Equity, Engagement, and Early Access to chair the work of the DET and to identify key district stakeholders at all levels of the organization to co-lead equity work.
- Identify clear roles and responsibilities for the DET.
- Use the DET to develop a district equity plan that includes a vision of equity, definition of equity, review of pertinent district data, goals for progress in identified areas, metrics to measure progress toward goals, and professional learning opportunities for all stakeholders.
- Use the DET to examine current practices in resource distribution to ensure that resources are equitably distributed to students in policies and practices.
- Ensure the District Equity Team has formal structures to collaborate with the Citizens Advisory Council for Educational Equity (CCAEE) to avoid any conflicting messages or practices.

## 1.2

### Assist each school in developing a School-based Equity Team (SET) to serve as leaders in developing equitable practices in the building

- Identify SET participants in each building.
- Identify clear roles and responsibilities for the SET.
- Use the SET to develop a building-based equity plan aligned to the school improvement plan and the district equity plan.
- Ensure the SET provides ongoing equity-related professional learning opportunities to all staff members.
- Ensure alignment between the processes and structures of the DET and SET.



## CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Racial competence is central to a culture in which students, educators, and families of color feel safe, welcome, and valued as integral members of their school and district community. Establishing a culture of racial competence requires creating an anti-racist climate in every building, utilizing social and emotional supports for active engagement with racial issues, and leveraging family and community partnerships to develop social trust. With racial competence as the foundation of a district's culture, students, educators, and families can understand and challenge the racial biases that affect every aspect of teaching and learning, engage in productive conversations about race and equity, and reach their full potential in a safe and supportive school environment.

The distinction between school climate and school culture is nuanced but can be explained as follows: climate refers to a school's attitude, while culture refers to its personality. A school or district's culture is shaped over time through changes to its climate (Gruenert, 2008). Therefore, creating an equitable, anti-racist climate in every school is necessary for establishing a deeply ingrained culture of racial competence throughout a district.

An equitable school climate gives all students, staff, and families—regardless of racial or socioeconomic background—access to “effectively supported high expectations for teaching, learning, and achievement; emotionally and physically safe, healthy learning environments for all; caring, courageous, self-reflective relationships among and between peers and adults; and multiple, culturally responsive pathways to participation” (Ross, Brown, & Biagas, 2020).

A district's commitment to racial competence requires teachers and leaders to have an asset-based approach to educating and serving students and families of color. This means that diversity is viewed as a strength and individuals are valued for their unique contributions to the school and district community.

A racially competent school climate mitigates the potentially harmful effects of policies and practices on staff and students of color. Dress, hair, and conduct policies often include coded or racialized language about appearances and attitudes, with negative consequences for students of color, including harsher punishments and increased time away from the classroom (Fregni & Zingg, 2020). Black children, especially males, are disciplined at higher rates than their white peers as early as preschool and throughout grades K-12, with long-term implications for their likelihood of arrest and incarceration as adults (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2016; Bacher-Hicks, Billings, & Deming, 2020).

Restorative discipline is a promising alternative to traditional disciplinary methods that “fosters belonging over exclusion” and helps improve school climate and culture (Institute for Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue, n.d.). Social and emotional learning (SEL) can also be used as a driver for racial equity in education. According to the National Equity Project, SEL “offers the possibility of acknowledging, addressing, and healing from the ways we have all been impacted by racism and systemic oppression” (National Equity Project, n.d.). SEL in schools should be approached with the explicit purpose of creating a culture of racial competence through improving the self-awareness and social and emotional intelligence of all students and educators with respect to race and equity.

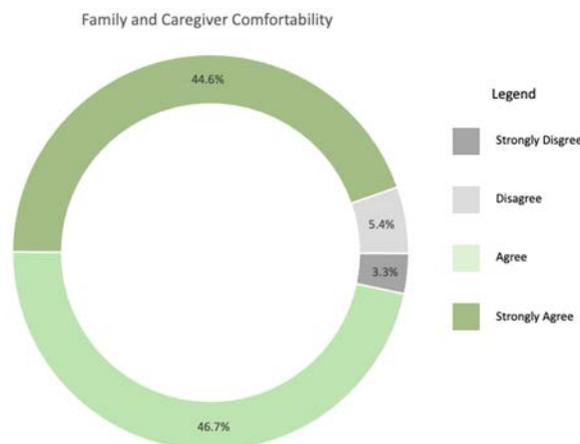
Establishing an equitable school climate also requires including the voices of diverse students, staff, families, and community members in decisions related to school policy and facilitating “courageous conversations” about equity on an ongoing basis (Ross, Brown, & Biagas, 2020). Research has shown that family and community engagement benefits not only individual student achievement, but also overall school improvement. Yet many districts do not effectively involve families and communities of color in their school improvement efforts, often due to misguided deficit thinking about non-white cultures and attitudes about education (McAlister, 2013). School and district leaders must develop social trust and positive relationships with families and community organizations to strengthen the culture of racial competence and improve.

# ST. MARY'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS' FINDINGS

While some stakeholders in St. Mary's County Public Schools believe that they have a voice in the district, an emergent theme from community stakeholder focus groups was, "positionality as voice" which suggests district stakeholders maintain a contributing voice based on informal and formal titles or positions within the district-community. One community stakeholder focus group member agreed to having a voice in the district yet equally expressed concern for other members of the district as that might not have a formal position within SMCPS as they stated, **"I have a voice [cites leadership position within the community], I often encounter families who feel frustrated when trying to find the process for people to be heard... frustrating because they don't understand the process or aren't connected enough to get in with the board."**

Despite inconsistent perceptions around having a voice in the district, an identified area of strength is that families and caregivers of St. Mary's reported moderately high levels of agreement with the statement, **"I feel comfortable speaking with teachers and administrators."** Of 184 respondents over 90% of families and caregivers indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed to feeling comfortable engaging school leadership and staff in conversation. District subgroups displayed a consistent level of agreement as analysis examined differences in response by demographic identifiers (e.g. race, gender, and school site) and no differences within or between groups existed

Figure 2  
Family and Caregiver Comfortability



When examining connectedness and a sense of belonging, survey results revealed that student feelings of belonging in their school are largely dependent on identity (e.g., gender and race). *Please see Appendix A for student feelings of belonging by gender and Appendix B by race.* With regard to gender identity and student feelings of belonging, we would be remiss if we did not include upheld beliefs surrounding gender identity by a member on staff at SMCPS who stated, **“You can only be a biological male or female..” and continued the statement by requesting Insight audit team members remove gender identity options outside of male or female on survey demographic questions.** When considering the culture of a school setting for inclusion and equity, explicitly for a non-binary student or a member of the LGBTQ+ community, beliefs such as this one shared by a SMCPS staff member, could serve as a detriment to the social and emotional health of students who do not identify as solely male or female, thereby contributing to a lowered perception of climate, culture, and community experienced within the district as well as school site.

Climate is also driven by policies and practices, and St. Mary’s current discipline policies include both a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and a multi-level behavior response system. Existing MTSS Tier 1 interventions that apply to all students include positive supports, second step, restorative approaches, responsive classroom, and conscious discipline. However, an in-depth review of the levels of responses to behavior infractions (*Appendix D*) revealed a punitive system that fosters exclusion, lacks opportunity for restoration, and has disproportionate negative impacts on students of color.

In 2018, 34.3% of the district’s out of school suspensions were Black or African American students, despite comprising only 19% of the overall student population. At Great Mills High School, 80.9% of school related arrests were Black or African American students while White students were arrested at a rate of 17% despite making up the majority of the student population at 41.3%. This disproportionality exists across the district and can be seen in further detail in Appendix C titled, “SMCPS 2018 Student Disciplinary Action and Outcomes in Middle and High Schools.”

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 2.1

Enlist the entire school community to work toward establishing a supportive community focused on equity and high-quality connections among all stakeholder groups

- Convene the Citizens Advisory Council for Educational Equity (CCAEE) and ensure that membership is representative of the collective St. Mary's County Public Schools community by including parents, students, instructional and non-instructional staff, as well as community partners.
- Work actively to make CCAEE a visible, recognized, and leading voice in SMCPS where authentic dialogue is encouraged.
- Ensure the CCAEE has formal structures to collaborate with the District Equity Team to avoid any conflicting messages or practices.
- Establish a culture of two-way communication by developing and communicating a transparent process by which external stakeholder voices can be heard.
- Leverage existing stakeholder comfort by holding meetings with SMCPS leaders, staff, caregivers, and students- particularly students of color, from the LGBTQ+ community, those with disabilities, etc.,- on specific issues relevant to them. Utilizing the process of deep listening with students, parents, and staff who endeavor to be part of a more inclusive and transparent school improvement process is crucial.
- Promote an affirming school culture using the tenets of ASCD's Whole Child Initiative.

### 2.2

Develop a restorative system-wide process for implementation, enforcement, and reporting of disciplinary matters. As a public system, accountability and transparency are a priority

- Leverage existing MTSS Tier 1 interventions to revise the existing Levels of Responses. Replace punitive consequences with restorative practices such as affective statements, community-building circles, small impromptu conferencing, and setting classroom agreements or norms.
- Convene the CCAEE to review the revised policy in effort to establish shared values and vision across the school system.
- Establish agreement on terminology so that all in the system have a clear understanding of equity, implementation, infractions, and disciplinary actions.
- Provide an overview of disciplinary policies and specific online location on back to school night.
- Ensure access by providing a brief online video on how to access the policies online for new families, non-english speaking families, and families who may need ADA accommodations.



## EQUITY IN THE EDUCATOR WORKFORCE

Every student deserves educators who will provide them with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in school today and in their futures. Some of the most compelling research in recent years indicates the significant positive impact that teachers of color have on all students—particularly students of color—in terms of achievement, expectations for success, and long-term life outcomes. A racially diverse educator workforce represents a district’s dedication to creating equitable access to excellent educational opportunities for all students, as well as its commitment to eliminating barriers to entry and providing equitable career advancement opportunities for educators of color.

Given the significant impact of effective educators on student outcomes, getting the right people in the right positions should be a top priority for school districts. When educator talent is managed well, a district can transform entrenched bureaucratic systems into more nimble processes that support the ultimate goal of ensuring all students have access to effective teachers in every classroom and effective leaders in every school.

Equitable beliefs, policies, and practices are necessary at every stage of an educator’s progression through a school district, from recruitment and hiring, to retention, to placement and promotion. People of color are both less likely to enter education at all and more likely to leave if they do enter. Therefore, a district must employ intentional strategies to attract racially diverse candidates into open positions, equitably place them in schools and classrooms, encourage them to remain in the district at proportional rates, and provide equitable opportunities for them to progress upwards in the organization.

These strategies could include involving diverse voices in the hiring and onboarding process; implementing induction programs and leadership academies specifically for educators of color; and ensuring that school and district leaders understand the positive and negative experiences of teachers and staff of color. Together, these strategies can mitigate racial inequities and ensure the equitable representation of educators of color at all levels of the organization.

Diversity benefits every workforce, and teaching is no exception. Research repeatedly indicates that teachers of color benefit students of color—particularly Black males—in a variety of ways, including increased test scores, lowered school suspensions, improved academic attitudes, increased student attendance, and reduction in the risk of dropping out (Gershenson et al., 2017; Lee, 2018; Miller, 2018; Partelow et al., 2017). Racial diversity among teachers also helps break down biases across races, thus having a positive effect on all students (Partelow et al., 2017).

Yet most districts do not effectively recruit and retain educators of color. In 40% of U.S. schools, there is not a single teacher of color on staff, and teachers of color only represent 18% of the overall teaching population (Partelow et al., 2017; Putman & Walsh, 2016). Many school districts are not yet implementing strategies to address this challenge: only one in three districts actively recruits from HBCUs or MSIs, only 40% of districts even consider a teacher's contribution to workforce diversity when hiring teachers, and 80% of districts "do not provide any specific supports geared toward inducting teachers of color" (Konoske-Graf, Partelow, & Benner, 2016).

Teachers of color tend to leave the profession or transfer schools at higher rates than white teachers (Barshay, 2018). In fact, national data indicates that there is a turnover disparity of approximately 7 percentage points between Black and white teachers (Barnum, 2018). According to a recent report by Dixon, Griffin, and Teoh (2018), teachers of color often leave their districts and/or education altogether due to antagonistic school culture, unfavorable work conditions, lack of agency and autonomy, feeling undervalued, and the high social and emotional cost of being a teacher of color.

In many districts, there is a trend to place higher percentages of teachers of color in hard-to-staff, low-income schools with less experienced leadership and with fewer professional development opportunities, leading to frustration and teachers exiting the district. Additionally, findings suggest that Black teachers tend to change schools or leave the profession if they aren't exposed to Black colleagues or a principal of color (Mahnken, 2018).

## ST. MARY'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS' FINDINGS

The data regarding equity in the educator workforce in SMCPSS reflects many of the challenges outlined in the research above. Specifically, evidence collected in the district suggested that both recruitment and retention are areas in need of improvement. While the recruitment calendar provided by SMCPSS representatives evidenced a good faith effort to recruit educators of color, the district remains majority white at all levels of staff. Please note that SMCPSS staff demographics were unfounded and unreported by the school district, therefore the audit team used demographics reported in surveys.

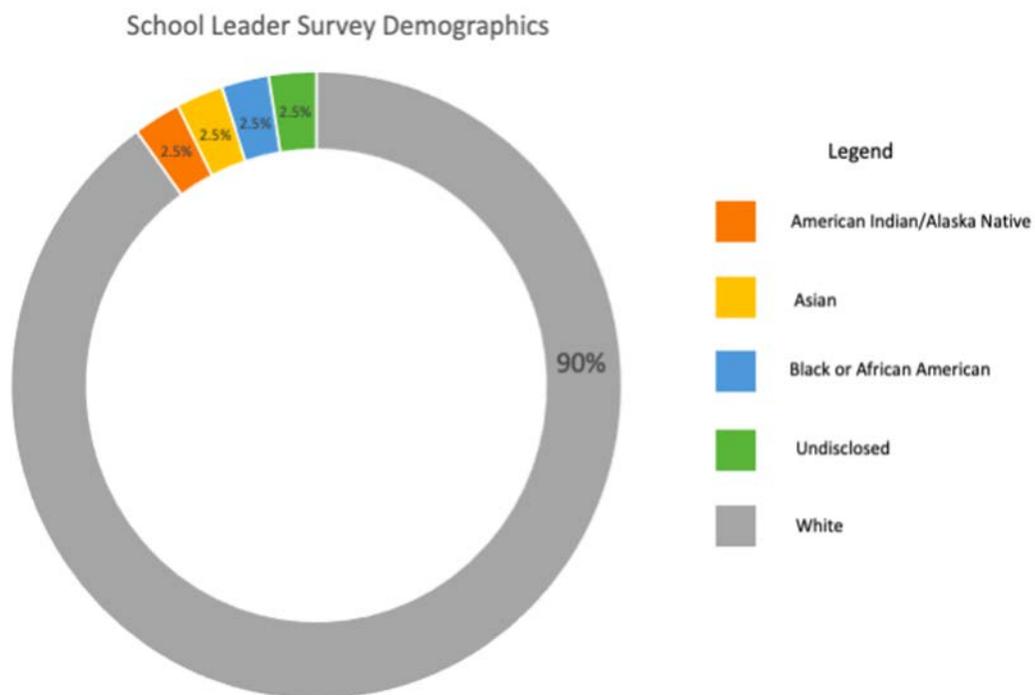
As noted in Appendices E (Educator Perceptions on Staff of Color Recruitment Efforts) and F (Educator Perceptions on Staff of Color Retention Efforts), perceptions of recruitment and retention efforts for educators of color differ between staff subgroups. When asked about schools' and the district's effectiveness in recruiting staff of color, respondents reported varying degrees of agreement, most notably dependent on their racial identity or ethnicity (see Appendix E). Specifically, White and Hispanic/Latinx educators recorded higher levels of agreement to the prompt compared to their colleagues who identified as Native Hawaiian/OPI, Black or African American, Asian, or American Indian/Alaska Native. While White or Hispanic/Latinx educators reported more favorable responses, the data overall demonstrates a discrepancy in educator perceptions, particularly educators from BIPOC communities, on SMCPSS's effectiveness in recruiting educators of color to the district.

When asked about the district's retention efforts, staff members' perceptions were similar to those reflected in the recruitment prompt. Specifically, SMCPSS teacher respondents' level of agreement to the prompt, "School leaders and district leaders effectively *retain* staff of color", held varying degrees of agreement, most notably dependent on their racial identity or ethnicity (see Appendix F). SMCPSS educators that identified as White or Hispanic/Latinx recorded higher levels of agreement to the prompt compared to their colleagues that identified as Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, Black or African American, Asian, or American Indian/Alaska Native. While White and Hispanic/Latinx educators reported more favorable responses, this demonstrates a second discrepancy in educator perceptions on SMCPSS's effectiveness in cultivating a diverse educator workforce in the district. A further examination of SMCPSS's educator workforce compared to reported student demographics is provided in Appendix G.

Research supports the importance of encouraging racially diverse candidates to remain in districts at proportional rates, and providing them equitable opportunities to progress upwards in the organization. SMCPs displayed limited opportunities for career advancement for educators and professionals of color given the demographic descriptive statistics derived from school leader survey respondents. Of 40 school leader respondents, 36 school leaders identified as White whereas one respondent preferred not to self-identify and three identified as either American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, or Black or African American.

Figure 3

SMCPs School Leader Demographics



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 3.1

Develop an Office of Talent Management that is led by a senior leader familiar with talent management strategies addressing recruitment, retention, and development of a talent pipeline to encourage career options and advancement specific to staff of color.

- Create conditions for district leaders to take time for deep reflection on their personal biases and their institution's history with race and how these factors may be impacting their decisions regarding recruitment, retention, and advancement of staff of color.
- Develop district processes and structures to support the active recruitment, retention and advancement of staff of color.
- Offer a robust induction program to support teachers of color in their first years of teaching. This may include being matched with a veteran mentor teacher, additional professional development opportunities, and/or extra coaching support (Carver-Thomas, 2018).
- Build on existing recruitment practices by developing meaningful partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and local universities to actively recruit teachers of color into administrative roles, especially those who have evidenced commitment to working in hard-to-staff schools.
- Develop a pipeline that includes opportunities for career growth for staff of color, including participation in leadership academies, instructional and leadership coaching, and other leadership development opportunities.



## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

For years, educational equity work has centered primarily (and necessarily) on our students- their race, culture, language, socioeconomic status, and identity. However, too often, the impact of educators' race, culture, and identity on students has been left unacknowledged. Placing equity at the center of educator practice means building structural, individual, and collective consciousness among all staff around issues related to racism, bias, and power, and the ways in which they interact to undermine equitable education for students. By engaging all educators in personalized, aligned professional learning that critically examines individual and systemic biases and provides effective tools and practices, schools can improve their effectiveness in working with diverse populations.

As districts work towards creating systems that dismantle systemic racism, it is imperative that their professional learning examine, question, and address personal and institutional issues of race, bias, and power head-on. People are not born racially competent—the skills and attitudes that comprise racial competence are learned through continuous questioning, reflection, and realignment. And yet, that work is often avoided out of fear that it will “expose our gaps in racial competence, and people might think we are racist. But without asking questions or taking risks, we can’t grow. If schools adopt a growth mindset about race, we can create a culture in which everyone is continuously developing their racial competence” (Michael, n.d.).

Additionally, research shows that professional learning is most effective when it is content-focused and job-embedded. When creating professional learning to develop the racial consciousness of educators across the district, it is important to not only meet staff where they are in their personal learning, but also to ensure that the offerings are tailored, as is appropriate, for their specific role. Engaging educators in collaborative professional learning and providing opportunities for them to have an active role in the development and implementation of professional learning is essential for sustaining an effective and responsive professional learning program.

In order to ensure that the district creates a professional learning culture grounded in the need for continuous development of racial competence, it is critical to seize every opportunity to engage educators in the understanding and ownership of the priorities around equity. In doing so, improvement feels cohesive and relevant, and becomes an invaluable part of what it means to be a racially competent educator.

Recent research repeatedly corroborates the link between teacher quality and outcomes for students (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018). According to the Center for Public Education, teacher quality has a greater impact on student achievement than other factors often associated with academic outcomes, including a student's race, socioeconomic status, and prior academic record (Schmidt et al., 2017).

In order to have a positive impact on outcomes for all students, teachers must be provided with the training, resources, and supports needed to deliver high-quality instruction to all students. Research also shows that teachers and their implicit biases can be a barrier to students of color reaching their full academic potential (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016). Teachers must be provided with opportunities to participate in equity-focused training so that they are willing and able to continually and critically reflect on the ways in which their personal and professional identities inform their ability to effectively meet the needs of a diverse student population (Larrivee, 2000).

While the impact of teachers cannot be overstated, students' experiences in schools are influenced by all adults employed by the district. Ongoing professional learning in equity and bias must be designed to allow all educators to reflect on their implicit biases and learn culturally responsive best practices.

Educators who engage in professional learning related to race and equity learn to formulate strategies for collectively addressing equity issues in their schools. Through this process educators gain a deeper understanding of equity and equity-related problems in their school context and are more empowered to contribute to the solutions.

## ST. MARY'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS' FINDINGS

It is unclear, based on district educator professional learning plans provided by the district, whether or how district leaders embed professional learning opportunities focused on equity over the entirety of the academic year. A thematic asset that emerged during the examination of SMCPs educators' and school leaders' qualitative data, however, was **"training requests and consistency."** Both groups of stakeholders shared a desire for training involving more inclusive, affirming, and relevant teaching strategies, as well as culturally responsive strategies.

One SMCPs school leader offered the following statement on the relevance of the district providing professional learning opportunities from top-down, **"District leaders could provide all school leadership teams with the same training (to include the district's definition of equity and professional development activities). That training would then be delivered to each school staff by the school leadership teams - during specific PD dates/times throughout the school year."** Additionally, school leaders sought additional guidance from district leadership on how to better serve their students equitably within the specific context of their school as one leader requested, **"More PD [professional development] regarding race and race-related inequities, especially institutional racism that has affected housing and homelessness."** A third school leader requested, **"More guidance and PD for teachers re[garding] transgender students."**

Teachers also recognized the importance of beginning to develop their cultural competence in order to have a positive impact on outcomes for all students. **A teacher shared, "I want to be trained by an expert on the topic [improving equity]. Someone that will help me uncover any unconscious bias or inequitable practices and help me create a more inclusive classroom environment."** A second teacher elaborated on the need for action, and asked the district to, **"Provide more opportunities to learn about equity and how to discuss it."** In addition to professional learning opportunities on race and equity, educators of SMCPs also requested the district to, **"Offer professional development for working with students that are under-represented such as LGBTQ+."**



Based on qualitative survey responses, nearly 55% of school leaders took initiative to provide their staff with additional professional learning centered on equity, diversity, and inclusion, as well as teaching and learning strategies relevant to their student population. While this speaks to some leaders' recognition of the importance of providing their own staff with essential professional learning, it is also noted in the data that nearly half the districts' school staff members have not had the opportunity to participate in these learning opportunities. Forty-five percent of school leaders reported a level of disagreement with the prompt, "Our teachers are trained in culturally responsive instruction and use the techniques in the classroom."

Additionally, qualitative survey responses provided by school leaders reinforced this finding, as one SMCPS school leader stated the need to **"provide cultural proficiency training to staff."** A second school leader reiterated this, stating there needs to be **"more countywide PD on this topic so schools aren't doing this solo."** Lastly, one school leader spotlighted the need for training teachers in equitable practices to further develop an environment suited for student social-emotional development, and shared, **"Equity (and social emotional development) should be a PD strand available across PD offerings during county-based days/sessions - these are just as important as 'instruction', if not more when we consider that our children are unable be ready to learn if their social emotional needs are not met and if staff do not truly recognize the difference between equal and equitable."**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1

Capitalize on staff members' interest in receiving robust, equity-focused professional learning by implementing a district-wide, consistently implemented course of professional learning with a focus on cultural competence for all levels of staff, including district office staff members.

- Elevate the leadership of DET and SET members (see Domain 1 Recommendations) by providing opportunities for them to receive advanced, intensive cultural competence professional learning so that they can then develop and deliver professional learning sessions for all SMCPS staff.
- Partner with an external organization with demonstrated experience in training school district staff members in developing culturally competent mindsets and practices.
- Ensure that all aspects of equity and cultural competence, including race, ethnicity, LGBTQ+, and other identities, are provided during professional learning.
- Develop a multi-year training plan that ensures consistency in professional learning schedules and content for all members.
- Identify high priority need areas, based on data presented in this report, to ensure immediate improvement in the cultural competence of all staff members
- Develop a specific short-term process, based on identified needs, to build staff members' cultural competence and ability to improve equitable conditions for all students in all settings.



## CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND LEARNING

The quality of a student’s learning environment and their access to opportunity play a key role in their academic and developmental life outcomes. Research has shown that a racially conscious curriculum and teaching practices are beneficial to all educators and learners. An equitable learning environment provides the culture, climate, and content needed to enable all students to thrive in the global economy. The establishment of equitable teaching and learning practices and the equitable provision of teaching materials and resources ensure positive student outcomes by providing racially affirming and high-quality instruction, diverse and inclusive curriculum, and programmatic access and equity.

Good practice dictates that educators analyze student performance and identify gaps in learning. However, if those educators do not reflect on the systems, biases, and practices that lead to such inequitable outcomes, there is a tendency to engage in deficit thinking and seek to “fix” the students. Educators who instead focus on fixing the system are those who have invested in increasing their own understanding of the historical and social context of students, their culture, and education through reading, reflection, and discussion with colleagues and students.

These race-conscious educators:

- Ensure each student feels like an active member of an inclusive learning family through engagement and connection.
- Center all students by promoting their voice and celebrating their identities, interests, cultures, and context.
- Actively engage each student in meaningful learning experiences through collaboration, differentiation, and exploration.

Providing students with equitable learning opportunities builds trust, enhances rapport with learners and, consequently, improves student motivation (Weimer, 2010). As noted by Chiefs for Change in their 2019 report “Honoring Origins and Helping Students Succeed: The Case for Cultural Relevance in High-Quality Instructional Materials,” a commitment to cultural relevance is a commitment to honoring student diversity and increasing student engagement and cannot result in the decrease of academic rigor. Providing a high-quality education to all students requires that a district offer them equitable access to a variety of courses. Students are best prepared for successful lives when they are engaged in teaching and learning that goes beyond knowledge transfer and pushes them to generate new ideas, engage with content critically, express themselves effectively, and work with others to solve problems in a global world.

## ST. MARY'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS' FINDINGS

As indicated in stakeholder surveys, 80% of school leaders are working to analyze student performance and identify gaps in learning between groups of students. However, 20% of school leaders disagreed or strongly disagreed with collecting, disaggregating, and discussing various data sets to understand and act to eliminate gaps between White students and their Black and Brown peers.

Current efforts to identify and close the achievement gap in SMCPS have been unsuccessful, as the disparity in academic performance between groups of students is evidenced in the consistent outperformance of white students in comparison to students of color, low-income students, students with disabilities and English learners. In reviewing 2019 data for 3rd and 8th grade students in Math and English Language Arts (ELA), white students achieved proficiency at a rate higher than that of the district average, while students of color, low-income students, students with disabilities and English learners demonstrated proficiency at rates significantly less than the district average (see Appendix H). This dynamic persists through graduation, as in 2020, 92% of all students graduated in four years. White students again outperformed the district average and their peers at 95% in comparison to 86.6%, 88.8%, 82.6% for Asian, Black or African American, and Hispanic students respectively (see Appendix I). Gaps between White Students and diverse learners are even more disparate, with 69.4% of students with disabilities, and 37.5% of English Learners graduating in four years.

Gaps in data collection and analysis also exist at the district level, as several student performance indicators were unfounded and unreported including: student outcomes for American Indian or Alaska Native students, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders, not low-income students, non-ELs, and students without disabilities. High School standardized assessment data and retention data was also unfounded and unreported.

Despite the gaps in academic achievement between groups of students, there was an average level of agreement that they are given the same opportunities to participate in chorus, band, sports, STEM, student leadership, and other special programs. Of 676 total student respondents, all subgroups displayed a consistent level of agreement to having equal participation rights in extracurricular activities or special programs as analysis examined differences in response by demographic identifiers (e.g. race, gender, and school site) and no differences within or between groups existed.



In alignment with staff professional learning requests, student perceptions of inclusive education content and materials reflected a statistical difference of agreement levels based on gender and race. The student population of SMCPs is nearly equally divided in its level of agreement to disagreement over lessons and homework reflecting different people, cultures, experiences, and backgrounds where 49% either disagreed or strongly disagreed and 51% either agreed or strongly agreed (n=676).

Although at first glance, perceptions seem equal in agreement or disagreement, inferential statistics depicted statistically significant differences between subgroups at SMCPs. Specifically, students that identified as American Indian or Alaska Native (2.33), Asian (2.31), Hispanic/Latinx (2.23), and students of two or more races (1.97) reported the lowest average mean scores parenthetically noted in response to course materials reflecting diverse groups compared to their peers who did not disclose their race (2.55), identified as White (2.52), or Black or African American (2.51). Likewise gender identify uncovered differences in mean scores where students that identified as female (2.40) and gender non-conforming or non-binary (2.15) reported lower means scores compared to their male peers (2.61). In all, the total average level of agreement to course materials reflecting diverse groups on a 4-point Likert scale where four (4) is a strong level of agreement, the student population at SMCPs reported a total mean score of 2.45; its lowest of all survey prompts.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1

Inspire educational gains among your most vulnerable student populations by developing a plan to ensure tiered intervention across grade levels and content areas.

- Adopt and communicate a clear district theory of action regarding the importance of improving core instruction and tiered interventions. Invest heavily in clarifying what good core instruction looks like and training teachers on how to achieve it.
- Upon adoption of new curricula, examine current intervention programs to ensure alignment.
- Adopt intervention strategies and programs as appropriate.
- Provide training and guidance for schools on the appropriate use of Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions and on implementation of the district's selected program(s).

### 5.2

Develop and staff an internal data alignment, data evaluation and systematic review process, with clear expectations for closing opportunity and achievement gaps.

- Charge an internal data driven-program evaluation team with disaggregating and analyzing student performance data across subgroups at consistent points across the year.
- Develop a standardized method of data review at each building, with the expectation that a written plan is developed to mitigate differences in achievement among subgroups.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.2

Establish a district-wide culture of developmental responsiveness which ensures that the practices adults use respond to students' individual, cultural, and developmental learning needs and strengths.

- Invest in professional development that provides educators with robust support and resources on the following:
  - Use of active and interactive teaching practices
  - Creating and sustaining a classroom environment that represents students
  - Use of words and non-linguistic models
  - Developing connections and ways of knowing their students

# PART III

## APPENDICES AND REFERENCES

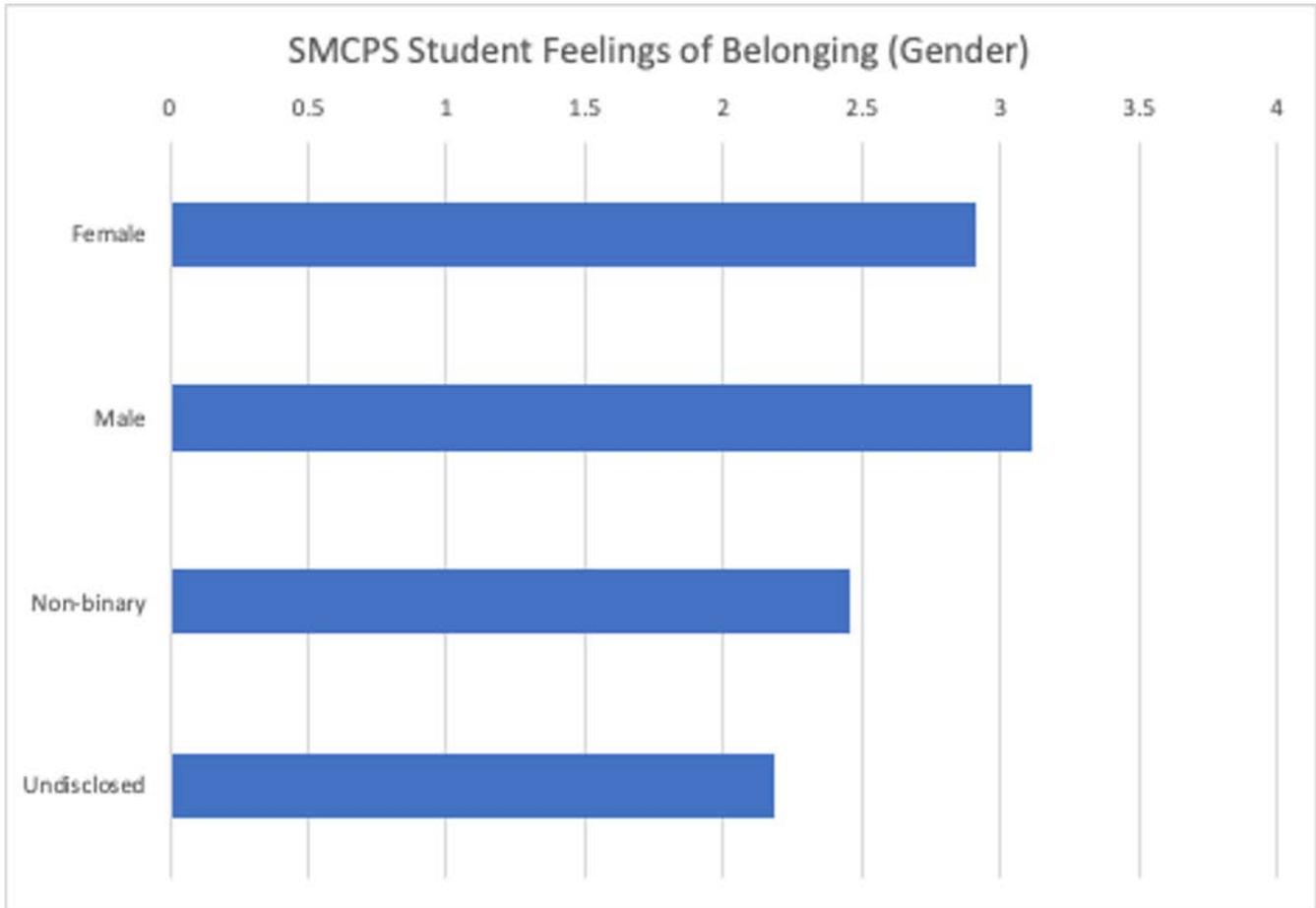
In this section, please find:

- Appendices that support the findings and recommendations notes in Part II
- List of all references used in the compilation of this report.

APPENDIX A

# SMCPS Student Feelings of School Belonging (BLG)

BLG Figure 1. Perceptions of Belonging by Gender



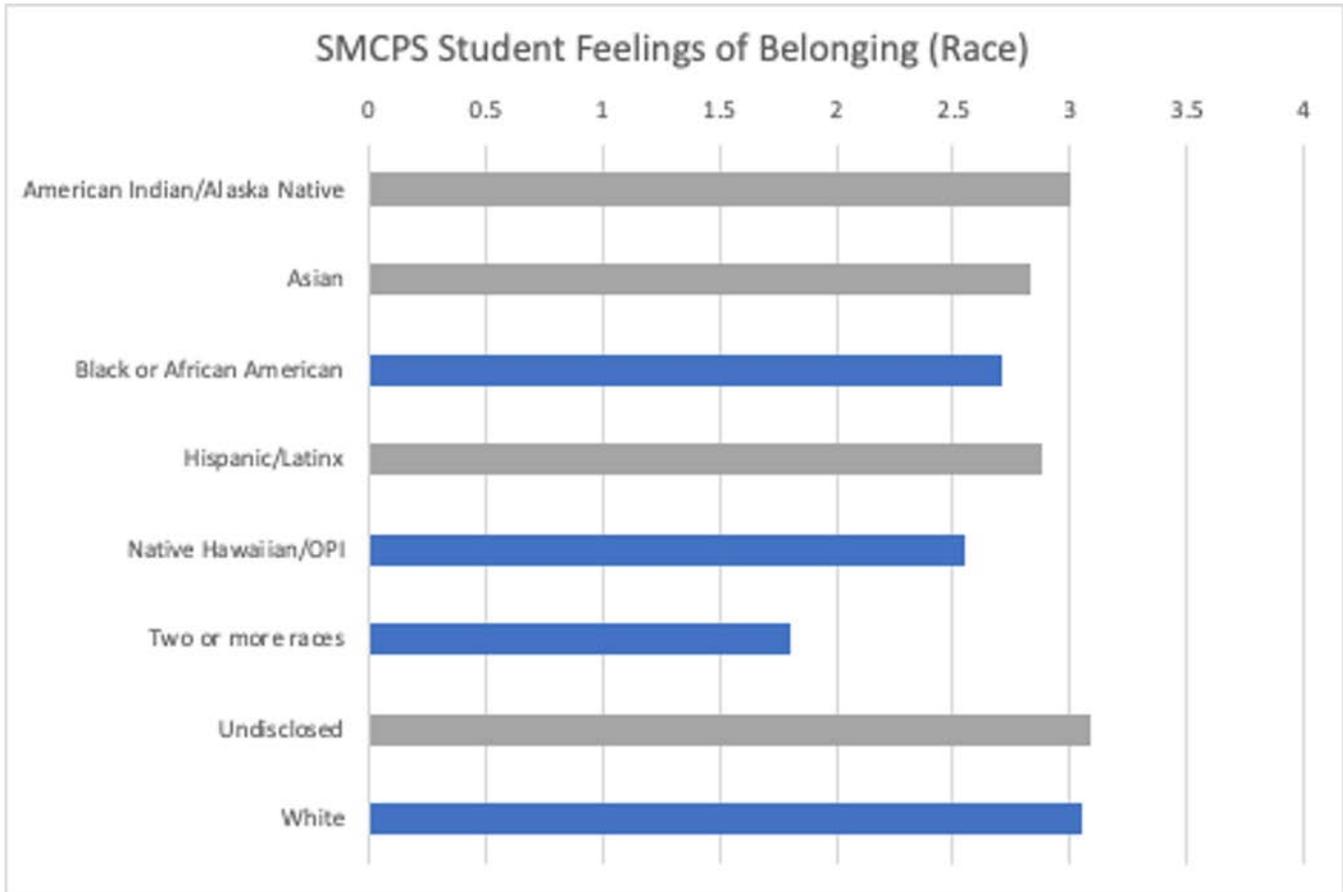
**Note to BLG Figure 1.**

Students' sense of belonging to their school has strong correlations to student engagement, academic achievement, and social-emotional health. SMCPS students received the opportunity to share their level of agreement to the prompt, "I feel like I belong in my school" through Insight stakeholder surveys deployed by the school district. As such a total of 676 SMCPS students voluntarily participated in the survey. During the data analysis process, Insight analysts discovered a statistically significant difference between how student subgroups reported their average level of agreement to the aforementioned prompt. In referencing BLG Figure 1, the agreement mean scores are illustrated by gender subgroups on a scale of one to four where one represents strongly agree and four represents strongly agree. The total mean score for all student respondents was 2.93, which approaches an average level of agreement among the group. Of note is the difference between male students who reported a 3.11 agreement mean score which is high and statistically different than the mean scores of their peers who identified as female (2.91), non-binary (2.46), or those students that chose not to disclose their gender 2.18).

APPENDIX B

# SMCPS Student Feelings of School Belonging (Race)

BLG Figure 2. Perceptions of Belonging by Race



**Note to BLG Figure 2.**

In referencing BLG Figure 2, the mean scores of students are present according to their identified race or ethnicity. There are two colors, grey and blue, to illuminate the subgroups that demonstrate statistically significant differences in mean scores represented in blue. With an average level of agreement to the prompt, "I feel like I belong in my school," SMCPS students (n= 676) reported a mean score of 2.93. When examining the mean scores of races featured in blue, there are differences between White students and their peers that identified as Black or African American, Native Hawaiian/OPE, or those that identified as two or more races. White students reported the second highest feeling of belonging with a mean score or 3.05 whereas Black or African American students reported the sixth highest mean score at 2.71, Native Hawaiian/OPI students reported a mean score of 2.55, and students that identified as two or more races reported a belonging mean score of 1.80 which were the seventh and eighth highest scores or eight subgroups respectively.

APPENDIX C

SMCPS 2018 Student Disciplinary Action and Outcomes (DA&O) in Middle and High Schools

DA&O Table 1a. 2018 MS and HS Student Disciplinary Data

School Name	Metric	Total Count	% Female	% Male	% Hispanic or Latino	% American Indian or Alaska Native	% Asian	% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	% Black or African American	% White	% Two or More Races	% English Learner	% Student with Disabilities
Esperanza Middle	Student Enrollment	902	49.7%	50.3%	9.4%	0.1%	3.2%	0.0%	24.5%	53.2%	9.5%	1.1%	12.9%
	In-School Suspensions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Out-of-School Suspensions	63	42.9%	57.1%	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	69.8%	19.0%	7.9%	3.2%	22.2%
	Expulsions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Referrals to Law Enforcement	32	40.6%	59.4%	3.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	75.0%	21.9%	0.0%	3.1%	31.3%
	School-Related Arrests	31	38.7%	61.3%	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	74.2%	22.6%	0.0%	3.2%	29.0%
	Student Enrollment	976	49.4%	50.6%	5.3%	0.2%	2.2%	0.3%	8.2%	77.4%	6.5%	0.5%	12.8%
	In-School Suspensions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Out-of-School Suspensions	14	35.7%	64.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%	71.4%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%
	Expulsions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Leonardtown Middle	Referrals to Law Enforcement	7	28.6%	71.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	71.4%	28.6%	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%
	School-Related Arrests	7	28.6%	71.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	71.4%	28.6%	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%
	Student Enrollment	993	50.6%	49.4%	3.0%	0.4%	0.3%	0.1%	6.7%	85.2%	4.2%	0.1%	9.2%
	In-School Suspensions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Out-of-School Suspensions	63	20.6%	79.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	77.8%	7.9%	0.0%	17.5%
	Expulsions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Referrals to Law Enforcement	20	15.0%	85.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	15.0%	85.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%
	School-Related Arrests	21	14.3%	85.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	19.0%	81.0%	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%
	Student Enrollment	976	48.1%	51.9%	10.0%	0.3%	4.3%	0.2%	33.2%	42.7%	8.7%	3.4%	10.1%
	In-School Suspensions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Spring Ridge Middle	Out-of-School Suspensions	109	43.1%	56.9%	4.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	61.5%	23.9%	10.1%	2.8%	22.0%
	Expulsions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Referrals to Law Enforcement	30	40.0%	60.0%	3.3%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	76.7%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%
	School-Related Arrests	30	40.0%	60.0%	3.3%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	76.7%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%
	Student Enrollment	1575	50.1%	49.9%	3.3%	0.3%	0.6%	0.1%	9.1%	83.0%	3.6%	0.3%	7.4%
	In-School Suspensions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Out-of-School Suspensions	45	17.8%	82.2%	6.7%	0.0%	4.4%	0.0%	26.7%	60.0%	2.2%	0.0%	17.8%
	Expulsions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Referrals to Law Enforcement	29	24.1%	75.9%	3.4%	0.0%	3.4%	0.0%	34.5%	58.6%	0.0%	0.0%	31.0%
	School-Related Arrests	29	24.1%	75.9%	3.4%	0.0%	3.4%	0.0%	34.5%	58.6%	0.0%	0.0%	31.0%

APPENDIX C

SMCPS 2018 Student Disciplinary Action and Outcomes in Middle and High Schools (continued)

DA&O Table 1b. 2018 MS and HS Student Disciplinary Data

School Name	Metric	Total Count	% Female	% Male	% Hispanic or Latino	% American Indian or Alaska Native	% Asian	% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	% Black or African American	% White	% Two or More Races	% English Learner	% Student with Disabilities
Great Mills High	Student Enrollment	1552	48.5%	51.5%	10.8%	0.1%	6.9%	0.3%	36.2%	41.3%	6.4%	3.1%	11.3%
	In-School Suspensions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Out-of-School Suspensions	168	47.6%	52.4%	7.1%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	69.0%	18.5%	4.2%	1.8%	20.8%
	Expulsions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Referrals to Law Enforcement	47	51.1%	48.9%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	80.9%	17.0%	0.0%	2.1%	42.6%
	School-Related Arrests	47	51.2%	48.8%	5.8%	0.0%	3.9%	0.3%	80.9%	17.0%	0.0%	2.1%	42.6%
Leonardtown High	Student Enrollment	1831	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.5%	74.8%	5.2%	0.5%	7.2%
	In-School Suspensions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Out-of-School Suspensions	68	17.6%	82.4%	7.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	23.5%	64.7%	4.4%	0.0%	23.5%
	Expulsions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Referrals to Law Enforcement	28	14.3%	85.7%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	32.1%	64.3%	0.0%	0.0%	32.1%
	School-Related Arrests	30	20.0%	80.0%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	30.0%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	36.7%
Chesapeake Charter School	Student Enrollment	416	52.2%	47.8%	5.5%	0.0%	3.6%	0.0%	6.0%	76.0%	8.9%	0.7%	7.9%
	In-School Suspensions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Out-of-School Suspensions	1	0.0%	100%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Expulsions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Referrals to Law Enforcement	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	School-Related Arrests	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Fairfield Academy	Student Enrollment	137	32.8%	67.2%	8.8%	1.5%	0.7%	0.0%	31.4%	51.8%	5.8%	1.5%	17.5%
	In-School Suspensions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Out-of-School Suspensions	10	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	30.0%	70.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%
	Expulsions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Referrals to Law Enforcement	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	School-Related Arrests	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Fairfield Academy II	Student Enrollment	54	25.9%	74.1%	7.4%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	38.9%	50.0%	1.9%	0.0%	9.3%
	In-School Suspensions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Out-of-School Suspensions	8	37.5%	62.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%
	Expulsions	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Referrals to Law Enforcement	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	School-Related Arrests	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

## APPENDIX C

# SMCPS 2018 Student Disciplinary Action and Outcomes in Middle and High Schools (continued)

### **Note to DA&O Tables 1a and B**

Although the overall distribution of disciplinary action is reflected equally among enrolled student subgroups at most middle and high school sites in SMCPS, the school sites denoted in grey reflect an unequal distribution of disciplinary action against students from Black or African American population, and in some cases students with disabilities, compared to their enrollment percentage in the school. Moreover, Black or African American students, from schools highlighted in grey have more referrals to law enforcement and school related arrests, which perpetuates influences of race on the school-to-prison-pipeline in criminalizing student behavior. This data strongly indicates a need for a joint effort by district level and school board members to audit language and consequences found in student conduct policies as well as consideration toward increased restorative justice training and practices enacted in SMCPS.

## APPENDIX D

# St. Mary's County Public Schools Student Handbook and Code of Conduct: Level of Responses With Behavioral Supports and Interventions

These responses are designed to teach appropriate behavior, so students are respectful, and can learn, and contribute to a safe environment. Teachers are encouraged to try a variety of teaching and classroom management strategies. When appropriate, teachers may engage the student's support system to ensure successful learning and consistency of responses, and change the conditions that contribute to the student's inappropriate or disruptive behavior. Responses taken may include, but are not limited to: parent/legal guardian outreach (contact parent/legal guardian via phone, email, or text); verbal correction; conference with school resource officer; or restitution.

### LEVEL 1 Responses:

- Teacher/Parent conference
- Parent Contact
- Student Conference
- Loss of school privileges
- Classroom management protocol
- Behavior contract
- Conference with Counselor
- Lunch Detention
- Change seat assignment
- Restitution
- Behavior Intervention
- Reminders/redirection
- Daily Progress Sheet
- Time out
- Conference with Safety Resource Officer (SRO)
- Task Assignment (reflection/apology)
- Verbal Correction
- Warning

### LEVEL 2

These responses are designed to teach appropriate behavior, so students act respectfully, can learn, and contribute to a safe environment. Many of these responses engage the student's support system, and are designed to alter conditions that contribute to the student's inappropriate or disruptive behavior. These responses aim to correct behavior by stressing its severity and acknowledging potential implications for future harm, while still keeping the student in school. Responses taken may include, but are not limited to: loss of privileges; conference with parent/legal guardian and student; or time out.

All Responses from Level 1 and these additional responses below:

- Removal from extracurricular activities
- Detention
- Conflict Resolution
- Referral to Pupil Services Team (PST)

### LEVEL 3

These responses engage the student's support system to ensure successful learning, and to alter conditions that contribute to the student's inappropriate or disruptive behavior. These responses aim to correct behavior by stressing its severity and acknowledging potential implications for future harm, while still keeping the student in school. These responses may involve the short-term removal of a student from the classroom. Such a removal should be limited as much as practical without undermining its ability to adequately address the behavior. Responses taken may include, but are not limited to the In-School Intervention Center.

All Responses from Levels 1 and 2 and these additional responses below:

- Bus Suspension
- In-School intervention (ISI)
- Saturday School (where available)
- Pupil Services Team (PST) meeting
- IEP review (students with disabilities)
- Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) /Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)

### LEVEL 4

These responses address serious behavior while keeping the student in school, or when necessary due to the nature of the behavior or potential implications for future harm, remove a student from the school environment. They promote safety of the school community by addressing self-destructive and dangerous behavior. Responses taken may include, but are not limited to short-term out-of-school suspension (1-3 days).

All Responses from Levels 1, 2 and 3 and these additional responses below:

- Short-term suspension, 1-3 days
- Police contacted, possible student arrest (where applicable)

## LEVEL 5

These responses remove a student from the school environment for an extended period of time because of the severity of the behavior and potential implications for future harm. They may involve the placement of the student in a safe environment that provides additional structure and services. These responses promote the safety of the school community by addressing self-destructive and dangerous behavior. Responses taken may include, but are not limited to: long-term out-of-school suspension (4-10 days); extended-term out-of-school suspension\* (11-44 days); or expulsion.\*

*\* As determined by the hearing officer*

All Responses from Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 and these additional responses below:

- Long-Term Suspension, 4-10 days-possible disciplinary conference with Student Services
- Alternative Placement
- Police contacted, possible student arrest (where applicable)
- Extended suspension or expulsion (if disciplinary conference in Student Services)

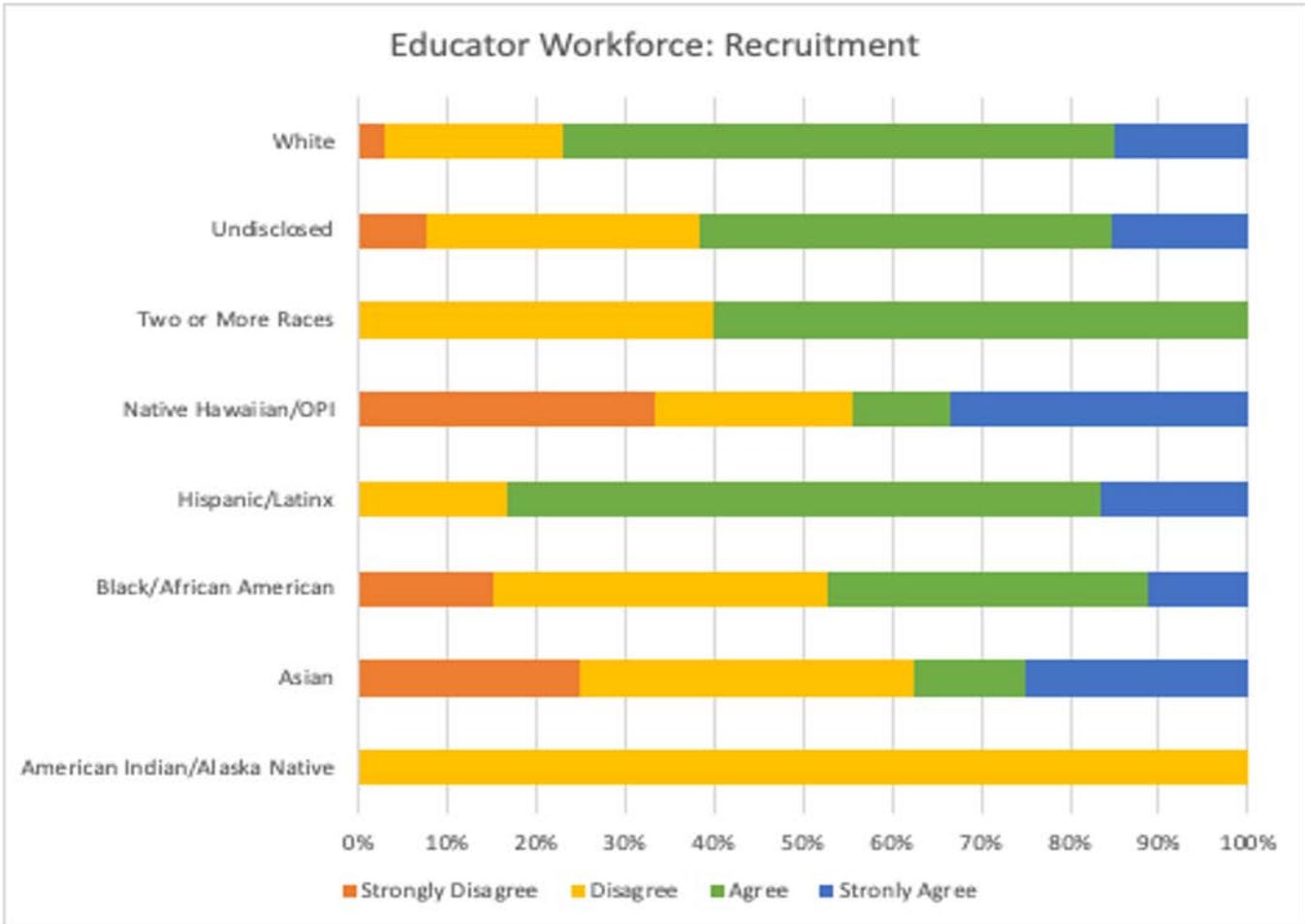
## REQUIRED REPORTING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

School administrators are required to report delinquent acts to law enforcement (offenses committed by a person under the age of 18 which would be crimes if committed by an adult (COMAR 13A.08.01.15). This includes incidents involving threats, possession of weapons, or physical injury. Delinquent acts do not include conduct or behaviors traditionally treated as a matter of school discipline. Incidents of disorderly conduct, disturbance, disruption of schools, trespass, loitering, profanity, and fighting that does not involve threats, weapons, or physical injury are considered school disciplinary issues to be handled at the discretion of the school administrator. Refer to the [Memorandum of Understanding with the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office - August 19, 2020](#).

APPENDIX E

# Perceptions of Educator Workforce (EW) Recruitment

EW Figure 1. Recruitment Effectiveness for Educators of Color



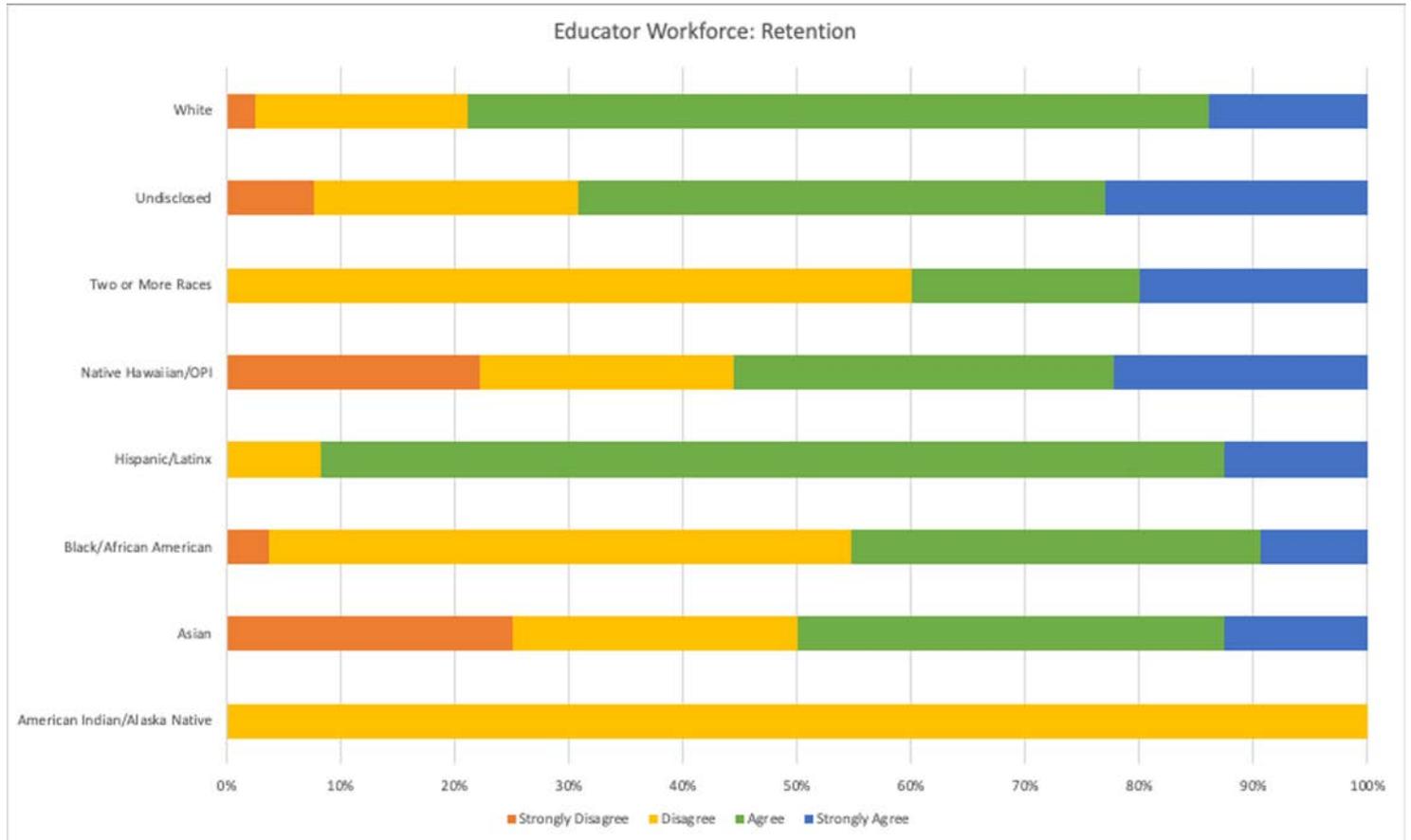
**Note to EW Figure 1.**

When asked their level of agreement to the prompt, "School leaders and district leaders effectively recruit staff of color" SMCPs teacher respondents (n=687) held varying degrees of agreement, most notably dependent on their racial identity or ethnicity. In particular, SMCPs educators that identified as White (n=574) or Hispanic/Latinx (n=24) recorded higher levels of agreement to the prompt compared to their colleagues that identified as Native Hawaiian/OPI (n=9), Black or African American (n= 53), Asian (n=8), or American Indian/Alaska Native (n = 1). While White and Hispanic/Latinx educators reported higher percentages of "strongly agree" and "agree" responses, the figure above demonstrates a discrepancy in educator perceptions, particularly educators from BIPOC communities, on SMCPs's effectiveness in recruiting educators of color to the district.

## APPENDIX F

# Perceptions of Educator Workforce Retention

EW Figure 2. Retention Effectiveness for Educators of Color



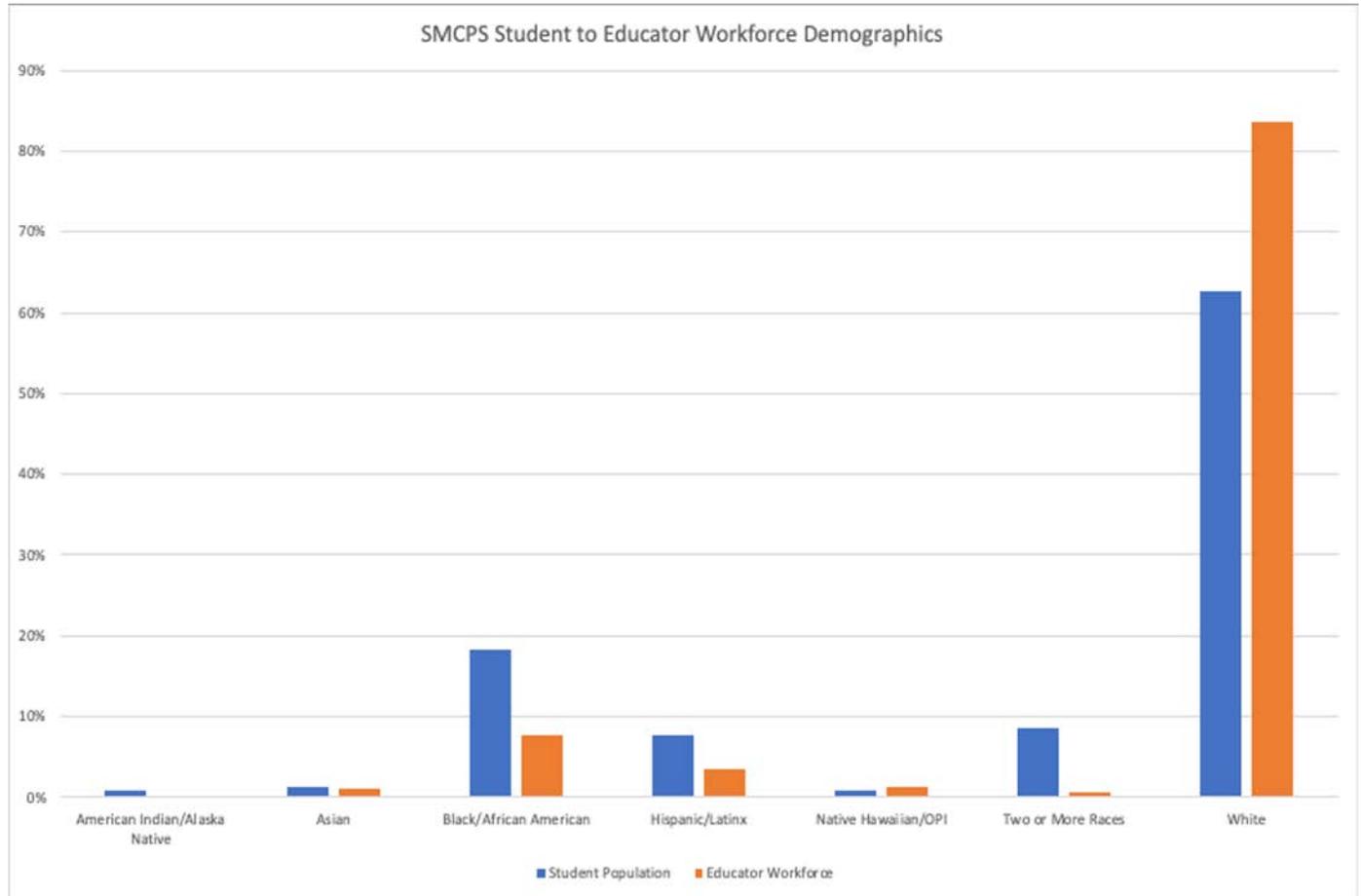
### Note to EW Figure 2.

When asked their level of agreement to the prompt, “School leaders and district leaders effectively *retain* staff of color” SMCPs teacher respondents (n=687) held varying degrees of agreement, most notably dependent on their racial identity or ethnicity. In particular, SMCPs educators that identified as White (n= 574) or Hispanic/Latinx (n= 24) recorded higher levels of agreement to the prompt compared to their colleagues that identified as Native Hawaiian/OPI (n=9), Black or African American (n= 53), Asian (n=8), or American Indian/Alaska Native (n=1). While White and Hispanic/Latinx educators reported higher percentages of “strongly agree” and “agree” responses, the figure above demonstrates a second discrepancy in educator perceptions, particularly educators from BIPOC communities, on SMCPs’s effectiveness in retaining educators of color to the district.

APPENDIX G

# SMCPS Student to Educator Workforce Demographics

EW Figure 3. Comparison of SMCPS Student and Staff Demographics



**Note to EW Figure 3.**

Although precise staff demographics for SMCPS was unavailable during the Equity Audit, team members were able to supplement some educator workforce data by way of the descriptive statistics rendered from the staff stakeholder survey. With a total of 687 staff participants the SMCPS educator workforce or teaching staff was broken down into the following percentages: 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, 1.2% Asian, 7.7% Black or African American, 3.5% Hispanic or Latinx, 1.3% Native Hawaiian or OPI, two or more races less than 1%, and 83.7% White. In looking at EW Figure 3, SMCPS staff percentages are displayed in orange situated beside SMCPS student percentages in blue. This figure illustrates the teaching staff of SMCPS percentages is quite incomparable to that of its student population and is not proportionately reflective of the SMCPS student body when drawing from district student data accessed on the district’s website and descriptive statistics supplemented from the staff stakeholder survey.

APPENDIX H

2019 St. Mary's County Public Schools 3rd and 8th Grade Math & ELA Proficiency

2019 St. Mary's County Public Schools 3rd Grade and 8th Grade Math & ELA Proficiency	3rd Grade ELA	3rd Grade Math	8th Grade MATH	8th Grade ELA
All Students	46.60%	46.80%	22.80%	49.10%
Male	41.70%	46.80%	21.3%	40.10%
Female	51.50%	46.80%	24.5%	59.20%
American Indian or Alaska Native	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported	77.10%
Asian	53.30%	Not Reported	16.7%	21.10%
Black or African American	31.80%	24.90%	7.1%	44.30%
Hispanic or Latinx	40%	26.70%	18.1%	Not Reported
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported
White	59.90%	56.20%	29%	55.70%
Multi-Racial	47.40%	36.80%	22.1%	46.50%
Low-Income	27.50%	27.40%	Not Reported	Not Reported
Not Low-Income	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported
English Learners	5%	7.10%	5%	18.80%
Non-ELs	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported
Students with Disabilities	9.50%	14%	5%	6%
Students without Disabilities	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported

APPENDIX I

# 2020 St. Mary's County Public Schools 4-Year Graduation & Dropout Rates

2020 St. Mary's County Public Schools 4-Year Graduation Rates	Graduated	Still in High School (Retained)	Dropped Out
All Students	92%	Not Reported	3.89%
Male	90.50%	Not Reported	5.14%
Female	93.80%	Not Reported	Not Reported
American Indian or Alaska Native	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported
Asian	86.60%	Not Reported	6.45%
Black or African American	88.89%	Not Reported	6.39%
Hispanic or Latinx	82.60%	Not Reported	15%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported
White	95%	Not Reported	>3%
Multi-Racial	87.80%	Not Reported	>3%
Low-Income	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported
Not Low-Income	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported
English Learners	37.50%	Not Reported	45.83%
Non-ELs	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported
Students with Disabilities	69.40%	Not Reported	8.04%
Students without Disabilities	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported

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