

community conversations 2022 cultivating a racially diverse & thriving educator community in south king county

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executive summary

community conversations 2022 cultivating a racially diverse & thriving educator community in south king county at a glance

120 youth of color engaged in conversations with other youth of color about supporting, retaining, and recruiting teachers and other educators of color. almost all youth attended middle schools or high schools in south king county school districts. conversations focused on experiences with educators of color, what it looks like to them for educators of color to thrive, the importance of having a more diverse educator workforce, and youth's own interests in education and teaching careers.

youth of color engaged in all phases of the project from recruiting, generating questions, and hosting conversations to making meaning, developing themes and findings, identifying calls to action, and designing the multimedia report. youth who worked on any phase of the project were compensated for their time. conversation participants received gift bags as tokens of gratitude. major themes, findings, and calls to actions, are below. see the full report and the companion videos for a deeper dive!

key themes

many high school participants in our project have had limited, if any, exposure to classroom teachers of color.

of more than 20 classroom teachers we have experienced through middle school: 21% of us have never had a classroom teacher of color another 18% of us have only had 1 teacher of color

theme 1

we see & feel the unique strengths that educators of color (eoc) bring to our experiences & to all students.

quote

"they just know what these students are going through on a personal level because they went through the things that these students are going through."

ashley lopez mora, auburn school district

theme 2

we want educators of color to shine. when educators of color shine, we can thrive.

quote

"by being comfortable, i would think they would want you to recognize them for who they are, their experiences, like them being a particular race, or if they're an immigrant, etc., their past life experiences."

hannah park, auburn school district

theme 3

we see & feel how hard it is for eoc to shine in white-centered systems.

quote

"in my school i see a lot of microaggressions not only from the students to the teacher, it's from the teacher to teacher."

vislee roman, kent school district

theme 4

we need to change our systems, strengthen our communities of care, & invest resources to support eoc.

quote

...one of the most important things is the resources that they need, especially for mental health, especially for even just to talk about it, because they don't have that space or even a network of other eoc that they can relate to..."

kaley duong, edmonds school district

theme 5

we believe we can lead change in this work.

quote

"...having students of color on interview teams would be really huge because we can see who will be impacting us."

anya souza ponce, seattle public schools

calls to action

we need greater access to and experiences with teachers and other educators of color.

please improve school & classroom conditions in the same ways we value educators of color.

provide healing, support and accountability to ensure educators of color thrive.

partner with youth of color leadership to support these calls to action.

page i

in 2020, puget sound educational services district (pseud) invited local leaders to join a wisdom council to elevate voices, expertise, and partnership opportunities for our communities of color across school districts in south king county (“the road map region”). in spring and summer 2021, the council launched an ongoing process of community conversations with youth, community leaders, parents, and educators of color* (eoc)** as we returned to school from pandemic learning. this past year, in 2022, pseud expanded support for both a youth wisdom council and a community wisdom council to ensure both youth leadership and community voice were centered in our initiatives. our youth wisdom council (ywc) adopted our second annual community conversations process with a focus on the need to cultivate a racially diverse & thriving educator workforce in the road map region.

twelve ywc leaders engaged in a total of 120 conversations with their 6th - 12th grade peers in schools across the road map region (school districts of auburn, federal way, kent, highline, renton, seattle, and tukwila). ywc leaders also reached out to five local educators of color* (eoc)** for review and discussion, additional insights, and calls to action. conversation participants engaged in collaborative meaning-making, developed recommendations, and shaped reporting and communication strategies.

we are excited for you to hear what youth of color in our schools have to say. we encourage you to ask follow-up questions of your youth, educators, and communities of color and engage them in next step decision-making to cultivate thriving cultures and support systems for a workforce that our youth believe can and will radically transform our schools.

*when we use the term educators, we are referring to all teachers, leaders, and other staff within our school buildings and district offices.

**we shorten educators of color to eoc throughout the report for brevity.

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our calls to action

in the following sections we share the themes and voices that came from our conversations about cultivating a racially diverse and thriving educator community in south king county. below are the calls to action that emerged. we ask our school and district leaders to listen and act on our behalf.

1 we ask you to intentionally ensure all students, and especially students of color, have greater access to and relationships with classroom teachers and other educators of color (eoc) across our educational lifetimes.

2 we ask you to recognize and uplift the conditions that our eoc already bring to our experiences. these should include: increasing opportunities for connecting with our ethnic, cultural, and racial identities.

creating more spaces and support systems for teacher-student relationships like those that our eoc provide. more belonging-rich and welcoming school environments.

centering diversity as an asset for all students, including increasing culturally responsive curricula and decreasing white-centered and eurocentric curricula across all subject areas.

amplifying your commitments to racial equity through increasing conversations about race and racial justice, reducing racial harm, and providing curricular and career representations of people who look like us.

3 we ask you to help our eoc shine by recognizing and acknowledging their brilliance, by supporting them to bring their full selves to school, and by ensuring they feel like they belong.

4 at the same time, we need you to attend to, remove, and support healing of any racial harm impacting our eoc.

5 we ask you to intentionally implement support strategies for our eoc. these should include: ongoing listening sessions or focus groups with eoc.

dedicated resources and/or spaces for self-care, rest, and healing. affinity spaces and/or leadership communities designed by and for eoc.

6 we need leadership and accountability policies and practices in place, especially for our white colleagues and supervisors, to support eoc so that they:

don't have to navigate and address ongoing racial harm alone. are placed in higher-level teacher and leadership positions.

are recognized for the extra work they do through compensation and accommodations.

7 we ask you to engage our youth leadership so that we can be on hiring committees, in leadership and decision-making roles, and hold our schools accountable to the calls to action above.

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schools in our road map region are 74% students of color. high-school students typically have over 20 classroom teachers by the time they reach 9th grade. we know that having even one same-race teacher of color can increase high-school graduation rates by as much as 13%*. during our conversations, we asked 61 high-school youth an even broader question:

"how many teachers of color have you had as classroom teachers in your education so far?"

21% never had a teacher of color

18% had 1 teacher of color

18% had 2 or 3 teachers of color

24% had 4 or 5 teachers of color

80% had 15 or more white teachers

data about increasing high school graduation rates comes from: *gershenson, s., hart, c. m., hyman, j., lindsay, c., & papageorge, n. w. (2018). the long-run impacts of same-race teachers (no. w25254). national bureau of economic research.

page 1

theme 1

we see & feel the unique strengths that more educators of color bring to our experiences & to those of all students

"they also come from first-generation student backgrounds. they understand the grind. they understand what goes on.

they understand those life lessons, especially from the bipoc perspective...they understand the family dynamics. they just know what these students are going through on a personal level because they went through the things that these students are going through."

ashley lopez mora, auburn school district

we see & feel the unique strengths that more eoc bring to our experiences & to those of all students.

how can our schools help us see and feel this more often?

our conversations about educators of color lifted up unique connections, life-changing experiences, powerful learning environments, and real possibilities for change. many of our first significant experiences with an educator of color were about shared cultural and racial identity and experience.

"we get to talk more about our cultures, and we actually relate to each other. she was the first person i've ever talked to in this school, as a staff member...she is fijian and i am marshallese..."

grace kaos, auburn school district

"she just was able to connect with me and bring an awareness about my race and about being a person that has a darker skin tone and how that would impact me, having to be careful because of others that have more privilege..."

lulia ghebrihiwot, highline public schools

"we can speak spanish and relate to a lot of the same jokes...it's refreshing to walk into a classroom with the same culture that you're used to at home."

fernando romero escobar, auburn school district

"our attendance lady. i can really relate with her because she's from the same part of asia that i am, so we're both able to talk in our language. it makes me feel like i belong a lot more."

rohana joshi, riverview school district

many of us talked about the comfort, connection, and relationships that our educators of color cultivated.

"when i got into middle school and high school, there were more teachers of color and i think it made me more comfortable, and it made it easier for me to communicate with teachers."

abigail barboza, tukwila school district

“teachers that were just really mindful of their ethnic perspectives also made it really easy to connect.”

caden crawford, tukwila school district

“recently one of my teachers of color had to travel back to his hometown because a family member was passing away. before, he already planned it, like going, and it just connected with me when i lost my grandpa, and he was going to be... he didn't say full details, but he let it out to know that everybody he's going to be gone. he talked a lot about his dad and how much he grew up with him, and it just connected with me and my dad.”

sergio ramirez alcantara, auburn school district

many of us have had limited experiences with educators of color in school. we feel it!

“a lot of the time at my school, as soon as i walk into the classroom, i just have to leave part of my identity behind. i can't go in talking about everything that i experience and just talking about my everyday life stuff because people won't understand it or even worse, they'll be arguing it with me and trying to prove that they're right when they actually have no real experience with it.”

anya souza ponce, seattle public schools

“it doesn't really feel good when you don't really see as many people as your own race. so you don't really feel comfortable.”

jesus ibarra castro, auburn school district

“what white students are learning is by white people for white people. when they learn about their peers of color only in this lens of trauma, and what white people did to us and our ancestors, that is the only lens in which they see us.”

anya souza ponce, seattle public schools

we imagine our schools with more educators of color full of welcoming and belonging-rich learning environments.

“it would probably feel more welcoming, knowing that there are people of color, not just all white teachers. that's what i would feel like would make me feel more comfortable, more open to talk to teachers because i feel like they would understand me in a way.”

josue subuyuj, kent school district

“staff of color who could relate at least somewhat to the experiences, or have an understanding of my life, or culture, or traditions or things like that would be super huge and would be able to foster a more welcoming environment for all students of color.”

anya souza ponce, seattle public schools

“[more educators of color would...] help with students who were struggling on their own because they see people like, 'oh, this person is the same as me. maybe i can open up to them more and help build that community of trust between a student and a teacher.”

diana chen, highline public schools

we believe that having more educators of color improves our motivation and engagement for school.

“[educators of color] just bring huge inspiration to the table and huge motivation and push factors. because then as soon as i expressed that [i wanted to go to college] with him, he was like, "all right, i'll help you with it." he wrote my letters of recommendation. he helped me find scholarships. he helped me with all of that...they want to see kids like them grow...he has just been a big support outside of the classroom, too.”

ashley lopez mora, auburn school district

“i'm going to do a little bit of storytelling because i feel like my experience in my school, especially going to a school that had predominantly white teachers and staff, i think that if i had more staff of color and teachers of color, i would feel so much safer and i would feel so much better going into school. my experience would probably not be crying a lot at school, not being even anxious to go to school, to go to the classroom, which is just so horrible because you shouldn't be feeling that way in a setting where you're supposed to be learning. i think that i would do so much better in my classes and my study habits and things like that if i had more teachers of color. even if i had a teacher of color in my class, i think something that would really change the most is just mainly the mindset i have going into school and what i think of school because i think that the teachers and staff play such a big part for a student in their views on their school.”

kaley duong, edmonds school district

in addition to the social, emotional, and relational benefits, we recognize the diversity in ways of being, ways of teaching, and ways of learning that more educators of color bring for all students.

“i feel like a lot of schools are kind of one-sided and that's kind of mostly european and western cultures. [educators of color] can speak on different points of view, not just white perspectives.”

yafet amine, federal way public schools

“especially in history, we can hear their side of their stories, their histories and stuff, instead of just a white person telling history of other races. we could actually hear it from the people from that race or that culture, what happened to them, what it felt like, and what it is like now...i feel like i would pay more attention and understand it more.”

josue subuyuj, kent school district

“even if the majority of students in that particular school is white, i would still advocate for there being as much possible so that students of all races can be met with representation of different races and met with a lot of new worldly perspectives and opinions and thoughts...i think that it would just build a stronger community and a community with more perspective and worldly views.”

hannah park, auburn school district

“my ancestors were literally...most people know them as the aztecs. that's so cool, but all that we learned about in school is how hernán cortés came and killed them all, and then that's all we learned. that's the only way in which my white peers learn about me and my culture and my people, which is very harmful for everyone, obviously.”

anya souza ponce, seattle public schools

“the school as a whole would be more culturally aware of what their peers and colleagues would be going through and therefore would be more mentally and socially just more smarter about the way they'd go about things. maybe there would be a lot more respect in our schools, a lot more kindness in our schools, and just overall a safer environment for students.”

anonymous

finally, in many of our conversations, we share the belief that more eoc will help create a more racially just community by being more willing to have conversations about race and racism...

“teachers of color are like, 'oh, yeah, we should talk about that because that's a major situation that's actually happening and nobody wants to talk about it.'”

bryan reyes, auburn school district

“i have this one teacher not at my school, but in a separate program that i'm in. his name is mr. little. he's black and i think that he would be a really great addition to any school that i'm a part of. the reason that i would want him is he's not afraid of those conversations about race or acknowledging or talking about like the n-word because there's white kids in the class or black kids who might get offended or other brown and you know other kids besides whoever he's talking about. he's not scared of those conversations, and i like that because i feel like our school could use a lot more of that.”

jasmine delgado-guerrero, highline public schools

“i would love to have him as a staff member, possibly in my school just so that he is more prominent at my school because we specifically challenge the things that regards racial discrimination because the school to prison pipeline affects a lot of low income communities and black and brown communities...teachers of color facilitate more conversations about their experience and maybe we could have like classroom conversations about race and stuff.”

hannah park, auburn school district

...by reducing racial harm...

"i feel like bullying would go down and everyone would be more accepting, because you're seeing someone you look up to who's a person of color, so then you might treat the students around you as equal as well."

rohana joshi, riverview school district

"i think that if there were more teachers of color, there would be less racial harm and discrimination."

hannah park, auburn school district

...and by supporting pathways to more racially equitable opportunities.

"teachers of color might say, 'oh, i want to help these kids because i never got that chance to be helped'."

diana chen, highline public schools

"now that i know what i went through, here's what i wish that i knew, and i'll share this all with you so that i can guide you through a better way of life or a better way of thinking about your own life.' just having that guidance and experience for sure helps out. that's something i would love to see more out of our staff."

anonymous

"there was this one teacher in seventh grade and she was for an elective class...it had to do with science, so it's something that i want to do possibly in the future and seeing somebody who looked like me and sounded like me... made me feel so good, because i knew that i actually had some doorway or possibility of being some science teacher."

anonymous

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theme two

we want educators of color to shine when eoc shine, we can thrive

"i believe that a teacher of color, educator of color, for them to really feel successful and shine i feel like, first of all, they have to be comfortable. especially if they are a minority in their field and which is a very high possibility. by being comfortable, i would think they would want you recognize for who they are, their experiences, like them being a particular race, or if they're an immigrant, etc., their past life experiences."

hannah park, auburn school district

we want educators of color to shine.

when educators of color shine, we can thrive.

what does it look and feel like for eoc to thrive in your schools?

we see our educators of color shining when they feel comfortable and welcome, when they are appreciated for all of their full selves, when they are recognized and celebrated for their unique and brilliant contributions.

"[for eoc to be] comfortable and really shine is having a voice within their field...getting more recognition and acknowledgement for who they are and what they have contributed to their school. just more support that way and i think just there being more open mindedness and opportunities for schools to have a lot of conversations about race and stuff like that."

hannah park, auburn school district

"i want to teach in a school that is diverse and celebrates teachers, and that's exactly what my school does."

anonymous

when they shine, we can thrive.

"i feel pride seeing teachers of color succeed."

anonymous

"just having people of color be your teachers, be those leaders, it's just inspiration. it's just like, 'i can do that too,' or, 'i can just be amazing like them too.' that's how i see it. that's how i feel it, too."

anonymous

"i feel like if i did have [more] teachers of color, then i feel like i would try to impress them almost, just because i respect them a little bit more...have a good connection with, i'll try harder."

jeremiah bynum, kent school district

"i think something that would really change the most is just mainly the mindset i have going into school and what i think of school."

kaley duong, edmonds school district

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theme three

we see & feel how hard it is for educators of color to shine in white-centered systems

"in my school i see a lot of microaggressions not only from the students to the teacher, it's from the teacher to teacher. one of my math teachers made a comment and all the students mad, but the teachers just didn't care, let it slide, but then students got on my math teacher because of what he said."

vislee roman, kent school district

we see & feel how hard it is for educators of color to shine in white-centered systems.

what challenges do you hear and feel from eoc in your schools?

our conversations illustrate that we see high turnover of educators of color due to unwelcoming cultures, lack of leadership and school support, racial harm, microaggressions, and tokenization.

"i think that for a school to be successful with the amount of educators of color... it's if i walk into the school and i see educators of color nearly in most classrooms and also seeing that it's not just a new one every single couple of months."

kaley duong, edmonds school district

"what i've noticed is you don't really see a lot of teachers of color in higher-level classes. you'll usually see the kids of color in those lower-level classes, like the core classes, along with teachers who are also people of color."

jeremiah bynum, kent school district

"[my white teacher] was fostering a conversation afterwards where kids were literally asking questions like, 'if she already knew what a lynching was, why was she so affected by it.' it was really gross and i just felt really uncomfortable in that space, so then i spoke up and the teacher just kept arguing with me. he was actively just continuing to harm his students of color."

anya souza ponce, seattle public schools

"if i were to be a teacher, maybe like elementary school, but my school, not really because i feel like it's not welcoming enough for like teachers to work there..."

asia banuelos, kent school district

“a racially diverse and thriving educator workforce means not just having teachers of color present in the schools...and not just using them as a check the box, because in a lot of schools there are very high turnover rates, and this is because teachers of color are not being supported, the culture is not one that is welcoming to people who aren't white.”

anya souza ponce, seattle public schools

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theme four

we need to change our systems, strengthen our communities of care & invest resources to support educators of color

we need to change our systems, strengthen our communities of care, & invest resources to support eoc.

what can our schools do tomorrow to ensure our educators of color thrive?

we want our schools to set up support systems. this includes listening to the experiences of educators of color in our schools, resources for self-care, and creation of dedicated communities for eoc.

"talking to staff of color that are already in our school system and seeing what their needs are..."

kaley duong, edmonds school district

“i think the biggest thing at my school that's a problem that also probably makes it hard for teachers to want to be there is there's no big interaction between the teachers and teachers. they just look at each other and then move on. whereas like in other schools i see the teachers hugging each other, talking about when they hung out at this time. they're not just coworkers, they're actual friends, so i think that would have to change because otherwise i don't think i would feel comfortable.”

jasmine delgado-guerrero, highline public schools

we also want schools to focus on eliminating racial harm and microaggressions while cultivating system-wide leadership and accountability in support of educators of color.

"get rid of microaggressions.”

vislee roman, kent school district

"when students complain about the teacher, they don't really do nothing about it.”

alena morales manriquez, highline public schools

"they need their support. i think what that looks like is administration, principals, et cetera finding the support that educators of color need because of the stuff they go through, especially when the dominating workforce is white."

kaley duong, edmonds school district

"i feel like when a teacher is asking for that help, they should be guided or at least provided with the help and not just being overlooked at or just gloss through it and be like, 'oh, okay, well, we have other teachers to worry about.' so, i feel like it should look like you're really caring or engaging with that person."

estefany padilla, highline public schools

finally, we see a need for thoughtful placement in supportive and prestigious roles for our eoc.

"what i've noticed is you don't really see a lot of teachers of color in higher-level classes. you'll usually see the kids of color in those lower-level classes, like the core classes, along with teachers who are also people of color. but at the higher-level classes, you'll have white teachers most of the time. i feel like in a setting where a teacher of color is shining as if they are in those classes..."

jeremiah bynum, kent school district

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theme five

we believe we can lead change in this work

"i think having youth input in general is super important because all of these decisions are being made and all these teachers are being hired, and the rates are extremely disproportionate...having students of color on interview teams would be really huge because we can see who will be impacting us."

anya souza ponce, seattle public schools

we believe we can lead change in this work.

what can our schools do tomorrow to engage youth of color in efforts to support, retain, and recruit more educators of color?

we can lead change by amplifying our voices on these issues, by sharing our voices in different decision-making spaces and by holding our leaders accountable to change.

"i feel as though there are a lot of youth of color who want more teachers of color and educators of color. we should hear about that. we should really promote that."

anonymous

"i think our role is definitely testifying at school board meetings, protesting, doing things like that, and getting our action and our voice out there. that might look like so many different ways, but i really have a vision of going to a school board meeting or protesting outside the school board, protesting outside our schools, even having a social media network where students can share about that, sharing about our experiences and other things like that, where there's so many different ways youth of color can just gather together."

kaley duong, edmonds school district

"having petitions to have more teachers of color. i was actually thinking about this and going to the districts of the superintendents, just talking to them and be like, 'hey, this is what we need and we're not seeing it.'"

estefany padilla, highline public schools

"the voice of youth of color and our experiences, because this is our education and it's just so frustrating the fact that we have to even demand this when we should be represented in our classroom. we should have these teachers that we would feel connected with and look like us."

anonymous

and we can go further, by taking on leadership roles that contribute to policy, decision-making & action, and being on hiring panels.

"for me to not even be able to have a say in who has a say in me is a little bit difficult for me to grasp why. i could at least be familiar with them before they step into the position, or someone can be familiar with them and vouch like, "we made the right decision with this person."

anonymous

"i think that having an emphasis on youth of color being in leadership roles such as, like asb or boards across school districts and schools. really having youth of color have a voice and really emphasizing that voice so that we can hear about their opinions and experiences with having educators of color."

hannah park, auburn school district

"to be a part of the hiring committee to see who gets hired and why they're hired."

jasmine delgado-guerrero, highline public schools

educators of color reflections & calls to action

as you can see, we are passionate about the benefits of educators of color, the supports required to ensure they thrive, and our leadership opportunities to help schools prioritize and create this reality. and in the spirit of 'nothing about us, without us,' we connected with some of our region's educators of color and want to highlight their experiences, insights, and needs that should underpin this work going forward.

we connected with five eoc from across our region: a high school principal, a counselor, an instructional specialist, an assistant principal, and an audiologist. questions we asked:

how do you most feel supported by students, co-workers, and admin?

what have your experiences been with microaggressions/racial harm and how do you make sure to bring joy back to your space?

what calls to action do you as an educator of color (eoc) most need to see admin take to help you thrive?

for classroom teachers: what calls to action do you want to see from educators who are not in the classroom? what changes do you want to see in the system?

what do you feel is the reason that educators of color (eoc), by and large, are not teaching higher level classes? and if you are teaching such a class, what is it like for you?

we share their anonymous voices below. three themes emerged:

"everywhere, it's insidious, it's day 1, 2, 3... it comes from the most 'woke' environments because it is harder for them to accept it's happening when someone shares that it's happening. it's harder as a person in leadership because i have to maintain levels of confidentiality."

"i laugh to keep from crying and remind myself i am providing incredible value and visibility for all the students who see me in their buildings."

they shared many examples of what this looks like. for example:

"me walking to class and the sub asking if i'm security."

"white women trying to touch my hair and get in my personal space." "i'm always seen as an angry black woman."

"everyday—i get 'i thought you were the janitor, not the principal.'"

in terms of what brings them back to joy, boundaries, strategies for self-care, and working with students of color to to change the system keeps them going and brings them joy.

"i learned this new idea: jomo: the joy of missing out! it's about not having to take on all the extras, and staying clear with my boundaries for time. being able to say no. not always having to take the lead: sometimes it's like, you're the brown person so take the lead on the equity work. [if other people will do it] i can say no, i can rest."

"reflecting, music is my therapy. i separate it out. i believe there's maintenance, self-care and community care. for maintenance: i go to therapy, massage, chiropractor. self-care: saying no and not feeling guilty, not overbooking.

community care: being with like minded people who genuinely like me and want to spend time with me and don't require me to code switch."

"working with and learning from young folks on how to interrupt and stop those things. empowering students to help find the solution."

calls to action. educators of color we spoke to have clear ideas about what can be done to better support them. the responses range from the personal (ie, white colleagues developing better skill sets to interrupt microaggressions) to systemic (ie, institutional support for programs like educators of color leadership communities (eclc) or affinity groups).

"there's a big push to recruit staff of color, but we need an equal push to keep educators of color. we need faces of people of color in buildings to come together, be in community, be in places away from white fragility. instead of hiding that white fragility is a big impact on people of color, i want admin and legislators to actually talk about it. you've been able to not engage in these issues around race because of your privilege."

"i'm in an admin position, so i feel like i am the call to action."

"there needs to be a trust in educators of color to use instruction/methodology/their skills set in a way that hasn't already been done. for example...i would argue that \$100 for food at a meeting is a better use of \$\$ than buying a book for a teacher about how to support students of color."

"i appreciate when white men take on some of the burden of being a woman of color. they step up and interrupt things, and say, 'not today, we're not doing that.' that makes it feel like it's not all on me."

"interrupting racist comments & microaggressions. preserve bipoc folks' humanity in the moment."

"i wish people were a little more curious. it's easy to think things are fine if you're not asking questions. being teachable and curious goes a long way. ask questions (not in a typecasting way, but with true curiosity). that would help open lines of conversation, where someone could learn a lot."

"the courage to take on white supremacy system in their most egregious and subtle forms."

reimagining our schools. educators of color talked about barriers in teacher prep/college, and how we already lose potential teachers at that stage of the career journey; they also talked about the need to change curriculum and pedagogy.

“can we provide multiple ways of knowing (for educators)? testing is a barrier!! they make you take endorsement tests [to teach ‘upper level content areas’]. what are multiple ways we can show we know the thing? we need funding for [teacher] programs. so many industries offer paid, on-the job training but we don’t respect educators enough to provide that.”

“history for native indigenous people and black people taught by and for indigenous and black people. chinese, japanese, latinx history too! education needs to be more diverse from the curriculum to the people teaching it.”

"curriculum is hugely important. if we're not able to purchase curriculum that has bipoc representation and themes, at least provide training in culturally responsive education. as a bipoc classroom teacher, training for how to be culturally responsive is hugely important [for me and especially for white colleagues]...give us the tools to be successful in centering our students, especially our bipoc students.”

“one of the most rigorous classes i ever taught wasn't an ap/ib class: the most rigorous classes are not necessarily respected as “higher level.” i would put ethnic studies ahead of apush. it’s more complex and demanding—we’re trying to combat racism!”

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appendix

why community conversations?

we began the community conversations project as a way to improve racially equitable collaborations and to build relationships and trusting partnerships between school systems and youth and families of color most harmed and underserved by a white-centered educational system. for us, a critical first step towards this goal requires finding better ways to honor, elevate, feel, and act upon the emotions, lived experiences, and educational aspirations of youth of color. we strived to make our process as transformative as the insights and calls to action we recommend. we discussed questions like:

who is invited to participate? who does participate? what questions are asked and by whom / for whom? what languages are used? whose responses are valued? who interprets the responses? who makes what decisions based on conclusions drawn?

our approach began with conversations among trusted peers guided by topics and questions created by youth of color. youth wisdom council members were partners in the meaning-making, in the implications, and in communication strategies.

we will also pursue opportunities to partner in decision-making that responds to these insights. through ongoing community conversations, we see opportunities to foster continuing dialogue, strengthen relationships, and sustain school-community partnerships that value and cultivate wellbeing for our region's youth, families, & educators of color.

conversation questions

what would it sound like, look like or feel like for a teacher or educator of color at your school to shine and be successful? what would be a right number of 'successful' teachers and other educators of color in your school? why this?

what do you think would change about your school and your experience if you were to have more teachers and staff of color? what roles might youth of color play in helping to keep and bring in more teachers and staff of color into your school?

how many teachers of color have you had as classroom teachers in your education so far?

how do you think your school career would have been different if you had more classroom teachers of color?

think about a time or a specific experience when a teacher of color impacted you in ways that you'd never felt before.

would you be interested in teaching or working at your school? why or why not?

what would have to change in order for you to reconsider?

name a person of color that is a role model or that inspires you that you would love to have as a teacher or staff member in this school. what are the qualities that would make them so appealing?

recruitment & conversation strategy

in order to build on existing relationships and trust, ywc youth started by having conversations with other youth we knew. at the end of each conversation, we asked our participants if they would like to conduct community conversations with other youth of color they knew. in doing so, we were strategically able to grow our wisdom council and grow the diversity of voices represented in our conversations.

training

pseud staff offered an in-depth training for everyone conducting a community conversation. both the training and conversations were conducted in both spanish and english, with translations from spanish to english completed by pseud staff. the focus of this training is to frame these interactions as conversations rather than interviews, in order to bring authenticity to these conversations with our community.

compensation

ywc members received hourly stipends from pseed for any work on the project. conversation participants received gift bags of school supplies.

what did conversations look like & how did they happen?

120 conversations across all 7 south king county 'road map' districts.

ethnic / racial representation

7% native american / pacific islander

25% black / african american

2% middle eastern

11% asian / asian american

55% latinx / hispanic

district representation

auburn 61 interviews

federal way 3 interviews

highline 20 interviews

kent 5 interviews

renton 1 interview

seattle 2 interviews

tukwila 6 interviews

other 2 interviews

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gratitude

we are so grateful for this incredible opportunity to hear from our region's youth of color. we would also like to take this opportunity to express a deep sense of gratitude to the amazing youth wisdom council team members who made this community conversation project possible. this could not have been accomplished without your commitment and dedication to our communities of color, especially our educators.

youth wisdom council contributors: abigail barboza, caden crawford, precious duckworth-domingue, kaley duong, lulia ghebrihiwot, miguel guapilla, rohana joshi, alexis mburu, ashley lopez mora, melissa nuñez, estefany padilla, hannah park, mar ramirez, vislee roman, and anya souza ponce.

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and, finally, a huge shout out of gratitude to lilly castro-acosta from our community wisdom council for supporting conversations and youth throughout this project!