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Norwalk Equity Report: *Community and Staff Perception of Diversity and Inclusion*

Disproportionality and Equity Lab

Norwalk Equity Report: ***Community and School Perception of Diversity and Inclusion***

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Executive Summary

Dr. Edward Fergus, Associate Professor of Urban Education and Policy, and Director, Disproportionality and Equity Lab, with the Temple University research team, conducted a four-month examination of community and school staff perception of educational equity experiences and needs at Norwalk Public Schools (NPS). The project involved gathering data via survey and focus groups with staff, students, and parents and community members. The Temple University research team commenced the project in late September 2020 and concluded data collection in mid-December 2020. We gathered surveys from nearly 1,900 parents and community members and 320 school staff, and conducted over 35 focus groups and 20 interviews with nearly 140 parents and community members, 17 school administrators, and 40 school staff.

This report is organized around the themes that emerged within each form of data. The first section outlines the distribution of disparity present in Norwalk Public Schools based on the 2019-20 school year. The second and third sections focus on establishing the overarching patterns among parent and school staff survey responses, respectively. The fourth section focuses on the themes that emerged from the focus groups. In reporting the findings from the analysis, we begin with describing the survey data and then utilizing the focus group data to further deepen the findings noted from the survey data. This organizing of the data provides an explanatory perspective of the survey data. In other words, the survey data provides general sentiment across various groups, however, it does not provide a textured understanding or examples of what is meant by participants. On the other hand, the focus group data provides a substantive amount of textured examples.

The overarching story that emerged is the district demonstrates varying opportunities, access, and experiences based on race/ethnicity, language, and socio-economic status. More specifically, there is a general sentiment that within some schools and perhaps across the district opportunities are organized by and to meet the needs of White and/or higher income students and parents. This overall pattern is a universal phenomenon among suburban school districts. The concern moving forward is for the district to operate in a strategic manner that addresses the systemic nature of these patterns, which includes acknowledging the history of these trends, the pedagogical shift necessary to drive equitable educational reform efforts, the cultural beliefs that gave permission for the persistence of these patterns, and a substantive level of progress monitoring at all levels.

Patterns of Disproportionality

Special Education

1. There is an overrepresentation of Black students in Emotional Disturbance identification (22%) compared to overall enrollment (15%). Meanwhile other groups demonstrate proportional representation, except Whites in OHI—43% identified as Other Health Impairments (OHI) compared to 25% enrollment.
2. There is an overrepresentation of male students in Emotional Disturbance (68%), Speech/Language Impairment (67%), and OHI identifications (65%) compared to overall enrollment (52%). Meanwhile, female students demonstrate proportional or underrepresentation.

Discipline

1. There is an overrepresentation of Black students in suspension (32%) compared to overall enrollment (15%). Meanwhile other groups demonstrate proportional or underrepresentation.
2. There is an overrepresentation of male students in suspension (65%) compared to overall enrollment (52%). Meanwhile female students demonstrate underrepresentation.

Gifted, Honors, and AP

1. There is an overrepresentation of White students in advanced programming (39%) compared to overall enrollment (25%). Meanwhile other groups demonstrate proportional or underrepresentation.
2. There is an overrepresentation of female students in advanced programming (54%) compared to overall enrollment (48%). Meanwhile male students demonstrate underrepresentation.

Parent Perceptions of School Resources, Quality, and Culture

1. Over 50% of each racial/ethnic parent group identified language interpreters present at meetings and materials being translated. Among all groups, Latinx parents demonstrated the highest percent identifying language services available (76.8%). Meanwhile, Asian parents demonstrated the lowest percent identifying language services available (51.4%).
2. Across all groups, over 75% note a satisfaction with school services and activities. In particular, parents uniformly (over 85%) demonstrated satisfaction with "makes you aware of chances to volunteer at the school."
3. Across the various elements of school quality, parents in each racial/ethnic group identified satisfaction with school quality elements. Of potential interest is the item on "my child is challenged at school academically." For each racial/ethnic group that item maintained the highest disagreement rating; though the disagreement rate does not go beyond 20% with any group.
4. Across the various groups, there is a majority agreement with the school culture and climate. However, Black parents have a different pattern than other parent racial/ethnic groups. For instance, the item **"Teachers treat students from different backgrounds in the same way"** was viewed differently by Black parents; nearly 11% disagree with the statement, while 3.6% of White parents, 1.8% of Asian parents, and 4.5% of Latinx parents disagree with the statement.
5. Overall, parents varied in their cross-cultural experiences:
    a. For example, a majority of White parents identified that they have various levels of cross-cultural experiences **"with a person of another racial/ethnic group"** (67.5%) and **"feel comfortable with people who are different race or ethnicity"** than themselves (88.2%).
    b. Black parents also noted having various levels of cross-cultural experiences **"with a person of another racial/ethnic group"** (60.6%) and **"feel comfortable with people who are different race or ethnicity"** than themselves (74.7%).
    c. Asian parents also shared various levels of cross-cultural experiences **"with a person of another racial/ethnic group"** (58.1%) and **"feel comfortable with people who are different race or ethnicity"** than themselves (63.8%).

d. A majority of Latinx parents also varied in cross-cultural experiences **"with a person of another racial/ethnic group"** (57.1%) and **"feel comfortable with people who are different race or ethnicity"** than themselves (76.3%).
e. Apparent across all groups is the range of parents feeling comfortable with people who are of a different racial/ethnic group; however, there is a lack of uniformity in responses which suggests there are different social experiences operating for these racial/ethnic groups.

6. The various groups of parents maintain divided deficit thinking perspectives. For example, the statement, **"Although I am hesitant to say so publicly, I believe that racial differences in intelligence may have a hereditary or genetic component"** demonstrated a range of agreement and neutrality among groups (% agree and % neutral): Whites (5.1% and 17.2%), Black (13.3% and 21.8%), Asian (9.6% and 26.9%), and Latinx (11.7% and 28.8%). These patterns suggest between 22% and 37% of parents either agree or remain neutral about whether racial differences in intelligence are due to a genetic component. With another facet of deficit thinking, which alludes to perception of cultural disposition towards education (e.g., **"Unfortunately, for many people of color, education just is not a real priority"**), each parent group varied in their agreement on the statement. The following represents the percent disagreeing with the statement: White (67%), Black (62.9%), Asian (41.3%), and Latinx (46.7%).
7. Parents also varied in regards to social and cultural dynamics that are important in developing an equity driven environment. For example, racism is a complex system of oppression that involves institutional, interpersonal, and internalized experiences. One item in the survey, **"I believe racist incidents occur, but I'm not convinced there is institutionalized racism,"** allows for individuals to demonstrate whether they view racism as institutional and/or interpersonal. The parents varied in their agreement with this item. The following represents the percent agreeing with statement: White (19.6%), Black (22.2%), Asian (35.1%), and Latinx (27%). This parent suggests that between a fifth (20%) to a third (33%) operationalize racism as occurring at the interpersonal level and not necessarily within institutions.
8. Across the different parent groups, there is a common absorption of a colorblindness perspective; the following are the percent agreeing with the statement **"Racism would cease to exist if everyone would just forget about race and see each other as human beings"**: White (50.7%), Black (58.7%), Asian (76.7%), and Latinx (74.6%). This common agreement was also apparent with the statement on assimilation **"It is important that people of color assimilate so that they can succeed in mainstream American culture"**: White (27.2%), Black (33.4%), Asian (43.5%), and Latinx (38.4%).

Staff Perception of Behavioral and Academic Supports, and Culture, Race, and Diversity

1. In the climate survey, staff were asked to identify the top three behaviors they considered difficult to manage. Understanding what staff find most difficult may assist in knowing whether the behavioral support systems are organized to meet such behavioral needs. The following behaviors were identified most frequently as the top three most difficult to manage: **fails to follow behavior expectations, uses attention-getting behaviors, bullies others, demonstrates aggressive behavior towards adults, hyperactive or nervous, demonstrates anger, and non-completion of homework**.

2. Overall, staff demonstrate varied agreement with the presence of quality elements (e.g., best practice) in the school, as well as vary in their perception of efficiency in those quality elements. For example, 25% of staff disagree, 45% agree, and 24% neither agree nor disagree that "**Our school has clear definitions for behaviors that interfere with academic and social success."** In addition, 34% of staff agree, 38% disagree, and 23% neither agree nor disagree that "**My school has an effective early intervention process to meet the behavioral needs of struggling learners."** Such variation suggests staff do not agree that quality elements of behavioral support systems are present and whether these elements are working at an effective level.
3. The majority of survey items (1, 3, 5-7) ask staff to identify the presence of Response To Intervention (RTI) design elements, and items 2 and 4 are global measures of wellness or efficiency. The majority of survey participants vary in their agreement with statements regarding the presence of academic support systems. For example, 37% of participants disagree, 26% neither agree nor disagree, and 20% agree with **"My school has put together a library of effective, research-based intervention ideas for common student referral concerns such as poor reading fluency and defiant behavior."** Nearly 22% did not know or neither agree or disagree, 32% agree, and 32% disagree with the statement, **"Our school has an intervention team (e.g., MTSS, pre-referral intervention team)."** And the participants also varied in perception of the academic supports as effective. For example, 31% of participants disagree, 26% neither agree or disagree, and 27% agree with **"Our school's intervention team effectively gathers information about a student's needs and provides targeted supports (e.g., interventions have a prescribed length of time and dosage)."**
4. The staff is certain in their belief that their teaching abilities are able to overcome various external factors. When it came to questions about their teacher training and their experience, the majority identified themselves as sufficiently prepared. For example, more than 82% agree with the statement, **"My teaching experience has given me the necessary skills to be an effective teacher**." Though when it came to conditions surrounding the students' home lives, staff was split. For example, 54% disagree, 27% agree and 20% are neutral with the statement, "**If students aren't disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline."**
5. The staff express varied achievement expectations for low-performing students: 40% expect some college and four-year college, and 30% expect high school completion only. Staff is more uniform in their expectation with average-performing students—over 75% expect a four-year degree or more. There is overwhelming agreement (97%) with expectations for high-performing students to graduate with minimally a four-year college degree or more.
6. Overwhelmingly, staff self-report racial comfort in talking about race. For example, nearly 75% of staff disagrees with the statement, "**Thinking or talking about race males me feel uncomfortable**." Furthermore, staff does not agree with statements that

reinforce stereotypes about Asian students. For instance, nearly 83% disagree with the statement, "**Academically, Asian students do not have to work as hard as other students to get good grades."** However, there is a split among staff regarding their comfort in talking about race without feeling that they may offend others: 33% disagree, 24% neither agree nor disagree, and 42% agree with the statement **"I am not hesitant to talk about race for fear that someone will be offended if I say something wrong."** This suggests a hesitancy among staff to engage in conversations about racial equity.

7. Staff self-report a level of awareness and knowledge on issues of diversity. For example, nearly 73% of staff agree with the statement, "**I am often concerned that racial and ethnic minorities are treated unfairly."** Additionally, they were in agreement on learning about groups experiencing marginalization: over 68% agree with the statement, "**I think there is a lot I can learn from the LGBTQ community**" and 93% agree with the statement, "**I want to understand how people from other racial and ethnic groups see the world."** When asked about cross-cultural experiences, educators shared that about 85% agreed with the statement: **"I often (at least once a week) spend time with a person of another racial or ethnic group than my own."** This suggests they identify having experiences that are cross-cultural. Additionally, they note having close friendships with others from different racial/ethnic groups from their own: 40% agreed and 34% disagreed **"my closest friends tend to be of the same racial or ethnic identification as myself."**
8. The staff are split in maintaining perspectives of colorblindness regarding their students. For instance, nearly 45% of staff agree, 22% neither agree nor disagree, and 33% disagree with the statement, "**I try to ignore skin color in order to view minority students as individuals**." Similarly, the staff was split on the following statement, "**Sometimes I wonder why we can't see each other as individuals instead of race always being an issue"**: 51% agreed, 20% neither agree nor disagree, and 28% disagree. There is also varied agreement with the statement regarding noticing race: 39% agree, 25% neither agree nor disagree, and 36% disagree with the statement, "**I try not to notice a child's race or skin color in the classroom setting."** Simultaneously, a good percentage of staff recognize omitting race will not solve racism: 44% of staff reporting disagreement with the statement, "**Racism would cease to exist if everyone would just forget about race and see each other as human beings."** This range of responses demonstrates the current thinking of staff that omitting race as an identity is not conducive to supporting student social and emotional learning. Staff also demonstrate a level of ambivalence regarding the need to be culturally responsive. For instance, in response to the statement, **"I am frustrated by how hard it is to be politically correct in our more diverse society,"** 55% disagreed while 16% agreed.
9. The concept of deficit thinking involves framing the behaviors of others as based in negative traits. In general, the staff are ambivalent about their perspectives on a variety of elements tied to deficit thinking. For instance, when asked about difference in

disciplining tied to "boy behaviors" staff were split: 55% disagree, 29% neither agree nor disagree, and 15% agree with the statement, "**Boys tend to be disciplined more often because they demonstrate behaviors more problematic than girls."** Staff responded with similar ambivalence when asked questions regarding schools, as a structural mechanism, playing a role in solving disadvantages: 70% disagree, 23% neither agree nor disagree, and 7% agree with statement, "**Schools cannot be expected to overcome the disadvantages of race and poverty."**

Perception of Access and Opportunity: ***School Staff and Parent Focus Groups***

1. Access and availability of resources were a concern for all stakeholders in the NPS community. However, perception of how and why those resource needs were distributed differed by stakeholder role (parent, staff, teacher) and by race/ethnicity and income status. Most stakeholders in the school and community agree that resources are inequitably distributed and that dynamics related to race, ethnicity, and income status are perceived as the leading cause of academic disparities. In this section, we showcase findings in which stakeholders perceive the district and its schools privileging the needs and requests of parents that request specific resources, utilize advocates to receive additional services, and control governance structures such as SGC (School Governance Council), where the parents representative of these groups tend to be White and/or higher income.
2. Members of the Norwalk School District community agree that there is a power dynamic that exists within the district that is maintained by a core group of parents. The display of power is played out through the way things are talked about (or not), who has access to information, and how resources are utilized. These parents wield their power both at the local level—through excluding other parents from joining events, and at the school level—by leveraging their influence to gain resources that directly benefit their children.
    a. These powerful parents have access to resources, as well as friends who are able to help them leverage their influence. While everyone agreed on the existence of this influential parent group, many participants were uncertain of the possibility to gain access to the group, and therefore gain access to relevant information they needed to make decisions for their child. For example, one parent said, "I feel like there is either—those in the know and then there's like everyone else. You're either in the loop, or you're out." Another parent suggested that the access these influential parents have is due to their history in the community, saying, "It feels like you either know what's going on with the community as a whole because you've gone through it already or you grew up here, or you're a teacher, or you're related to a teacher or something, or you don't."
3. While there are organizations that should help parents feel more empowered to engage with the school, both school staff and parents perceive that a small groups of parents were in control. Within the structure of Norwalk Public Schools, the School Governance

Councils (SGC) and the Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) were described by parents and school staff as serving different roles. SGC focuses on operations of a given school whereas the PTA focuses on fundraising. According to focus group participants, neither group is diverse, nor is either group welcoming to racial/ethnic minority and lower income parents.

4. Communication varies in NPS and impacts the access the school community has to information, and in the quality of the information that is shared. Most parents reported difficulty accessing information about school processes and resources. Even when parents do know, they suggest that others probably don't have the same information.
5. The disparity in special education and gifted, Honors, and AP programming is especially notable in the ways that parents access these services for their children. According to some school staff, some affluent White parents come to IEP meetings with additional resources. As one school staff member said, "I think White parents have the wherewithal to come with an advocate." Another school staff member said, "I do think that the squeaky wheel gets the oil. I don't know if it's always parents of color that are getting it." Other school staff identified that at times during gifted meetings, there was disagreement whether or not a child was perceived as sitting in their seat or responsive in the classroom as qualities of being "gifted."
6. Some students in Norwalk have access to tutors and paid advocates. Some students don't even have access to translated materials. In fact, this was one issue that came up often in focus groups and interviews: the disparity that exists because information isn't readily available to parents who speak languages other than English. Norwalk is a growing district with many different languages being spoken. However, many people say that materials are often not translated into the languages of parents in the community. This creates another barrier to getting access to information. One staff member explained that when they tried to get translations for parent materials in a different language, they were turned away.

Recommendations

The analysis provided in this equity audit report highlights a range of findings regarding parents and school staff perceptions of how well activities in Norwalk result in access and opportunity, specifically insights on staff perspective on school practices, as well as parents and school staff perspectives on racial and cultural diversity. The recommendations provided are intended not to be an exhaustive list, but are rather focused activities to continue the movement of NPS towards improving access and opportunity as focus to reduce patterns of disparity over the next 3-5 years.

Improve Adequacy and Efficiency of Supports

Intervention Supports

1. Development of a district-wide tiered system of support that includes defining academic and behavioral tiers available and processes for utilization. The following are tools for considering the implementation timeline of RTI:
    a. School Level implementation guide: http://www.rtinetwork.org/images/Colorado_School_RtI_Fidelity_Rubrics_2.pdf
2. Extensive review of SBRI implementation processes in order to address inconsistencies and redundancies.
3. Development within each school of a formal list of tiered interventions for academic and behavioral supports that match continuous student needs. The following are sample resources:
    a. Academic Interventions list: https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/aintervention
    b. Behavior Interventions list: https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/bintervention
4. Develop tools and protocols for the operation of intervention team meetings. The following are sample resources:
    a. Implementation checklist: https://intensiveintervention.org/sites/default/files/Student-Level_DBI_Checklist_508.pdf

Communication for Access and Opportunity

1. Schools improve the manner of communicating with parents regarding critical services:
    a. Regularly provide accessible information on enrollment in magnet, gifted, honors, and AP courses.
    b. Ensure equitable processes occur within special education evaluation with a particular attention on how parents without advocates are able to experience an informed process:
        i. Create a process to regularly gather feedback from parents regarding the evaluation process.

Improve Access and Perspectives of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity

Perspectives on Practice and Diversity

1. Develop and implement a professional learning series that focuses on developing a pedagogical lens that includes an expansive cross-cultural competency, in order to replace bias-based beliefs such as colorblindness, deficit thinking, and racial discomfort:
    a. The principals with the equity team can participate in a summer institute to practice professional learning activities for implementation during the 2021-22 school year.
2. Continuous assessment of educator knowledge on intervention support systems, curriculum and instruction, and gifted and advanced courses enrollment improvements.

3. Develop parent engagement and support activities that encourage cross-cultural competency. Activities should include opportunities for intergroup contact,[1] perspective taking,[2] and individuation.[3]
4. District leadership development of an equity policy/statement that reflects the ethical perspectives of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) which are important for guiding a multi-year operational plan:
    a. Utilize the information from various recent audit reports to identify the key DEI components.
    b. Generate a policy/statement that reflects the DEI components and gather feedback from parents, school staff, and students.

Improvement of Parent Opportunities for School Decision Making

1. Improve process of parent opportunities to participate in the School Governance Council (SGC):
    a. The improvement can include an interim process of selection that ensures the SGC is representative of racial/ethnic student enrollment of the school.
2. Improve communication with parents:
    a. Continued use of virtual platform to connect with families during the 2021-22 school year.
    b. Improved utilization of translation services for families, in particular Haitian Creole and Spanish.
    c. Create centralization of information regarding critical enrollment and services provisions. For example, the enrollment processes for magnet programs, gifted programming, etc.

[1] As early as the 1960s, intergroup contact is discussed as a strategy for reducing/interrupting the reliance on implicit biases and bias-based beliefs. The focus of the interaction is to share cultural artifacts within a context of parity and equal standing. *Citation: Pettigrew TF. Intergroup contact theory. Annual Review of Psychology. 1998; 49:65–85.10.1146/ annurev.psych.49.1.65; Pettigrew TF, Tropp LR. A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 2006; 90:751–783.*

[2] This strategy focuses on creating opportunities for an individual to develop a closeness with the stigmatized group and reduce the habit of using stereotypes. *Citation: Galinsky AD, Moskowitz GB. Perspective-taking: Decreasing stereotype expression, stereotype accessibility, and in-group favoritism. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 2000; 78:708–724.*

[3] Stereotypes are at times derived from imagery of out-group members and used to maintain in-group status as well. In order to counter-act these stereotypes, individuating is proving to be a strategy for creating information specific to individuals that allows for less reliance on a stereotype. *Citation: Fiske, S. Stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. In: Fiske, S.; Gilbert, D.; Gardner, L., et al., editors. The handbook of social psychology. 4. Boston: The McGraw-Hill; 1998. p. 357-411.*

Introduction

Dr. Edward Fergus, Associate Professor of Urban Education and Policy, and Director, Disproportionality and Equity Lab, with the Temple University research team, conducted a four-month examination of community and school staff perception of educational equity experiences and needs at Norwalk Public Schools (NPS). The project involved gathering data via survey and focus groups with staff, students, and parents and community members. The Temple University research team commenced the project in late September 2020 and concluded data collection in mid-December 2020. We gathered surveys from nearly 1,900 parents and community members and 320 school staff, and conducted over 35 focus groups and 20 interviews with nearly 140 parents and community members, 17 school administrators, and 40 school staff.

This report is organized around the themes that emerged within each form of data. The first section outlines the distribution of disparity present in Norwalk Public Schools based on the 2019-20 school year. The second and third sections focus on establishing the overarching patterns among parent and school staff survey responses, respectively. The fourth section focuses on the themes that emerged from the focus groups. In reporting the findings from the analysis, we begin with describing the survey data and then utilizing the focus group data to further deepen the findings noted from the survey data. This organizing of the data provides an explanatory perspective of the survey data. In other words, the survey data provides general sentiment across various groups, however, it does not provide a textured understanding or examples of what is meant by participants. On the other hand, the focus group data provides a substantive amount of textured examples.

The overarching story that emerged is the district demonstrates varying opportunities, access, and experiences based on race/ethnicity, language, and socio-economic status. More specifically, there is a general sentiment that within some schools and perhaps across the district opportunities are organized by and to meet the needs of White and/or higher income students and parents. This overall pattern is a universal phenomenon among suburban school districts. The concern moving forward is for the district to operate in a strategic manner that addresses the systemic nature of these patterns, which includes acknowledging the history of these trends, the pedagogical shift necessary to drive equitable educational reform efforts, the cultural beliefs that gave permission for the persistence of these patterns, and a substantive level of progress monitoring at all levels.

Framing of Disproportionality

For over 30 years, in national, state, district, and building level data, the documentation of disciplinary and special education overrepresentation for Black and Latinx students have been highly consistent (e.g., Children's Defense Fund, 1975; McCarthy & Hoge, 1987; Raffaele Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al., 2002). Analyses over the last decade (Raffaele Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Rausch & Skiba, 2004) have found rates of out-of-school suspensions for African American elementary school students between four and seven times greater than White students, although findings of Latino disparities have been somewhat less consistent (e.g., Gordon, Della Piana, and Keleher, 2000). Similarly, the overrepresentation of African American students referred and classified for special education has been equally well documented (e.g., Donovan & Cross, 2002; Parrish, 2002). Zhang and colleagues' (2014) analysis of a 5-year trend of special education enrollment data (2004-2008) found a decrease in the overrepresentation of Black

students among children identified with intellectual disability, and, at the same time, a continued pattern of disproportionality in the other high incidence disability categories (e.g., emotional disturbance, learning disabilities, and multiple disabilities). Zhang's research continues the thread from prior studies, which also documented a similar pattern (e.g., Coutinho and Oswald, 2000; Fierros and Conroy, 2002; Oswald et al., 1999; Parrish, 2002; Skiba et al., 2011).

Historically, many districts have focused on individual student factors to determine the "causes" of disability identification and poverty as common causes (Ahram, Fergus, and Noguera, 2011; Skiba et al., 2006). However, research exploring the relationship between student-level factors (demographic factors, in particular) and disability identification has been mixed and has yielded few insights as to how education systems might address disparities through services and supports based on student demographic factors. By contrast, research exploring systems-level factors suggests that districts should consider how to adjust and improve the conditions in which students learn in order to address disparities in disability identification.

Research has clearly demonstrated how systems-level factors (e.g., practices, procedures, guidelines, and school-level characteristics) interact with patterns of disproportionate identification. This literature also outlines the following practices as influencing rates of disproportionality: limited interventions, procedures, and teams for implementing these interventions (Gravois and Rosenfield, 2006); differential implementation of referral processes (Harry and Klingner, 2006; Klingner and Harry, 2006); inappropriate approaches to behavior management (Milner, 2006; Skiba, Peterson, and Williams, 1997; Weinstein et al., 2003); limited concepts of cultural responsiveness within response to intervention frameworks (Harris-Murri, King, and Rostenberg, 2006); inadequate framing of zero tolerance and other behavior management policies (Noguera, 2003; Skiba et al., 2002); and problematic beliefs about poverty, race, and learning (Ahram, Fergus, and Noguera, 2011; Fergus, 2016; Fish, 2017; Irizarry, 2015; Skiba et al., 2006). This research provides a textured documentation of school processes as flawed, and potentially influencing the disproportionate representation of Black and Latinx students in special education, discipline and advanced programming.

Special Education. While the extent of special education disproportionality varies depending on the method of analysis, research consistently shows that African American students are more likely to be classified as students with disabilities (e.g., see Donovan & Cross; Parrish, 2002). The overrepresentation of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students in special education classifications are at least in part due to the manner in which schools examine and understand student behavior (Skiba et al., 2008). Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, and Bridgest (2003) show that teachers perceive students exhibiting "African American movement style" as more aggressive and less academically able compared to students exhibiting "standard" movement styles.

Over the last 20 years various system approaches such as Response to Intervention (RTI) appear to hold a great deal of promise for identifying and changing teacher behaviors and school structures. In order to increase the effectiveness of academic intervention, systems of support (e.g., Fuchs et al., 2003) use the examination of local academic data by school personnel as a springboard for re-structuring academic interventions and structures in those schools.

School discipline. Overexposure to exclusionary school discipline places CLD students at increased risk for a range of negative outcomes. Given the strong and robust finding that academic engaged time is among the strongest predictors of achievement (Brophy, 1988; Wang, Haertel, and Walberg, 1997), disproportionate exclusion of CLD students must be seen as a risk factor for lower academic success. By being overrepresented in exclusionary discipline, CLD

students are also disproportionately exposed to the negative outcomes associated with suspension and expulsion, including school dropout (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, and Rock, 1986), lower school achievement (Rausch & Skiba, 2004), and an increased likelihood of contact with the juvenile justice system (Wald & Losen, 2003).

Section 1: Norwalk Patterns of Disparity

The research on racial and ethnic, language, and free/reduced lunch eligibility disparities in special education, discipline, and gifted programming over the past 40 years has developed substantive findings on the continued intensity of disproportionality patterns (e.g., Skiba et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2012) as well as the educational practices that directly or indirectly support disproportionality (e.g., Ahram and Fergus, 2011; Harry and Klingner, 2006; Losen and Orfield, 2002). Norwalk demonstrates a similar pattern of disproportionality patterns. This section of the report provides a broader overview of patterns for the 2019-20 school year

Special Education

Figure 1 demonstrates the overall enrollment and special education identification patterns by race/ethnicity. Apparent in the figure is the overrepresentation of Black students in Emotional Disturbance identification (22%) compared to overall enrollment (15%). Meanwhile, other groups demonstrate proportional representation, except Whites in OHI—43% identified as OHI compared to 25% enrollment.

Figure 1: Percentage of Enrollment and Special Education Identification by Race/Ethnicity.

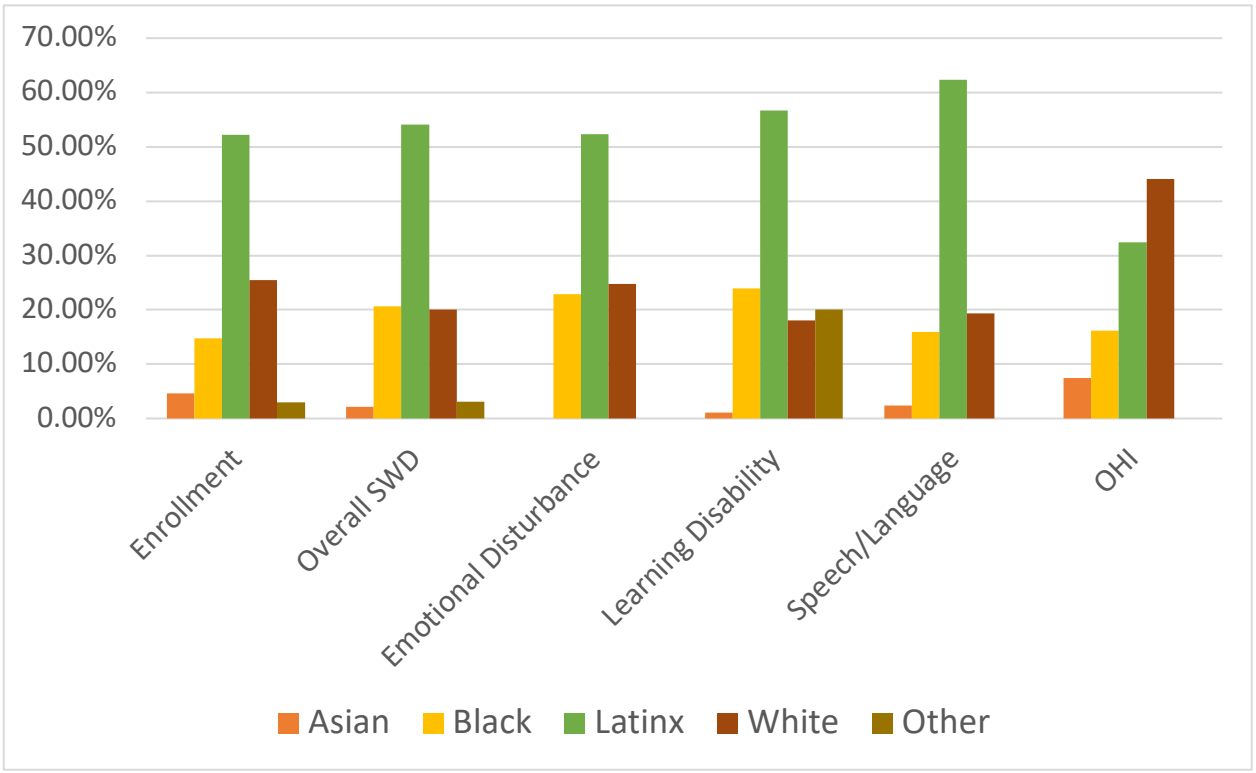
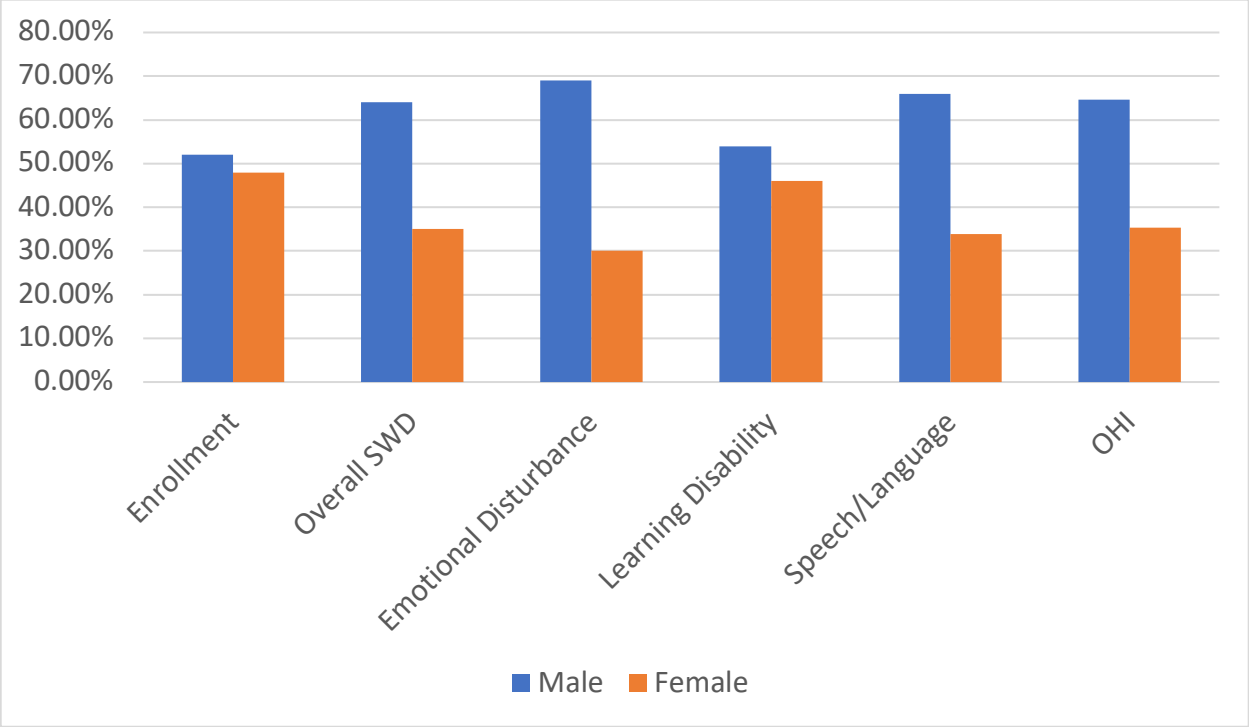


Figure 2 demonstrates the overall enrollment and special education identification patterns by gender. Apparent in the figure is the overrepresentation of male students in Emotional Disturbance (68%), Speech/Language Impairment (67%), and OHI identifications (65%) compared to overall enrollment (52%). Meanwhile female students demonstrate proportional or underrepresentation.

Figure 2: Percentage of Enrollment and Special Education Identification by Gender.



Discipline

Figure 3 demonstrates the overall enrollment and discipline patterns by race/ethnicity. Apparent in the figure is the overrepresentation of Black students in suspension (32%) compared with overall enrollment (15%). Meanwhile, other groups demonstrate proportional or underrepresentation.

Figure 3: Percentage of Enrollment and Unique Student Suspension by Race/Ethnicity.

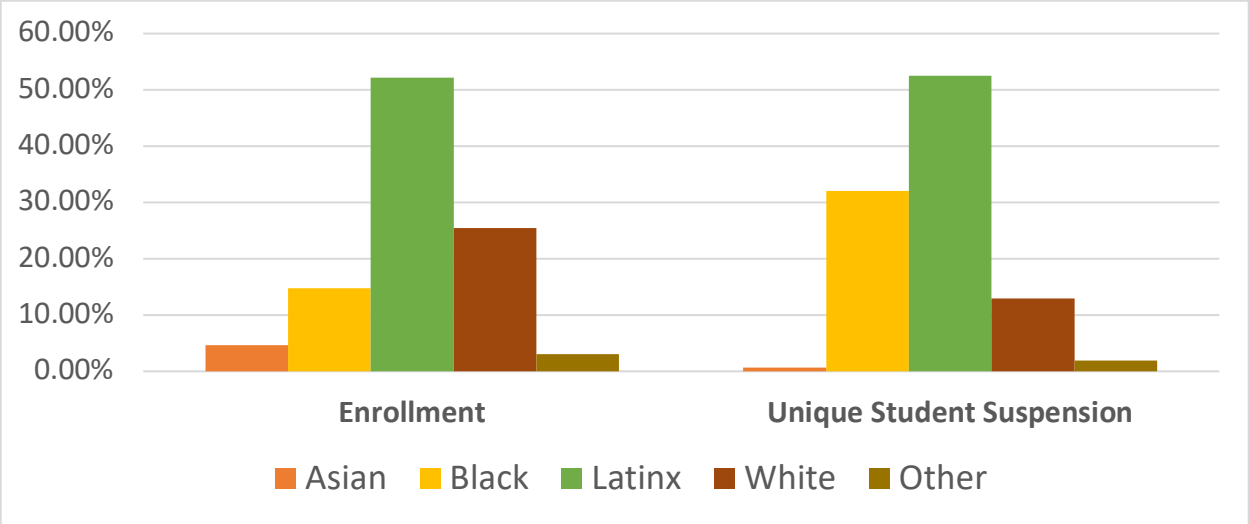
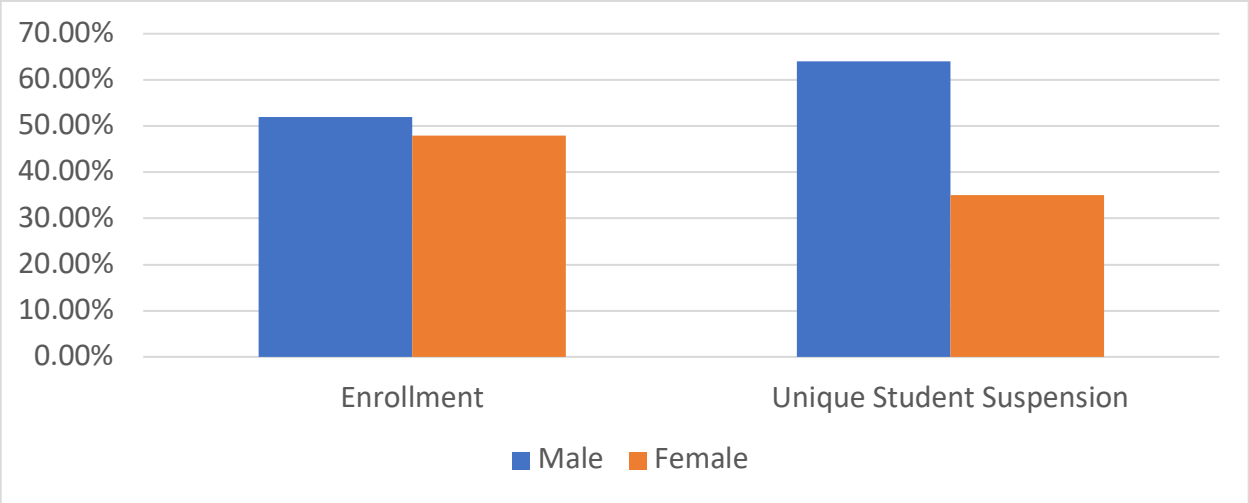


Figure 4 demonstrates the overall enrollment and discipline patterns by gender. Apparent in the figure is the overrepresentation of male students in suspension (65%) compared to overall enrollment (52%). Meanwhile female students demonstrate underrepresentation.

Figure 4: Percentage of Enrollment and Unique Student Suspension by Gender.



Gifted, AP, Honors

Figure 5 demonstrates the overall enrollment and advanced programming enrollment patterns by race/ethnicity. Apparent in the figure is the overrepresentation of White students in advanced programming (39%) compared to overall enrollment (25%). Meanwhile, other groups demonstrate proportional or underrepresentation.

Figure 5: Percentage of Overall Enrollment and Advanced Programming Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity.

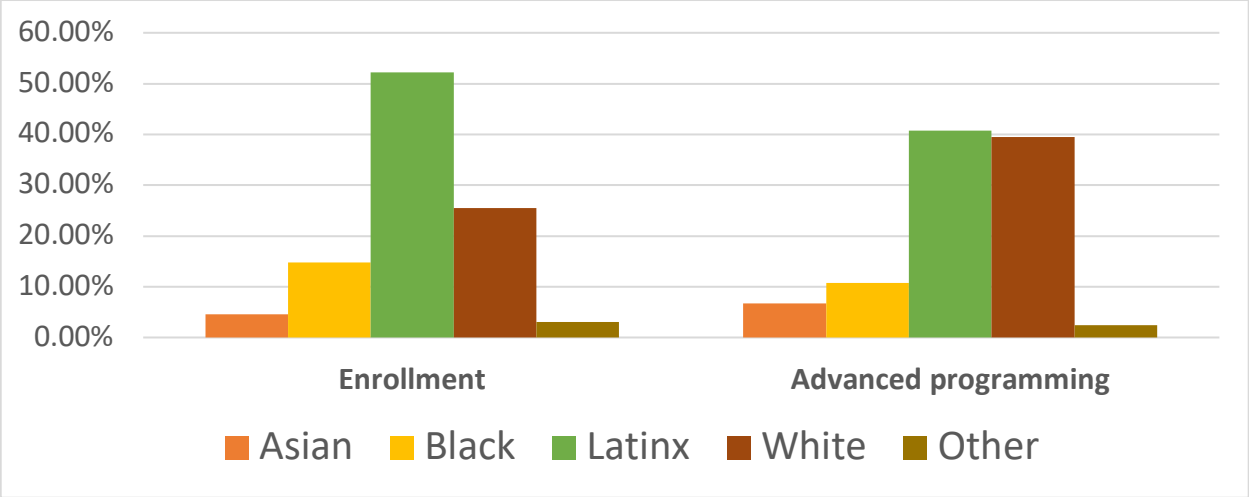
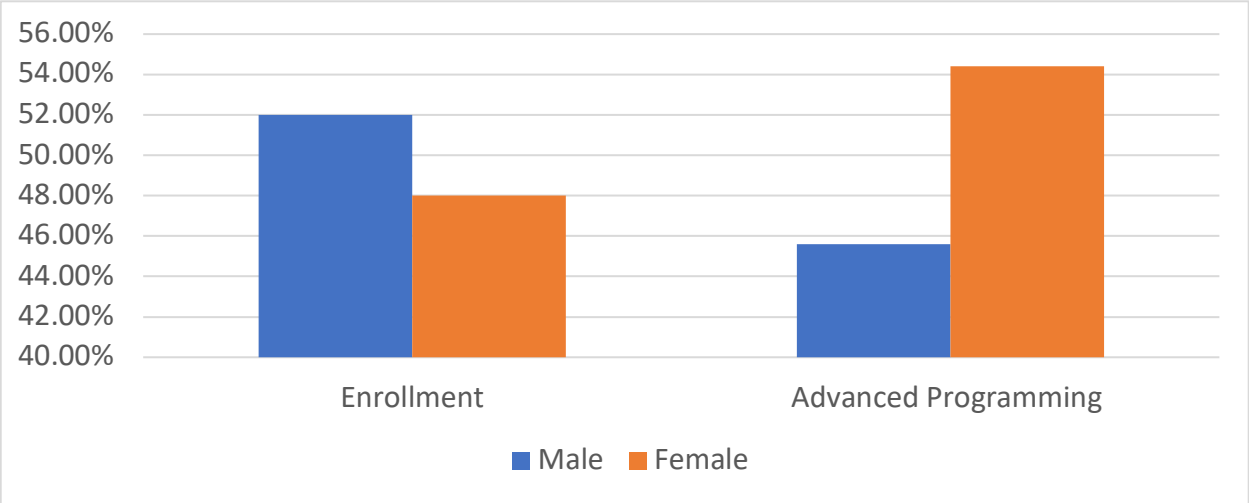


Figure 6 demonstrates the overall enrollment and advanced programming patterns by gender. Apparent in the figure is the overrepresentation of female students in advanced programming (54%) compared to overall enrollment (48%). Meanwhile, male students demonstrate underrepresentation.

Figure 6: Percentage of Overall Enrollment and Advanced Programming Enrollment by Gender.



Overall these patterns of disproportionality illustrate that within Norwalk Public Schools, Black and Latinx students are overrepresented in certain categories of special education, overrepresented in discipline, and underrepresented in advanced programming. The next section provides a perceptual view into specific practices and equity beliefs among school staff that, as the research demonstrates, is implicated in these disproportionality patterns.

Section 2: Parent Survey Findings: Varying perspectives on access, resources, and perceptions of diversity and inclusion

Perceptions of School Resources

The parent and community survey asked several questions about their perceptions of available resources specific to language services. Tables 1-4 provide the percentage of parents by race/ethnicity that identify whether language services are present. Over 50% of each racial/ethnic parent group identified language interpreters present at meetings and materials being translated. Among all groups Latinx parents demonstrated the highest percent identifying language services available (76.8%). Meanwhile, Asian parents demonstrated the lowest percent identifying language services available (51.4%).

Table 1: Percent **White** Parents' Identification of Language Services.

	Yes	No	Do Not Know
Interpreters that speak your language for meetings or parent teacher conferences. (1)	50.3%	20.5%	29.2%
Written materials, such as newsletters or school notices that are translated into your language. (2)	64.1%	19.2%	16.7%

Table 2: Percent **Black** Parents' Identification of Language Services.

	Yes	No	Do Not Know
Interpreters that speak your language for meetings or parent teacher conferences. (1)	69.4%	15.5%	15%
Written materials, such as newsletters or school notices that are translated into your language. (2)	80.1%	14%	5.9%

Table 3: Percent **Asian** Parents' Identification of Language Services.

	Yes	No	Do Not Know
Interpreters that speak your language for meetings or parent teacher conferences. (1)	51.4%	22.9%	25.7%
Written materials, such as newsletters or school notices that are translated into your language. (2)	59.6%	27.9%	12.5%

Table 4: Percent **Latinx** Parents' Identification of Language Services.

	Yes	No	Do Not Know
Interpreters that speak your language for meetings or parent teacher conferences. (1)	76.8%	10.7%	12.5%
Written materials, such as newsletters or school notices that are translated into your language. (2)	84.6%	8.8%	6.6%

Perception of School Satisfaction

School satisfaction survey items focus on services and activities such as providing information on how a child is doing, opportunities to volunteer, workshops available, knowing how to help your child with homework, and how to help child planning for future. Tables 5-8 provide the percent of parents by race/ethnicity that responded to satisfaction with school services and activities. Across all groups, over 75% note a satisfaction with school services and activities. In particular, parents uniformly (over 85%) demonstrated satisfaction with **"makes you aware of chances to volunteer at the school."**

Table 5: Percent of **White** Parents' Satisfaction with School Services and Activities.

	Does it very well (%)	Just OK (%)	Not Very Well (%)	Doesn't do it at all (%)
Lets you know between report cards how your child is doing in school. (1)	52.4%	31.4%	13.3%	2.9%
Helps you understand what children at your child's age are like. (2)	35.3%	36.5%	19%	9.2%
Makes you aware of chances to volunteer at the school. (3)	65.7%	23.4%	8%	2.9%
Provides workshops, materials, or advice about how to help your child learn at home. (4)	42.5%	37.5%	15.6%	4.4%
Provides information about how to help your child with his/her homework. (5)	33.3%	39.7%	19.1%	7.8%
Provides information on how to help your child plan for college or vocational school. (6)	25.6%	34.8%	17.6%	22%
Provides information about how to help your child plan for completing homework. (7)	30.9%	39.8%	18.9%	10.5%

Table 6: Percent of **Black** Parents' Satisfaction with School Services and Activities.

	Does it very well (%)	Just OK (%)	Not Very Well (%)	Doesn't do it at all (%)
Lets you know between report cards how your child is doing in school. (1)	63%	22.9%	9.4%	4.7%
Helps you understand what children at your child's age are like. (2)	46.2%	29.6%	15.1%	9.1%
Makes you aware of chances to volunteer at the school. (3)	66%	21.3%	6.4%	6.4%
Provides workshops, materials, or advice about how to help your child learn at home. (4)	47.9%	29.8%	16.5%	5.9%
Provides information about how to help your child with his/her homework. (5)	42.2%	30.5%	17.1%	10.2%
Provides information on how to help your child plan for college or vocational school. (6)	30.2%	30.7%	16.8%	22.3%
Provides information about how to help your child plan for completing homework. (7)	39.5%	31.9%	14.1%	14.6%

Table 7: Percent of **Asian** Parents' Satisfaction with School Services and Activities.

	Does it very well (%)	Just OK (%)	Not Very Well (%)	Doesn't do it at all (%)
Lets you know between report cards how your child is doing in school. (1)	62.6%	22.4%	14%	.9%
Helps you understand what children at your child's age are like. (2)	45.5%	35.6%	14.9%	4%
Makes you aware of chances to volunteer at the school. (3)	61.9%	24.8%	9.5%	3.8%
Provides workshops, materials, or advice about how to help your child learn at home. (4)	43.3%	38.5%	13.5%	4.8%
Provides information about how to help your child with their homework. (5)	32.4%	43.8%	15.2%	8.6%
Provides information on how to help your child plan for college or vocational school. (6)	26.3%	36.8%	16.8%	20%

Provides information about how to help your child plan for completing homework. (7)	37.3%	39.2%	11.8%	11.8%

Table 8: Percent of **Latinx** Parents' Satisfaction with School Services and Activities.

	Does it very well (%)	Just OK (%)	Not Very Well (%)	Doesn't do it at all (%)
Lets you know between report cards how your child is doing in school. (1)	69.7%	19.8%	7.3%	3.1%
Helps you understand what children at your child's age are like. (2)	51.1%	32.1%	12%	4.8%
Makes you aware of chances to volunteer at the school. (3)	64.2%	23.1%	9%	3.7%
Provides workshops, materials, or advice about how to help your child learn at home. (4)	52.3%	34.1%	10.1%	3.5%
Provides information about how to help your child with their homework. (5)	46.3%	33.7%	13.6%	6.4%
Provides information on how to help your child plan for college or vocational school. (6)	34.7%	32.8%	16.8%	15.7%
Provides information about how to help your child plan for completing homework. (7)	44.7%	35.2%	14.1%	6%

Perception of School Quality

School quality survey items focused on parents' agreement with various elements of school quality: child enjoyment of school, good discipline in the classroom, leadership capacity, and family involvement availability. Tables 9-12 provide the percent of agreement with school quality elements among parents by race/ethnicity. Across the various elements of school quality, parents in each racial/ethnic group identified satisfaction with school quality elements. Of potential interest is the item, **"my child is challenged at school academically."** For each racial/ethnic group that item maintained the highest disagreement rating, although the disagreement rate does not go beyond 20% with any group.

Table 9: Percent of **White** Parents' Satisfaction with School Quality.

	Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)
My child is challenged at school academically. (1)	67.9%	15.9%	16.2%
My child enjoys school. (2)	83%	11.8%	5.2%
My child's teachers maintain good discipline in the classroom. (3)	82.9%	14.4%	2.7%
In my child's school, most students and teachers respect each other. (4)	87.8%	9.2%	3%
The principal and assistant principal maintain good discipline at my child's school. (5)	86.6%	9.5%	3.9%
My child's school welcomes my family's involvement with the school. (6)	83%	13.6%	3.4%
My child's school makes it easy to be involved there. (7)	77.4%	16.3%	6.3%

Table 10: Percent of **Black** Parents' Satisfaction with School Quality.

	Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)
My child is challenged at school academically. (1)	72.3%	18.3%	9.4%
My child enjoys school. (2)	82.5%	13.4%	4.1%
My child's teachers maintain good discipline in the classroom. (3)	86.1%	10.3%	3.6%
In my child's school, most students and teachers respect each other. (4)	86.8%	10%	3.2%
The principal and assistant principal maintain good discipline at my child's school. (5)	85.3%	10%	4.7%
My child's school welcomes my family's involvement with the school. (6)	83.2%	13.2%	3.7%
My child's school makes it easy to be involved there. (7)	77.5%	17.3%	5.2%

Table 11: Percent of **Asian** Parents' Satisfaction with School Quality.

	Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)
My child is challenged at school academically. (1)	74.1%	15.7%	10.2%
My child enjoys school. (2)	85.5%	12.7%	1.8%
My child's teachers maintain good discipline in the classroom. (3)	93.6%	5.5%	.9%
In my child's school, most students and teachers respect each other. (4)	91.6%	7.5%	.9%
The principal and assistant principal maintain good discipline at my child's school. (5)	89.6%	9.4%	.9%
My child's school welcomes my family's involvement with the school. (6)	85.7%	12.4%	2%
My child's school makes it easy to be involved there. (7)	82.1%	17%	.9%

Table 12: Percent of **Latinx** Parents' Satisfaction with School Quality.

	Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)
My child is challenged at school academically. (1)	74.9%	16.3%	8.8%
My child enjoys school. (2)	86%	10.3%	3.6%
My child's teachers maintain good discipline in the classroom. (3)	86.5%	12.2%	1.3%
In my child's school, most students and teachers respect each other. (4)	90.1%	8.1%	1.9%
The principal and assistant principal maintain good discipline at my child's school. (5)	88.8%	8.9%	2.4%
My child's school welcomes my family's involvement with the school. (6)	86.1%	12.3%	1.6%
My child's school makes it easy to be involved there. (7)	82%	15.9%	2.1%

Perception of School Culture and Climate

School cultural climate survey items focus on how individuals experience and interpret interactions in school. Tables 13-16 provide an overview of parents' percent of agreement with items specific to various school culture and climate components. Across the various groups, there is a majority agreement with the school culture and climate. However, Black parents have a different pattern than other parent racial/ethnic groups. For instance, the item **"Teachers treat students from different backgrounds in the same way"** was viewed differently by Black

parents, as nearly 11% disagree with the statement while 3.6% of White parents, 1.8% of Asian parents, and 4.5% of Latinx parents disagree with the statement. Additionally, while over 85% of White, Asian, and Latinx parents agree with all these school culture and climate items, on the other hand, less than 80% of Black parents agreed with the following items:

- Students make friends with students of other racial and ethnic groups.
- Students from different backgrounds treat each other with respect.
- Teachers treat students from different backgrounds in the same way.

These differences suggest that Black parents are perceiving social-cultural interactions occurring in a different way compared with other groups. Some of the conversation in Section 4 will provide examples.

Table 13: Percent of **White** Parents' Agreement with School Cultural Climate.

	Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)
When you walk into the school building it looks welcoming. (1)	82.7%	11.6%	5.8%
Students make friends with students of other racial and ethnic groups. (2)	88.8%	8%	3.2%
Students from different backgrounds treat each other with respect. (3)	84.4%	13%	2.5%
Administrators (e.g. the principal, vice-principal, or dean) treat students with respect. (4)	93.7%	5.3%	1%
Teachers treat students from different backgrounds in the same way. (5)	80.6%	15.9%	3.6%
I feel welcome in this school. (9)	91.2%	5.5%	3.3%
My child feels safe at their school. (10)	92.9%	5.5%	1.6%

Table 14: Percent of **Black** Parents' Agreement with School Cultural Climate.

	Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)
When you walk into the school building it looks welcoming. (1)	86.1%	9.3%	4.6%
Students make friends with students of other racial and ethnic groups. (2)	78.6%	13.5%	7.8%
Students from different backgrounds treat each other with respect. (3)	74.2%	19.6%	6.2%
Administrators (e.g. the principal, vice-principal, or dean) treat students with respect. (4)	89.1%	7.8%	3.1%
Teachers treat students from different backgrounds in the same way. (5)	70.5%	18.1%	11.4%
I feel welcome in this school. (9)	85.9%	9.4%	4.7%
My child feels safe at their school. (10)	91.1%	6.3%	2.6%

Table 15: Percent of **Asian** Parents' Agreement with School Cultural Climate.

	Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)
When you walk into the school building it looks welcoming. (1)	86.2%	10.1%	3.7%
Students make friends with students of other racial and ethnic groups. (2)	84.4%	12.8%	2.7%
Students from different backgrounds treat each other with respect. (3)	86.4%	10.9%	2.7%
Administrators (e.g. the principal, vice-principal, or dean) treat students with respect. (4)	96.3%	3.7%	0%
Teachers treat students from different backgrounds in the same way. (5)	92.7%	5.5%	1.8%
I feel welcome in this school. (9)	97.2%	1.8%	.9%
My child feels safe at their school. (10)	94.5%	5.5%	0%

Table 16: Percent of **Latinx** Parents' Agreement with School Cultural Climate.

	Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)
When you walk into the school building it looks welcoming. (1)	89.1%	7%	3.9%
Students make friends with students of other racial and ethnic groups. (2)	86.5%	10.9%	2.6%
Students from different backgrounds treat each other with respect. (3)	82.2%	14.4%	3.4%
Administrators (e.g. the principal, vice-principal, or dean) treat students with respect. (4)	94.5%	4.7%	.8%
Teachers treat students from different backgrounds in the same way. (5)	86.6%	8.9%	4.5%
I feel welcome in this school. (9)	93.7%	4.2%	2.1%
My child feels safe at their school. (10)	91.9%	6.5%	1.6%

Perceptions of Cross-Cultural Experiences, and Culture and Race

The perceptions of culture, race, and diversity items are components of climate scales, which have five subscales that measure different components of diversity perspective taking: racial discomfort, awareness and knowledge, colorblindness, deficit thinking, and responsibility (Fergus, 2017). An additional set of items focus on cross-cultural experiences and readiness which focus on mapping the types and frequency of social interactions individuals avail themselves.

Tables 17-20 demonstrate the percent of parents agreeing with cross-cultural experiences and readiness. Overall, parents varied in their cross-cultural experiences. For example, a majority

of White parents identified that they have various levels of cross-cultural experiences **"with a person of another racial/ethnic group"** (67.5%), and "**feel comfortable with people who are different race or ethnicity"** than themselves (88.2%). Black parents also noted having various levels of cross-cultural experiences **"with a person of another racial/ethnic group"** (60.6%), and **"feel comfortable with people who are different race or ethnicity"** than themselves (74.7%). Asian parents also shared various levels of cross-cultural experiences **"with a person of another racial/ethnic group"** (58.1%), and **"feel comfortable with people who are different race or ethnicity"** than themselves (63.8%). The majority of Latinx parents also varied in cross-cultural experiences **"with a person of another racial/ethnic group"** (57.1%), and **"feel comfortable with people who are different race or ethnicity"** than themselves (76.3%). Apparent across all groups is the range of parents feeling comfortable with people who are of a different racial/ethnic group; however, there is a lack of uniformity in responses which suggests there are different social experiences operating for these racial/ethnic groups.

Another interesting difference emerged in the response across parent groups regarding their closest friendship circles. The intention of the statement **"My closest friends tend to be of the same racial/ethnic identification as myself"** is to explore another dimension of cross-cultural exposure, specifically to understand how much cross-cultural exposure that individuals maintain in one of their most personal connections.

Across the groups, White parents compared with other groups self-reported agreeing that their closest friends shared their racial/ethnic identification: Whites (53.3%), Black (42.1%), Asian (40.1%), and Latinx (42.9%). This pattern suggests that among this sample of parents nearly half maintain closest friendships with individuals that are different than their own racial/ethnic identification. Simultaneously, half of the parent sample maintain closest friendships with individuals similar to their racial/ethnic identification.

Table 17: Percent of **White** Parents' Cross-Cultural Experiences and Readiness.

	Disagree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Agree (%)
I am often concerned that racial and ethnic minorities are treated unfairly. (1)	49.2%	22.5%	28.2%
I think there is a lot I can learn from the LGBTQ community. (2)	12.8%	39.5%	47.7%
I often (at least once a week) spend time with a person of another racial/ethnic group than my own. (3)	15.7%	16.9%	67.5%
I respect the values and beliefs of people who are of a different race or ethnicity than I am. (4)	8.8%	2.1%	89.1%
I want to understand how people from other racial and ethnic groups see the world. (5)	7.2%	12.6%	80.3%
My closest friends tend to be of the same racial/ethnic identification as myself. (6)	23.4%	23.4%	53.3%
I feel comfortable with people who are a different race or ethnicity than I am. (7)	5.4%	6.5%	88.2%

Table 18: Percent of **Black** Parents' Cross-Cultural Experiences and Readiness.

	Disagree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Agree (%)
I am often concerned that racial and ethnic minorities are treated unfairly. (1)	46.4%	18.6%	35%
I think there is a lot I can learn from the LGBTQ community. (2)	23.8%	37.3%	38.9%
I often (at least once a week) spend time with a person of another racial/ethnic group than my own. (3)	19.1%	20.2%	60.6%
I respect the values and beliefs of people who are of a different race or ethnicity than I am. (4)	21.1%	4.3%	74.6%
I want to understand how people from other racial and ethnic groups see the world. (5)	18.1%	13.8%	68.1%
My closest friends tend to be of the same racial/ethnic identification as myself. (6)	37.4%	20.5%	42.1%
I feel comfortable with people who are a different race or ethnicity than I am. (7)	13.4%	11.8%	74.7%

Table 19: Percent of **Asian** Parents' Cross-Cultural Experiences and Readiness.

	Disagree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Agree (%)
I am often concerned that racial and ethnic minorities are treated unfairly. (1)	54.1%	21.1%	24.8%
I think there is a lot I can learn from the LGBTQ community. (2)	27.6%	35.2%	37.1%
I often (at least once a week) spend time with a person of another racial/ethnic group than my own. (3)	21%	21%	58.1%
I respect the values and beliefs of people who are of a different race or ethnicity than I am. (4)	22.1%	3.8%	74.1%
I want to understand how people from other racial and ethnic groups see the world. (5)	21%	9.5%	69.5%
My closest friends tend to be of the same racial/ethnic identification as myself. (6)	38.3%	20.6%	40.1%
I feel comfortable with people who are a different race or ethnicity than I am. (7)	19%	17.1%	63.8%

Table 20: Percent of **Latinx** Parents' Cross-Cultural Experiences and Readiness.

	Disagree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Agree (%)
I am often concerned that racial and ethnic minorities are treated unfairly. (1)	48.6%	24%	27.4%
I think there is a lot I can learn from the LGBTQ community. (2)	22.7%	36.9%	40.4%
I often (at least once a week) spend time with a person of another racial/ethnic group than my own. (3)	18.4%	24.5%	57.1%
I respect the values and beliefs of people who are of a different race or ethnicity than I am. (4)	20.7%	4.6%	74.7%
I want to understand how people from other racial and ethnic groups see the world. (5)	18.8%	17%	64.2%
My closest friends tend to be of the same racial/ethnic identification as myself. (6)	34.2%	22.9%	42.9%
I feel comfortable with people who are a different race or ethnicity than I am. (7)	16%	7.7%	76.3%

Perceptions of Colorblindness and Deficit Thinking

Tables 21-24 illustrate parents' agreement with items on colorblindness and deficit thinking. Deficit thinking is an ideology that argues individual outcomes are due to cultural group deficits and/or genetic deficits. Among the various groups of parents they maintain divided deficit thinking perspectives. For example, the statement, **"Although I am hesitant to say so publicly, I believe that racial differences in intelligence may have a hereditary or genetic component"** demonstrated a range of agreement and neutrality among groups (% agree and % neutral): Whites (5.1% and 17.2%), Black (13.3% and 21.8%), Asian (9.6% and 26.9%), and Latinx (11.7% and 28.8%). These patterns suggest between 22% and 37% of parents either agree with or remain neutral about whether racial differences in intelligence are due to a genetic component. With another facet of deficit thinking, which alludes to perception of cultural disposition towards education (e.g., **"Unfortunately, for many people of color, education just is not a real priority"**), each parent group varied in their agreement on the statement: the following is the percent disagreeing with the statement: White (67%), Black (62.9%), Asian (41.3%), and Latinx (46.7%).

Parents also varied in regards to social and cultural dynamics that are important in developing an equity driven environment. For example, racism is a complex system of oppression that involves institutional, interpersonal, and internalized experiences. One item in the survey, **"I believe racist incidents occur, but I'm not convinced there is institutionalized racism,"** allows for individuals to demonstrate whether they view racism as institutional and/or interpersonal. The parents varied in their agreement with this item. The following represents the percent agreeing with the statement: White (19.6%), Black (22.2%), Asian (35.1%), and Latinx

(27%). This data suggests that between one fifth (20%) to one third (33%) of the parents surveyed operationalize racism as occurring at the interpersonal level and not necessarily within institutions.

Lastly, colorblindness is an ideology that argues erasing race identifiers provides a better avenue of minimizing racism in society. The survey contains a range of items that highlight different elements of this concept. Across the different parent groups, there is a common absorption of a colorblindness perspective; the following are the percent agreeing with the statement, **"Racism would cease to exist if everyone would just forget about race and see each other as human beings"**: White (50.7%), Black (58.7%), Asian (76.7%), and Latinx (74.6%). This common agreement was also apparent with the statement on assimilation, **"It is important that people of color assimilate so that they can succeed in mainstream American culture"**: White (27.2%), Black (33.4%), Asian (43.5%), and Latinx (38.4%).

Table 21: Percent **White** Parents' Agree with Colorblindness and Deficit Thinking.

	Disagree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Agree (%)
Thinking or talking about race/ethnicity makes me feel uncomfortable. (1)	76.1%	18.5%	5.3%
Although I am hesitant to say so publicly, I believe that racial differences in intelligence may have a hereditary or genetic component. (2)	77.7%	17.2%	5.1%
I am frustrated by how hard it is to be politically correct in our more diverse society. (3)	40.7%	29%	30.3%
The values and beliefs shared by those in disadvantaged neighborhoods tend to go against school values and beliefs about what makes up a good education. (4)	57.1%	31.9%	11%
Sometimes I wonder why we can't see each other as individuals instead of race and ethnicity always being an issue. (5)	19.2%	22.4%	58.4%
I believe schools have a responsibility to provide services to students of color that will help them overcome the disadvantages they have faced. (6)	14.3%	27.4%	58.3%
The things that were done to people of color in the past in this country were terrible, but I am not sure it is the school's responsibility to make up for that. (7)	31.5%	31.8%	46.8%
It is important that people of color assimilate so that they can succeed in mainstream American culture. (8)	37.4%	35.4%	27.2%
Racism would cease to exist if everyone would just forget about race and see each other as human beings. (9)	31.1%	18.1%	50.7%
I believe racist incidents occur, but I'm not convinced there is institutionalized racism. (10)	55.4%	25%	19.6%

I am sometimes suspicious of data showing racial disparities because data can be manipulated to say anything one wants it to say. (11)	43%	33.1%	23.8%
Unfortunately, for many people of color, education just is not a real priority. (12)	67%	22.9%	10.2%

Table 22: Percent **Black** Parents' Agreement with Colorblindness and Deficit Thinking.

	Disagree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Agree (%)
Thinking or talking about race/ethnicity makes me feel uncomfortable. (1)	75.4%	13.6%	11%
Although I am hesitant to say so publicly, I believe that racial differences in intelligence may have a hereditary or genetic component. (2)	64.9%	21.8%	13.3%
I am frustrated by how hard it is to be politically correct in our more diverse society. (3)	44.7%	30.3%	25%
The values and beliefs shared by those in disadvantaged neighborhoods tend to go against school values and beliefs about what makes up a good education. (4)	53%	27.3%	19.7%
Sometimes I wonder why we can't see each other as individuals instead of race and ethnicity always being an issue. (5)	23.2%	16.8%	60%
I believe schools have a responsibility to provide services to students of color that will help them overcome the disadvantages they have faced. (6)	13.9%	22.8%	63.3%
The things that were done to people of color in the past in this country were terrible, but I am not sure it is the school's responsibility to make up for that. (6)	42%	29.3%	28.8%
It is important that people of color assimilate so that they can succeed in mainstream American culture. (8)	37.7%	29%	33.4%
Racism would cease to exist if everyone would just forget about race and see each other as human beings. (9)	31.2%	10.1%	58.7%
I believe racist incidents occur, but I'm not convinced there is institutionalized racism. (10)	56.8%	21%	22.2%
I am sometimes suspicious of data showing racial disparities because data can be manipulated to say anything one wants it to say. (11)	33.1%	26.9%	40%
Unfortunately, for many people of color, education just is not a real priority. (12)	62.9%	19.1%	18%

Table 23: Percent **Asian** Parents' Agreement with Colorblindness and Deficit Thinking.

	Disagree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Agree (%)
Thinking or talking about race/ethnicity makes me feel uncomfortable. (1)	70.4%	21.3%	8.4%
Although I am hesitant to say so publicly, I believe that racial differences in intelligence may have a hereditary or genetic component. (2)	62.5%	26.9%	9.6%
I am frustrated by how hard it is to be politically correct in our more diverse society. (3)	38.1%	35.2%	26.7%
The values and beliefs shared by those in disadvantaged neighborhoods tend to go against school values and beliefs about what makes up a good education. (4)	41.7%	32%	26.2%
Sometimes I wonder why we can't see each other as individuals instead of race and ethnicity always being an issue. (5)	17%	17.9%	65.1%
I believe schools have a responsibility to provide services to students of color that will help them overcome the disadvantages they have faced. (6)	18.6%	26.8%	54.6%
The things that were done to people of color in the past in this country were terrible, but I am not sure it is the school's responsibility to make up for that. (7)	32.4%	26.5%	41.2%
It is important that people of color assimilate so that they can succeed in mainstream American culture. (8)	24.2%	32.3%	43.5%
Racism would cease to exist if everyone would just forget about race and see each other as human beings. (9)	12.6%	10.7%	76.7%
I believe racist incidents occur, but I'm not convinced there is institutionalized racism. (10)	37.2%	27.7%	35.1%
I am sometimes suspicious of data showing racial disparities because data can be manipulated to say anything one wants it to say. (11)	25.3%	34.1%	40.7%
Unfortunately, for many people of color, education just is not a real priority. (12)	41.3%	29.3%	29.3%

Table 24: Percent **Latinx** Parents' Agreement with Colorblindness and Deficit Thinking.

	Disagree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Agree (%)
Thinking or talking about race/ethnicity makes me feel uncomfortable. (1)	68.3%	21.2%	10.6%
Although I am hesitant to say so publicly, I believe that racial differences in intelligence may have a hereditary or genetic component. (2)	59.5%	28.8%	11.7%
I am frustrated by how hard it is to be politically correct in our more diverse society. (3)	35.3%	37.2%	27.5%
The values and beliefs shared by those in disadvantaged neighborhoods tend to go against school values and beliefs about what makes up a good education. (4)	43.6%	34.4%	22%
Sometimes I wonder why we can't see each other as individuals instead of race and ethnicity always being an issue. (5)	15.8%	18.3%	65.8%
I believe schools have a responsibility to provide services to students of color that will help them overcome the disadvantages they have faced. (6)	15.2%	24.4%	60.4%
The things that were done to people of color in the past in this country were terrible, but I am not sure it is the school's responsibility to make up for that. (7)	27.3%	31.2%	41.4%
It is important that people of color assimilate so that they can succeed in mainstream American culture. (8)	22.5%	39%	38.4%
Racism would cease to exist if everyone would just forget about race and see each other as human beings. (9)	15.4%	10%	74.6%
I believe racist incidents occur, but I'm not convinced there is institutionalized racism. (10)	35.9%	37.1%	27%
I am sometimes suspicious of data showing racial disparities because data can be manipulated to say anything one wants it to say. (11)	26.3%	37.7%	35.9%
Unfortunately, for many people of color, education just is not a real priority. (12)	46.7%	29.8%	23.6%

Overall, the parent and community survey items demonstrate a strong perception across racial/ethnic groups with a satisfaction with some school services and quality elements. Additionally, the response patterns demonstrate that specific racial/ethnic groups of parents perceive different experiences within the school culture and climate. And finally, the varying racial/ethnic groups represented among parents illustrate different perspectives representing deficit thinking, colorblindness, and cross-cultural experiences. The section demonstrating the analysis from the focus groups highlights a deepened exampling of why and how some of these perceptions varied across racial/ethnic groups.

Section 3: School Staff Survey Findings: Perceive School Practices as Limited and Ambivalent of Racial Equity

The school staff survey focused on understanding two areas of educational practice. First, the survey focused on understanding staff perception of practices related to providing academic and behavioral supports. In Section 3 of the report, a noted perception among school staff and parents is the inconsistent availability of resources, particularly when it comes to providing additional supports. We explored these supports in order to understand if one of the areas of improvements for the schools and district will be around providing access to supports. If this is the case, then it would be prudent to know whether those supports are perceived as operating efficiently.

In the climate survey, staff were asked to identify the top three behaviors they considered difficult to manage (Table 25). Understanding what staff find most difficult may assist in knowing whether the behavioral support systems are organized to meet those behavioral needs. The following behaviors were identified most frequently as the top three most difficult to manage: **fails to follow behavior expectations, uses attention-getting behaviors, bullies others, demonstrates aggressive behavior towards adults, hyperactive or nervous, demonstrates anger, and non-completion of homework**.

Table 25: Response to Top Three Student Behaviors Most Difficult for Staff to Manage.

	Number of Staff identify difficult behavior	Percent of Staff Respondents
Fails to follow behavior expectations.	83	25.9%
Bullies others.	23	7.2%
Demonstrates aggressive behavior towards other students.	50	15.6%
Demonstrates aggressive behavior towards adults.	47	14.7%
Hyperactive or nervous.	35	10.9%
Cheats on assignments.	12	3.8%
Demonstrates anger.	33	10.3%
Fails to follow behavior expectations.	38	11.9%
Uses attention-getting behaviors.	106	33.1%
Overly sensitive to criticism.	8	2.5%
Talks about family issues that cause concern.	10	3.1%
Frequent usage of profanity.	18	5.6%
Sleeping in the classroom.	26	8.1%
Non-completion of homework.	55	17.2%
Other behaviors: Anxiety, attendance including cutting, chronic absenteeism, disengagement, does not participate in class,	29	9.1%

inability to manage impulses, passive-aggressive noncompliance, showing up to class late among higher level classes and allowed by admin.		

Elements of quality behavioral supports (e.g., best practices) are well-documented by the research community. The survey responses demonstrate the staff perceive the wellness or efficiency of the behavioral early intervention system in their school as inconsistent. The items in table 26 are organized in the following manner: items 1, 3-5, 7, and 9-10 provide staff perception of quality elements present, and items 2, 6, 8, and 11-13 focus on staff perception of wellness or efficiency of quality elements. Overall, staff demonstrate varied agreement with the presence of quality elements (e.g., best practices) in the school, as well as vary in their perception of efficiency in those quality elements. For example, 25% of staff disagree, 45% agree, and 24% neither agree nor disagree that "**Our school has clear definitions for behaviors that interfere with academic and social success."** In addition, 34% of staff agree, 38% disagree, and 23% neither agree nor disagree that "**My school has an effective early intervention process to meet the behavioral needs of struggling learners."** Such variation suggests staff do not agree that quality elements of behavioral support systems are present and whether these elements are working at an effective level.

Table 26: Percent Agreement on Perception of Behavioral Support Systems.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable or unknown
	%	%	%	%	%	%
1. Our school has clear definitions for behaviors that interfere with academic and social success.	**7.7%**	**18.8%**	**24%**	**38.5%**	**7.7%**	**3.4%**
2. Our school has a clear policy/procedure (e.g., flowchart) for addressing office-managed versus staff-managed behavior problems	**9.7%**	**27.7%**	**30.1%**	**22.3%**	**4.9%**	**5.3%**
3. I believe expected behaviors are taught directly to all students in our school's classrooms.	**4.9%**	**19.9%**	**13.6%**	**41.3%**	**18.4%**	**1.9%**
4. Our school policies and procedures describe and emphasize proactive, instructive, and/or restorative approaches to student behavior that are implemented consistently.	**2%**	**21.5%**	**26.5%**	**38%**	**8%**	**4%**

5. Faculty at our school are shown school-wide data regularly and provide input on universal foundations (e.g., expectations, acknowledgements, definitions, consequences) at least every school year.	**12.7%**	**44.9%**	**18.5%**	**14.1%**	**2.4%**	**7.3%**
6. If I feel that a student is exhibiting behavior problems in my class, I know where to access resources in the school that will help me manage that student's behavior more effectively.	**6.4%**	**15.2%**	**20.6%**	**43.6%**	**10.8%**	**3.4%**
7. My school has an effective early intervention process to meet the behavioral needs of struggling learners.	**8.3%**	**29.4%**	**23%**	**28.9%**	**4.9%**	**5.4%**
8. School-wide discipline (i.e., behavior, school safety, school climate) is one of the top three goals in the school improvement plan.	**4.5%**	**18.4%**	**27.4%**	**28.4%**	**9%**	**12.4%**
9. Our school has an established behavior intervention team.	**8.9%**	**26.1%**	**24.1%**	**27.6%**	**5.4%**	**7.9%**
10. Our school's behavior intervention team frequently (80 percent or more) provides appropriate and consistent guidance to staff on supporting student behavioral needs.	**12.9%**	**30.8%**	**21.9%**	**19.4%**	**4%**	**10.9%**
11. Staff at school frequently acknowledge students for positive behaviors.	**3.4%**	**7.8%**	**12.6%**	**46.6%**	**28.2%**	**1.5%**
12. School rules are applied equally for all students.	**11.7%**	**19.4%**	**17.5%**	**30.1%**	**17%**	**4.4%**
13. This school places a priority on teaching students strategies to manage their stress levels.	**5.9%**	**21.1%**	**27%**	**33.8%**	**7.4%**	**4.9%**

Finally, educators did not always agree as to whether their school maintained the components of a quality RTI design. Table 27 identifies the degree to which school staff agrees with statements regarding the presence of quality design elements standard in academic intervention supports. The majority of survey items (1, 3, 5-7) ask staff to identify the presence

of these design elements and items 2 and 4 are global measures of wellness or efficiency. The majority of survey participants vary in their agreement with statements regarding the presence of academic support systems. For example, 37% of participants disagree, 26% neither agree nor disagree, and 20% agree with **"My school has put together a library of effective, research-based intervention ideas for common student referral concerns such as poor reading fluency and defiant behavior."** Nearly 22% did not know or neither agree or disagree, 32% agree, 32% disagree with the statement, **"Our school has an intervention team (e.g., MTSS, pre-referral intervention team)".** And the participants also varied in perception of the academic supports as effective. For example, 31% of participants disagree, 26% neither agree nor disagree, and 27% agree with **"Our school's intervention team effectively gathers information about a student's needs and provides targeted supports (e.g., interventions have a prescribed length of time and dosage)."** The question to consider is, *if there exists a gap in an overarching understanding of available practice, how do classroom educators make decisions as to what to provide for intervention supports and for whom? And if supports will be expanded, what improvements need to be made in academic and behavioral support systems?*

Table 27: Percent Agreement on RTI Design Components.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	NA or Unknown (%)
1. My school has put together a library of effective, research-based intervention ideas for common student referral concerns such as poor reading fluency and defiant behavior.	**9.3%**	**28.8%**	**25.9%**	**17.6%**	**3.4%**	**15.1%**
2. My school follows up with teachers soon after a classroom intervention has been put into place to ensure that the instructor has been able to start the intervention and is implementing it correctly.	**11%**	**27.5%**	**24%**	**23.5%**	**3%**	**11%**
3. Our school has an intervention team (e.g., MTSS, pre-referral intervention team).	**7.1%**	**25.3%**	**23.2%**	**29.3%**	**2.5%**	**12.6%**

4.	**Our school's intervention team effectively gathers information about a student's needs and provides targeted supports (e.g., interventions have a prescribed length of time and dosage).**	**6.6%**	**24.9%**	**26.4%**	**23.9%**	**3%**	**15.2%**
5.	**My school uses local or research normed (e.g. CBM), or criterion-based benchmarks (e.g., DIBELS) to judge the magnitude of a student's delays in basic academic skills.**	**4.5%**	**16.2%**	**22.7%**	**30.3%**	**10.6%**	**15.7%**
6.	**My school's intervention team follows a formal problem-solving model during meetings.**	**7.1%**	**21.7%**	**34.3%**	**15.2%**	**3.5%**	**18.2%**
7.	**Our school has developed a response-to-intervention framework which outlines the detailed process of providing intervention in and out of the classroom.**	**6.8%**	**26%**	**30.7%**	**19.8%**	**3.1%**	**13.5%**

Self-Efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy, originally developed by cognitive psychologist Albert Bandura (1977), is defined as the beliefs an individual has about their abilities that can affect their behavior. In terms of schools, self-efficacy is the degree to which school staff believes that their abilities can impact the degree to which they can be motivated to work hard. The Temple University team used 6 items from the Denzine (2005) self-efficacy scale. Table 28 demonstrates the staff is certain in their belief that their teaching abilities are able to overcome various external factors. When it came to questions about their teacher training and their experience, the majority identified themselves as sufficiently prepared. For example, more than 82% agree with the statement, **"My teaching experience has given me the necessary skills to be an effective teacher**." Though when it came to conditions surrounding the students' home lives, staff was split. For example, 54% disagree, 27% agree, and 20% are neutral with the statement, "**If students aren't disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline."**

Table 28. Percent Agreement on External Self-Efficacy.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
1. My teaching experience has given me the necessary skills to be an effective teacher.	**0.5%**	**2.2%**	**14.7%**	**54.9%**	**27.7%**
2. Teachers are not a very powerful influence on student achievement when all factors are considered.	**42.5%**	**41.9%**	**6.5%**	**5.9%**	**3.2%**
3. If students aren't disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline.	**16.1%**	**37.1%**	**19.4%**	**24.2%**	**3.2%**
4. My teacher training program has given me the necessary skills to be an effective teacher.	**3.8%**	**14.3%**	**22%**	**44.5%**	**15.4%**

The nature of self-regard demonstrated above was also present when staff was asked a global question on self-confidence. In Table 29, staff felt a level of confidence in reaching the hardest to reach students: 48% self-report feeling somewhat confident and another 37% felt very confident, while 5% do not feel confident at all.

Table 29. Percent Staff Confident to Reach Hardest to Reach Students.

	Not Confident at all %	Not too confident %	Somewhat confident %	Very confident %	Not Sure %
And how confident are you that you can turn around your hardest to reach students by the end of the year?	**5.3%**		**47.9%**	**37.2%**	**9.6%**

Teacher Expectations

Table 30 demonstrates the staff's achievement expectations of low-, average-, and high-performing students. The staff express varied achievement expectations for low-performing students: 40% expect some college and four-year college, and 30% expect high school completion only. Staff is more uniform in their expectation with average-performing students—

over 75% expect a four-year degree or more. There is overwhelming agreement (97%) with expectation for high-performing students to graduate with minimally a four-year college degree or more.

Table 30. Percent Staff Expectations of Student Achievement.

As things stand now, how far in school do you think your students will get?

	Less than HS graduation	HS graduation or GED only	Some college	Two year degree	Four year college	Obtain a master's degree or equivalent	Obtain a PhD, MD or other advanced degree
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Low-performing students	**0.6%**	**29.6%**	**26.3%**	**14%**	**21.2%**		**8.3%**
Moderate-performing students		**1.7%**	**9%**	**13.5%**	**58.4%**		**17.4%**
High-performing students		**0.6%**	**2.2%**		**28.1%**		**69%**

Perspectives on Culture and Race

The diversity climate scale, which has five subscales, measures different components of diversity perspective taking: racial discomfort, awareness and knowledge, colorblindness, and deficit thinking. We consider the nature of these perspectives as comprising the range of culturally responsive perspective existing among staff and establishing a tone for how issues of culture and diversity are interpreted and responded to within the school context.

Racial Discomfort

Overwhelmingly, staff self-report racial comfort in talking about race (see Table 31). For example, nearly 75% of staff disagrees with the statement, "**Thinking or talking about race males me feel uncomfortable**." Furthermore, staff does not agree with statements that reinforce stereotypes about Asian students. For instance, nearly 83% disagree with the statement, "**Academically, Asian students do not have to work as hard as other students to get good grades."** However, there is a split among staff regarding their comfort in talking about race without feeling that they may offend others (33% disagree, 24% neither agree or disagree, and 42% agree with the statement **"I am not hesitant to talk about race for fear that someone will**

be offended if I say something wrong." These results suggest a hesitancy among staff to engage in conversations about racial equity.

Table 31. Percent Agree with Racial Discomfort Statements.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
1. Thinking or talking about race makes me feel uncomfortable.	34.3%	41.3%	13.6%	8.5%	2.3%
2. I am not hesitant to talk about race for fear that someone will be offended if I say something wrong.	10.6%	22.6%	24%	30.8%	12%
3. Academically, Asian students do not have to work as hard as other students to get good grades.	55.3%	28.6%	15%	1%	
4. Black students' cultural attitudes and styles of speech make it hard for me to teach them.	55.3%	30.3%	10.1%	3.4%	1%
5. Although I am hesitant to say so publicly, I believe that racial differences in intelligence may have a hereditary or genetic component.	65.5%	18.4%	12.6%	2.4%	1%

Awareness and Knowledge of Cultural Diversity

Staff self-report a level of awareness and knowledge on issues of diversity (see Table 32). For example, nearly 73% of staff agree "**I am often concerned that racial and ethnic minorities are treated unfairly."** Additionally, they were in agreement on learning about groups experiencing marginalization: over 68% agree "**I think there is a lot I can learn from the LGBTQ community**" and 93% agree "**I want to understand how people from other racial and ethnic groups see the world."**

When asked about cross-cultural experiences, educators shared that about 85% agreed with the statement, **"I often (at least once a week) spend time with a person of another racial or ethnic group than my own."** This suggests they identify having experiences that are cross-cultural. Additionally, staff note having close friendships with others from different racial/ethnic groups from their own: 40% agreed and 34% disagreed with the statement, **"my closest friends tend to be of the same racial or ethnic identification as myself."**

Table 32. Percent Agree with Awareness and Knowledge Statements.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
1. I am often concerned that racial and ethnic minorities are treated unfairly	1%	4.9%	20.5%	40.5%	33.2%
2. I think there is a lot I can learn from the LGBTQ community	3.5%	4%	23.8%	41.1%	27.7%
3. I believe all students at my school can learn.	0.5%		3.4%	22.9%	73.2%
4. I care about the experiences of members of racial and ethnic minority groups in the U.S.	0.5%	0.5%	4.9%	33.2%	61%
5. I want to understand how people from other racial and ethnic groups see the world.		0.5%	5.9%	37.3%	56.4%
6. Trying to be culturally responsive all the time is nice in theory, but the reality is that a teacher does not have time to be all things to all students.	29.8%	29.8%	22.7%	15.7%	2%
7. I often (at least once a week) spend time with a person of another racial or ethnic group than my own.		2.3%	11.5%	39.1%	47.1%
8. My closest friends tend to be of the same racial or ethnic identification as myself.	10.5%	24.4%	24.4%	33.7%	7%
9. I believe racist incidents occur, but I'm not convinced there is institutionalized racism.	38.4%	19.8%	36%	2.3%	3.5%

Colorblindness

In Table 33, the staff are split in maintaining perspectives of colorblindness regarding their students. For instance, nearly 45% of staff agree, 22% neither agree nor disagree, and 33% disagree with the statement, "**I try to ignore skin color in order to view minority students as individuals**." Similarly, the staff was split on the following statement, "**Sometimes I wonder**

why we can't see each other as individuals instead of race always being an issue": 51% agreed, 20% neither agree nor disagree, and 28% disagree. There is also varied agreement with the statement regarding noticing race; 39% agree, 25% neither agree nor disagree, and 36% disagree with the statement, "**I try not to notice a child's race or skin color in the classroom setting."**

Simultaneously, a good percentage of staff recognize omitting race will not solve racism; 44% of staff reporting disagreement with the statement, "**Racism would cease to exist if everyone would just forget about race and see each other as human beings."** This range of responses demonstrates the current thinking of staff that omitting race as an identity is not conducive to supporting student social and emotional learning. Staff also demonstrate a level of ambivalence regarding the need to be culturally responsive. For instance, in response to the statement, **"I am frustrated by how hard it is to be politically correct in our more diverse society,"** 55% of the staff disagreed, while 16% agreed.

Table 33. Percent Agree with Statements on Colorblindness.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
1. I try to ignore skin color in order to view minority students as individuals.	16%	17.5%	21.5%	19%	26%
2. Sometimes I wonder why we can't see each other as individuals instead of race always being an issue.	14.4%	14.4%	19.8%	29.7%	21.8%
3. The things that were done to people of color in the past in this country were terrible, but I am not sure it is the school's responsibility to make up for that.	28.1%	29.6%	28.6%	10.1%	3.5%
4. I try not to notice a child's race or skin color in the classroom setting.	16.2%	20.1%	24.5%	20.1%	19.1%
5. Latino students who speak English should refrain from speaking Spanish at school so they don't alienate other students or teachers.	50.2%	29.4%	14.9%	5.5%	
6. Racism would cease to exist if everyone would just forget about race and see each other as human beings.	25%	19.5%	21.5%	18%	16%

7.	I am frustrated by how hard it is to be politically correct in our more diverse society.	25.9%	29.4%	28.4%	11.7%	4.6%

Deficit Thinking

The concept of deficit thinking involves framing the behaviors of others as based in negative traits. In general, the staff are ambivalent about their perspectives on a variety of elements tied to deficit thinking. For instance, when asked about difference in disciplining tied to "boy behaviors," the staff were split: 55% disagree, 29% neither agree nor disagree, and 15% agree with the statement, "**Boys tend to be disciplined more often because they demonstrate behaviors more problematic than girls."** The school staff showed similar ambivalence when asked questions regarding schools as a structural mechanism playing a role in solving disadvantages: 70% disagree, 23% neither agree nor disagree, and 7% agree with the statement, "**Schools cannot be expected to overcome the disadvantages of race and poverty."**

Table 34. Percent Agree with Statements on Deficit Thinking.

		Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
1.	As an educator, I'm very limited in what I can do when students from disadvantaged neighborhoods (i.e., low-income) hold negative beliefs about schools	23.2%	43%	20.8%	11.1%	1.9%
2.	Boys tend to be disciplined more often because they demonstrate behaviors more problematic than girls.	27.5%	27.9%	28.9%	13.2%	2.5%
3.	Students of color from disadvantaged homes (e.g., low-income homes) just seem to show a lack of initiative.	45.6%	35.3%	15.7%	3.4%	
4.	It is important that students of color assimilate so that they can succeed in mainstream American culture.	29.7%	22.6%	35.9%	9.7%	2.1%

5.	**Schools cannot be expected to overcome the disadvantages of race and poverty.**	**35.3%**	**34.8%**	**23%**	**5.9%**	**1%**
6.	**The values and beliefs shared by those in disadvantaged neighborhoods tend to go against school values and beliefs about what makes up a good education.**	**31%**	**37.5%**	**24%**	**7%**	**0.5%**

Section 4: District and School Resources and Access Powered by Privilege

Access and availability of resources were a concern for all stakeholders in the NPS community. However, perception of how and why those resource needs were distributed differed by stakeholder role (parent, staff, teacher) and by race/ethnicity and income status. Most stakeholders in the school and community agree that resources are inequitably distributed and that dynamics related to race, ethnicity, and income status are perceived as the leading cause of academic disparities. In this section, we showcase findings in which stakeholders perceive the district and its schools privileging the needs and requests of parents that request specific resources, utilize advocates to receive additional services, and control governance structures such as the SGC (School Governance Council), and the parents representative of these groups tend to be White and/or higher income.

Across all members of the school community, and specifically among Black and Latinx school staff and parents, there was a shared a perception that the social capital and networks of higher income parents, as well as the cultural capital of being White operates in Norwalk as a force that other parents and school staff members find difficult to penetrate and withstand. A concern raised of such perceived privileging is whether it leads to a segregation of services, lack of diversity in all aspects of the school community (e.g., gifted/talented and AP/honors classes, teacher and school administrator diversity, etc.) and a hoarding of resources and services (e.g., special education, language services).

Wealthy parents are able to secure additional resources (e.g., PTA funds, advocates, curriculum, and time) and influence how these resources are allocated (e.g., SGC, PTA). In turn, previous NPS leadership is perceived to have prioritized the needs of parents who use advocates to request specific services and resources. For example, numerous stakeholders (e.g., school staff and parents) perceived some principals making explicit site-based decisions that maintained inequitable structures in gifted/talented and AP/honors enrollment, and discipline practices.

Other stakeholders simply tolerate systemic injustice and acts of explicit bias. Sometimes, these system injustices and acts of explicit bias are purposeful, as with refusing to translate documents for parents in languages other than English. Other times, the school is so pressured to meet the demands of wealthy White parents that available resources are stretched thin and distributed unevenly leaving little leftover for non-White children in the district. As one staff member said directly, “They are catering to the White families. That’s how my principal is and I think that’s a survival technique for [them].”

When inequities are raised, these stakeholders attribute the inequities of the resources and services and at times the disparities in student outcomes to deficits in the parental engagement patterns of non-White and less affluent families (e.g., “they don’t volunteer to join SGC,” “they don’t get enough votes to be on SGC because nobody knows them,” “they don’t support their kids’ education,” etc.).

The other pattern discussed in this section is the manner in which coded language emerged among school staff and parents in such a way that suggests stakeholders are either cognizant of hiding their language so as not to appear exclusionary or biased, or are coding language based on a uncertainty of what type of language to use. For instance, school staff members often talk about parents in coded language, lamenting that these parents—parents who live in South Norwalk for example, or parents who don’t speak English—don’t know how to engage the schools. Either way the presence of ongoing coded language raises concerns as to how the school staff and broader community will engage open forum dialogue on equitable

resource distribution and inclusion in various school practices. Overall, the pressure of parents with social and cultural capital historically powers the distribution of services, resources, program enrollment, PTA, SGC, and responses to inequalities within Norwalk Public Schools.

Theme 1: Gatekeepers of Resources and School Governance

Members of the Norwalk School District community agree that there is a power dynamic that exists within the district that is maintained by a core group of parents. The display of power is played out through the way things are talked about (or not), who has access to information, and how resources are utilized. These parents wield their power both at the local level—through excluding other parents from joining events, to the school level—by leveraging their influence to gain resources that directly benefit their children.

In topics ranging from attending school events to getting services for children, this group of power-wielding parents was discussed. However, discussions about how that power dynamic relates to issues of race and class were muted. Instead, participants referenced certain schools, certain communities, and used other local signifiers of race and class. For example, participants talked about "that part of town" or specific neighborhoods like "South Norwalk" to explain who has access to what.

The subject of race and class were at the heart of most conversations, and yet this was often a very implicit practice that the research team, unfamiliar with the implications of the indirect language, had to probe for clarity. Some participants noticed the absence of direct conversations around race and class. For example, one school staff member said, "We want to go colorblind. We'd rather talk about socioeconomics. We'd rather talk about where you live. We'd rather talk about everything, but we don't want to talk about the inequities that exist along the line of race."

The inequities that exist along the lines of race are evident particularly when describing the climate of the school community. Self-identified White parents were more likely to describe Norwalk schools as warm and welcoming. When asked if they felt the school was a welcoming space, one White parent said:

> So welcoming! It's a huge school. I've had a good experience with his teachers. I think that they made an effort to stay in close contact with their families . . . so I'm connected to the teachers, and I feel very welcome from the teachers.

However, self-identified Black and Latinx families, or families of children who were biracial reported a different dynamic. Instead, they felt the school was not a warm place and that they were not necessarily welcome. This notion is consist with previous survey data on culture and climate experiences (Tables 13-16) in which Black parents, specifically, identified a different experience with the school culture and climate:

> So my children are biracial. My husband and I are both biracial… like kind of feeling as if they're treated differently. I can't say that it's ever felt like a terribly warm experience. I don't know if that's really the school district or if it's, or if it's like the parents.

According to many staff and parent participants, it **is** the parents. In particular it is a group of parents who appear to have more access to information and also have the ability to influence

school resources in their favor. These parents were described as "gatekeepers" or "country club members" and they were described as having a "clique" that other parents found difficult to infiltrate. At the community level, these parents discouraged the participation of other parents in school activities. As one parent highlighted in their discussion of parent nights at schools:

> They have the nights, parent nights and things like that. But at least my experience is just, it hasn't, it just doesn't feel terribly warm. Maybe it just feels a bit forced or whatever or a bit clique-y. I don't know if there is a clique, if there are some gatekeepers. But it kind of felt that way, based on [my] experience**.**

The pervasive discussion of this clique of powerful parents occurred at all levels of the school community. There was frustration around how this group operated, using their power to gain additional resources for their children and hoarding information. Some parents suggested that there was a climate that discouraged engagement from other parents in order to maintain control. One parent suggested that these parents are more affluent which then allows them to influence their level of involvement in school-based activities:

> The schools that I'm involved in [there are] gatekeepers and they're actively involved in maintaining control... I know some of these people are like—have more money so they're, like, probably donating things, that can be involved.

This suggests a perception that the nature of economic capital and networks is a driver of influence in the school. This may be more prominent in schools in which groups of parents raise substantive amounts of funds through PTA and/or SGC activities. Across all races, parents felt that this core group made it difficult for them to participate fully in school activities. They suggested that the influential parents discouraged their involvement by actively keeping them out of information networks—forgetting to forward emails or not sharing information on social networking platforms like Facebook. One parent said:

> …it's always the same folks taking the lead, even if you want to volunteer…. They have their own little circle, and it's always the same country club mentality moms, that [say] 'You know what, oh, no, we don't do that, that way.'

The persuasive power of these parents was felt at the school level. School staff remarked that the parents were able to leverage their privilege to gain advantages for their children, a fact that school staff members felt helpless against. For example, one school staff member said:

> You have… parents who dictate what goes on in our building and then you have the other parents who are just trying to get their kid a good education… [They] have a friend on the board and they go downtown and principals don't want to hear that.

This staff member suggested that this influence impacts the school through fear, stating that, "Our principal is afraid of them. [They] can say whatever [they] wants, [they] afraid of those parents."

These powerful parents have access to resources, as well as friends who are able to help them leverage their influence. While everyone agreed on the existence of this influential parent

group, many participants were uncertain of the possibility to gain access to the group, and therefore gain access to relevant information they needed to make decisions for their child. For example, one parent said, "I feel like there is either—those in the know and then there's like everyone else. You're either in the loop, or you're out." Another parent suggested that the access these influential parents have is due to their history in the community saying, "It feels like you either know what's going on with the community as a whole because you've gone through it already or you grew up here, or you're a teacher, or you're related to a teacher or something, or you don't."

While there are organizations that should help parents feel more empowered to engage with the school, powerful parents were in control. Within the structure of Norwalk Public Schools, the School Governance Councils (SGC) and the Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) were described by parents and school staff as serving different roles. SGC focuses on operations of a given school, whereas the PTA focuses on fundraising. According to focus group participants, neither group is diverse, nor is either group welcoming to racial/ethnic minority and lower income parents.

In particular, according to descriptions from focus group participants, the SGC is a group overwhelmingly comprised of White women. Some parents, were explicit about the lack of diversity on the SGC saying, "can't we get, like, a parent that's not White on the SGC?" Another parent said, "I had an SGC meeting, a school governance council, which is a group of parents, administrators and community members that every school in Norwalk has one. It's all White people."

Members of the SGC hold considerable influence in the school community and so these positions are coveted, yet some parents suggested that there is no clear process to becoming part of this important school community organization. One family member said, "So part of another thing is that the SGC for [my school]. There's no names. There's nothing posted like all other schools. They're picked by [the principal]. I don't know. They have a meeting. I don't know their agenda. It's not transparent." In relation to the creation and maintenance of these school-based organizations, there is a perception that principals maintain the information and prioritize certain communities and their needs. Principals have autonomy over their budgets and allocate resources based on the school/principal's priorities.

School community members suggest that SGC members are overwhelmingly made up of White affluent parents. Not all schools have a parent coordinator. One parent said, "Your building has to decide if they want a parent coordinator. But a parent coordinator deals with the engagement of the parents." In this instance, the parent said the principal decides if they think a parent coordinator is necessary and, if so, only then are resources allocated to that position.

Stakeholders noted that the composition of PTA, SGC, and parent coordinators not only lacked racial diversity, but also lacked the linguistic diversity that is representative of the district. The lack of racial and linguistic diversity signals whose opinions and input matter within the structure of the district. The lack of linguistic diversity impacts the programming and planning, as well as parent engagement. One principal noted this dynamic:

> I would say that it was, that parents communicated to me that they had a, they didn't feel comfortable in the school. They didn't feel connected. They had a difficult time. Part of it was very specific to language, and not, our Spanish speaking families not feeling as if they had an advocate, and not having things translated, basic things that should occur.

Where there are no formal roles that act as a parent advocate for diverse communities, racial/ethnic minority staff plays the role as a bridge between families and the school. For example, one staffer commented:

> Basically, they were appreciative that I was there full-time, that I was bilingual, that I was able to communicate with the parents. One of the classroom teachers told me [redacted], you are the only ESL teacher that has come to this building that told us about [program].

This bilingual teacher fills in to help bridge communication gaps between families and the school, but this invisible labor isn't sustainable as a strategy to reach all families. Some schools are mindful of creating formal systems to support their diverse staff. One school administrator explained:

> Some schools have parent engagement coordinators. Some schools do not. Some schools have a larger percentage of bilingual staff, and so, you know, I have made sure that we have staff here that speak Creole because we have a rising percentage of families that speak French Creole, and I don't know that, that's happening everywhere, but I know that there are schools where it doesn't happen.

The lack of diverse staff, both racially and linguistically, create another barrier for parental engagement. Without other cultural representatives, diverse families who try to engage with school organizations are met with resistance.

> I remember going to one table, and no one would even acknowledge me. And they said this table is not for you. And I looked, and it wasn't my culture, so I guess I couldn't volunteer because it was not my culture.

Another parent said, "It's uncomfortable and doesn't make you feel like you always want to be involved. Or it feels like maybe you shouldn't be involved because there's these people that don't want you, really."

Theme 2: Communication Gaps Create Limited Access and Information Hoarding

Communication varies in NPS and impacts the access the school community has to information and in the quality of the information that is shared. Most parents reported difficulty accessing information about school processes and resources. Even when parents do know, they suggest that others probably don't have the same information. For example, one White parent, when talking about choosing a school for her child said:

> A lot of people don't know you can transfer schools. Well, I feel like a lot of people don't know they can transfer schools. But—I don't feel like Norwalk publicizes or lets parents know, hey, if you're unhappy at your neighborhood school or wherever, you can choose to go somewhere else provided there's room. So most people don't know that.

Information is not publicized and hard to know—for all parents. Some schools have systems for frequent communication. In these schools, families receive regular and high-quality communication:

> They always elicit like information from parents. There is a weekly newsletter that Rowayton puts out, like, every single Sunday, you know, where we can just get information.

Not all families have this level of access. Black and Latinx families suggest that it is especially hard for them to get information and attribute issues of race, class, and language to the information gap. This idea was echoed by school staff who spoke about race and class indirectly when saying, "In [school name], if one person knows, they all know. For parents from District 99 which are mostly housing projects, [they] don't know about certain resources because people don't tell them."

Without formal positions like parent coordinator, and with a lack of diverse staff that speak languages other than English, it is unclear who holds the responsibility of informing parents of school processes. In some schools, there are newsletters that go out to families, however, other schools with different populations would need to take a different approach. One school staff member spoke about realizing that parents don't read their email and need to be called in order to share information:

> I see parents that we need to call them all the time because they don't read their emails. They don't see the news. They don't know the papers that we send home. The kids sometimes even with speaking a new language, they don't know what is the news or what's happening, or why they have to do it, to tell my parents to do it. Because they're the ones that have to go home and show the parents, no, you need to do this. You need to sign this.

How then do families find out about what's going on in schools? With few parent coordinators and limited bilingual staff, Black (this includes Haitian families) and Latinx families have few allies within the school that help them gain access to the resources they need. One Black parent shared a conversation with a White parent that yielded important information she did not know about school choice.

> I was talking to another woman who's White and I said wait a minute. She said 'I'm going to get my daughter into [redacted]'. I said I didn't even know that [redacted] considered themselves a Norwalk Public School, because… it is South Norwalk…. I want my daughter to go to the best school. How do I get into [redacted]?

Some Black parents suggested that regular conversations with White parents keep them informed. For example, one Black parent explained the strategies she used to learn about resources for her child:

> I live in South Norwalk. I think we have limited knowledge about the school system and what's going on. But recently I've gained some White friends who are more on the affluent side. And I'm so glad that their children, one of their children, is [my child]'s

> age. So I'm like, okay, tell me what's out there, okay. And they happen to know a wealth more, way more than if I would ask one of my neighbors in South Norwalk. And I'm like, how do you know this information? Well, they know somebody who knows somebody, and I guess money talks to money and money doesn't talk to South Norwalk.

Affluent White parents know a "wealth" more than their neighbors in South Norwalk. This knowledge then stays in the community of wealth ("money talks to money") within particular communities in Norwalk. Frequently, participants spoke about neighborhoods as a proxy for speaking about race and class. One school staff member noted that this conversation about neighborhoods holds unspoken racist assumptions:

> Our parents, in the Hispanic community, as well as the African American community do not feel as part of this whole family. Because there's this perception or—judgment is passed on—oh, well, they're from South Norwalk. So what does that mean? Because I'm from South Norwalk, you don't expect much from me? Quite frankly, it's racial profiling. It's the underlying of, 'let me tippy-toe and let me say it this way,' but quite frankly, it's a racist remark.

Communication is central in the organizational health of the district. Stakeholders experience varying levels of communication from their schools and the district. Schools in communities with families from higher socioeconomic levels are perceived to receive more frequent and effective communication. These families report stronger senses of a school community. Black, Latinx, and low-income families reported feeling like they do not have access to information. When trying to bridge communication gaps, they reported feeling unwelcome. Linguistic barriers pose challenges for schools and the district. Schools frequently fail to translate materials for families who speak languages other than English, which decreases their connection with the school and limits their participation in their children's education.

Accessing Resources: Special Education

Communication in NPS is challenging, especially when parents try to navigate structures in relation to Special Education and Gifted Education programming. White students are more likely than their racially diverse peers to be placed in advanced programs at elementary schools and advanced courses at the middle and high school level. This observable disproportionality seems to be based on several factors. First, some White and/or affluent families know how to engage the systems and are able to secure additional resources to ensure that their children access opportunities and resources. Second, barriers exist that generally keep non-White and/or low-income families from gaining access to these opportunities.

This disparity is especially notable in the ways that parents access special educational services for their children. According to some school staff, some affluent White parents come to IEP meetings with additional resources. As one school staff member said, "I think White parents have the wherewithal to come with an advocate." Another school staff member stated, "I do think that the squeaky wheel gets the oil. I don't know if it's always parents of color that are getting it."

Parents of color are not the squeaky wheel because they often do not know what resources are available, nor do they understand how to access the resources that are available. Families noted a lack of support from the school/district in getting their child the services they need. But school staff suggested that parents often don't know how to engage the schools to get the services they need. One notable example of this is the use of advocates:

> I think that there needs to be a better way for parents to understand how services are obtained. I don't know how. But I also think that sometimes it's just… you know parents also don't know how to advocate either.

The language of "advocacy" appears in many ways throughout interviews and focus groups. Parents expect schools to advocate for services based on their experiences with a child. But schools expect parents to advocate for services and, when necessary to secure outside advocates to force the school to get the service the child needs. Advocates as a resource exemplifies an educational service provider that many parents may not be aware could support them with their student needs. Yet not all parents know about advocates and certainly aren't aware that they need to secure this educational resources *before* the approach schools to talk about services for their child. For parents who do not speak English, navigating this terrain is especially challenging. One school staff member explains:

> ... it's very daunting for a parent who one) doesn't speak the language, two) doesn't feel like they have the education to even be there, and three) if you're sitting at a table with the principal, the SPED teacher, the nurse I mean it's pretty daunting to sit at a table and then hear those reports that are so filled with jargon that you don't quite know what it is they're saying and you may just say -- and you might just hear, oh, services but you don't really know what the services are and how do those services really translate to your student.

Without an advocate, children are at risk of not getting the supports they need. School staff routinely says that parents don't know that they are expected to ask for these things. As one staff member tellingly said, "If you're not asking us to spend more money on your kid, we're not going to offer. And when teachers ask to spend more money on a certain kid, because the parents can't or won't or don't then they say—no, too bad!"

Getting services for a child is challenging generally because of all the jargon that is used. Parents who don't speak English or who may not feel well versed in this discourse might be intimidated at meetings making it difficult for them to advocate. Yet, schools insist that parents must play this role and that they don't carry much weight in securing the right resources for children without parent involvement. One school staff member states that even their voice is not heard in requesting services for some children:

> What I've found is when the special education team, at the building level, advocates for a student saying—look, this parent isn't in a position to advocate for this student, so we're going to advocate. Our advocacy is just not as strong as a parent or an advocate. So when we say—look, this kid really needs X, Y, and Z, here's the data, here's why we think that, the District is much less likely to provide those services

> than if a professional advocate came in and said, this kid needs X, Y, and Z, or if the parent says, I think my kid needs X, Y, and Z.

This idea of outside pressures, outside of student need, influence the district to provide services. As one [White?] parent said, "special ed students are co-taught in a classroom. And so that was it, and that's what everybody got. So I said, hey, you know what, it's time to get a lawyer, which I did." This type of resource is an expense many families can not afford. One staff member explained how advocates work:

> In special education, there are advocates, like, people whose job it is to come in and advocate for the parent and the student, but that's expensive. And I think some of them charge $100 plus an hour or so. It's not nothing. It's not $20. And so the parents that can afford that bring advocates and when there's an advocate, the district is just so much more likely to give the parent whatever they're asking for. And to go above and beyond. The district is so much more likely to fulfill the parents' requests and then go beyond. When parents don't have advocates, they get much less. And it's not even just having an advocate; it's knowing how to advocate for yourself.

Parents who have the resources to afford an advocate are able to get resources for their child. Without prior knowledge of an advocate position, some parents may attend meetings to get services for their children alone. One Black staff member said that the disparity means that Black and Latinx parents often get minimal supports for their child:

> I've heard about PPTs where parents have brought their advocates and their lawyers and you know? And they're getting everything that they want. And then meanwhile you have someone who looks like you or I and they just need a little… you know?

Another school staff member stated that wealthy White parents get more resources than the accommodation for their child requires:

> I have kids, wealthy White kids, whose parents are good advocates, who hire advocates, who are getting more services than they would ever need. I have data to show that they don't need some of the services they're getting. And they still get it, because it's too hard to get them to—it's too hard to fight.

As one staff member explained, a common accommodation these parents seek is to get their child more time on tests:

> As a school counselor I especially see the influx of students, especially White families requesting 504s. We jump right over SRBI and go straight to 504s and a lot of times it's because they can get extra time on the SATs.

Also noted by focus group participants is the impact of when school and district staff accommodate the needs of these parents. Though school staff are required to provide responses and make accommodations to such requested needs, it does take their time and attention away from other students:

> Parents who can advocate for their kids get way more services than the parents who can't. And when an advocate says, 'we want you working with this kid one-on-one, a half hour a day', now I have to join two other groups together and make one bigger group. So I have a half hour, where I can work with this kid one-on-one—my time is finite. So if I give one kid more time, I have to give some other kids less time, and the kid who gets more time is normally White, and the kids who get less time are normally not. Because their parents don't know that they could ask for one-on-one services, or they don't realize that their kid was in a group of three, and now they're in a group of five, because I've combined two groups. And that's much less effective, but they don't—I don't have to tell the parents I combined those groups, because I wrote it as small group, and it's still a small group. So these are the things where they get the short end of the stick.

Another staff member described how the saturation of resource response to parents with advocates has left primarily Black and Latinx students with not getting appropriate access to supports:

> I have a kid now, whose parents are not in a position to advocate, don't understand that they could get more—I have a student right now and they're—I was like, I think they need to be in this specific classroom, in this other school, because it's—meets—it's better for their needs. And they're like, oh, well there isn't room in that class. And I'm like, it doesn't matter if there is room in the class, you have to find a place for this kid. If this kid had an advocate, we—they would have made another class for him by now. They would have developed a program for him, in order to keep him in the District.

While there is awareness that affluent, White parents have knowledge and resources that is not readily available to other Norwalk parents, little is done to limit their influence or to move toward equity of resource allocation for all students. There are also few efforts to support parents to let them know how to leverage their power to obtain resources for their children. Instead, school staff members often blame parents for their lack of involvement. When educators were asked about the disparities in the district, some assign blame to parents and their inability to advocate for their children:

> So you have the same level of kid with the same problem, and one is getting a different treatment, not because the teacher intends it to, but because sometimes the parents don't know to reach out, and sometimes if they do know, they can't, because they don't have a phone, or they literally can't get to school to tell you the problem.

Another educator argues that students get treated differently because their parents don't know any better even when they are shown the disparity. However, this argument presumes that showcasing the disparity represents knowing the cause of the disparity, particularly the intricacies of how it happens:

> I just think parents, knowing that there is a gap that exists is the first thing and a lot of parents don't know. And it could be just their own ignorance. I don't say that in a bad way. It's just not knowing. Just not knowing. I know for a building level that I/we have

> sent e-mails out to families about the achievement gap and what it means and defined it in a way that families can understand it in layman's terms, you know.

Staff also described physical barriers that prevent parents from accessing services for their children. For example, resources are located in one community and transportation options are limited. This impedes low-income families' ability to access services and resources. For example, one staff member said:

> I don't think parents here all get what they need to be collaborators, because this is the only—like, if your child has special needs and they're in preschool, this is where they would go, and [the service center is not] geographically located in an accessible place. We are nowhere near, we are miles from the nearest like, public transportation hub.

Overall, transportation, lack of information, and lack of financial resources put some families at risk of getting resources for their child. Yet, schools also serve as a risk factor when teachers are not always able to advocate successfully for their students nor are they able to escape the dictates of wealthy White families who hire advocates to ensure their children obtain services and supports—a situation that divides teachers' time inequitably.

Accessing Resources: Gifted and Talented Program

For some parents, schools act as an additional risk condition in learning about and being involved in gifted, talented, and AP/honors programs**.** Enrollment in advanced courses is an observable disproportionality in NPS. White students are more likely than their racially diverse peers to be placed in gifted programs by the third grade and advanced courses in middle and high school. Numerous staff describe the nature of this pattern:

> …we're now starting to look at the students that are in the program and what representation of [redacted] is there in the IB Diploma program and it's not a good representation of [redacted] at all. It's 80% White I would say. And then when you look at our numbers [we are] 50% Hispanic, I mean it just doesn't bode well for equity and access and inclusion.

Another staff member shared:

> We're looking at 24% of our students are White, but 40 something percent of the seats occupied in high-level classes are White students, 15% of our students are Black, 9% of the seats occupied in those classes are Black or African American students… Then when certain kids are getting put into accelerated classes, what they're exposed to academically in those classes versus what students in some lower-level classes might be exposed to, the gaps develop over time. It's how much you've been taught, how you've taught, what you've been taught.

When educators are asked to what they attribute this disproportionality, they point to economics. Again, parents who can afford more, get more:

> It's all economics. If you can pay for a tutor your child will do better. It's because you paid for a tutor. If you can't, you have to rely on peer tutoring. I think people's experiences are based on what their access is, and the access is based on economics, not about intention. There's a disparity between White students, Black students, Hispanic, and Latino students. I think obviously, wealth is a factor in terms of what students have access to in terms of resources. A test like the SAT is frequently not just a test of aptitude but a test of how much tutoring you can afford.

Parents who don't ask for more resources don't get them. Parents who can't afford to pay for their own supplemental resources lose out as well and while educators suggest that is it not the intention of the school, district, and teacher to perpetuate these inequities, little is done to create a level playing field in the face of known economic disparities:

> Within the district, there is incredible wealth disparity, so we have students who live in $3 million [houses] on Long Island Sound and we have students who live in housing projects that are problematic as any sort of public housing in any city. That level of disparity and I think, sometimes, there is a sense of kids from certain areas have access to certain things and kids from other areas don't have access. I think that's an underlying feeling that, sometimes, I think students experience in the building.

Accessing Resources: Language Services

Some students in Norwalk have access to tutors and paid advocates. Some students don't even have access to translated materials. In fact, this was one issue that came up often in focus groups and interviews: the disparity that exists because information isn't readily available to parents who speak languages other than English.

Norwalk is a growing district with many different languages being spoken. However, many people say that materials are often not translated into the languages of parents in the community. This creates another barrier to getting access to information. One staff member explained that when they tried to get translations for parent materials in a different language, they were turned away:

> I have gone inside central office in my professional situation because I had Creole-speaking families who could not read documentation, because they refuse to put it in a language that they could read. I went in central office to try to help that family out. They said, no, we only do Spanish."

While Spanish is one of the dominant languages spoken in the district, it is not the only one. Also, there is no investment in having staff members who are bilingual to support these parents:

> I have to say my view is very like in two points because of the language that's mostly in our school. I know there is getting—we're getting more and more as Spanish speaking parents around the city. And I think that we need to have more people to have the bilingual together because parents—I feel that parents feel more comfortable with your own language to speak about it. And sometimes that gets like

> a barrier between a school and parents because if the teacher or someone is there to help them and doesn't speak their own language it's they're getting very like isolated. Like they can't have the same communication with the teacher.

One Spanish speaking parent noticed the discrepancy as well:

> I speak English well enough and, like, our first language at home is English, because my kids don't speak Spanish and neither does my husband. I feel like if I need to find out something, I'll figure it out and I'll find out. But I do wonder about the non-English speakers, how they figure out anything at [our school], really, because not too much is given out so easily to them.

Building the capacity of schools to be able to communicate with families so they would understand how to access resources and accelerated course work is not a priority. In fact, while many educators agree that they need to do more to support families who speak languages other than English, they suggest that there is no effort from the district office to help them do so:

> [I] feel like teachers, we're always trying to do our best to reach out to our families but unfortunately I think the—there hasn't been enough of a directive with that from central office.

Linguistic barriers pose challenges for schools and the district. Schools frequently fail to translate materials or provide other supports for families who speak languages other than English. Yet, when families are unable to advocate for their children, they are blamed for the lack of engagement. It is not surprising then who does well in NPS. As one educator said:

> We basically send a message to students that only certain students are allowed to succeed in this school and that's not the message that we want to send. One of the things we've also looked at is we're an IB school, IB diploma program. We just started that, I think, three years ago. If we look at the students who are in the IB diploma program if you had to guess, who would you think it is?

Theme 3: Deficit Thinking as a Barrier to Equity

As described earlier in the report, deficit thinking ideology serves to explain patterns of limited outcomes based on presumption of cultural group deficits (e.g., missing information, not advocating, prioritizing education, etc.) and/or genetic deficits (e.g., inherent cognitive limitations based on race/ethnicity). A common framing that emerged among school staff and some parents is a deficit thinking framing in explaining why less affluent and non-White students are experiencing disproportionate outcomes.

There is an awareness of economic disparities in the community and a belief that those who have more get more, yet when asked why some of the disparities exist in Norwalk, some school staff members suggested that parents were the problem or that gaps of inequity could be bridged with parent supports:

> It's all about the "pieces missing at home"... So I think as we identify more and more of those factors, the pieces that are missing at home and if we can provide them, then we, at least, give them an opportunity or a chance to compete with their peers.

What, to educators, are the pieces that are missing at home? Again and again, school staff point to wealth as being the biggest disparity. When discussing which students thrived during COVID remote learning, teachers pointed to those students who had their own quiet spaces to learn, a condition they know is not available to all students:

> What we see in the time of COVID in remote learning, who's having the best experience in remote learning, and typically, it's the students who have a home where they can have a quiet space to do the work and the network's not cutting out. That's not the experience of all of our students and I think that ties into the question before about socioeconomic disparity and how that plays into achievement gaps.

School staff members are well aware of the advantages wealth gives some children. The resources they seem to offer other parents is simply to follow the model of the affluent families, even though they realize that it is not possible. For example, one school staff member explained the ideal conditions for students to do well during remote learning.

> So if parents are, are home, they're supporting the homework, they have a quiet environment. They're providing books for example, or having books accessible, it really sets a tone of climate and expectation for students. Whereas I know that we have students who live with multi-families in one apartment, like, they sublet rooms. It's not an apartment for a whole. So obviously, that student is not going to have the same advantage of having a quiet corner or desk to do their homework or not a collection of books to choose from for independent reading that some of their peers might have.

A student who does not have these conditions will not do well in Norwalk. As another staff member also mentioned that home conditions preclude children from doing well:

> I do think kids who come from a home where both parents are college-educated and there are financial resources in the home and the student goes home. I think about Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. I don't know if you're familiar with that. I think about students who go home and it's a question of whether the heats going to get turned off, what kind of meal you're going to have, or whether things are going to be chaotic in the home. The impact that has on a student's ability to focus on getting homework done in the right time. Get it done to the same level that somebody else who maybe has a different environment at home. I think that's a key factor.

School staff members know what children need to do well and seem to feel like their hands are tied when it comes to children whose families are not wealthy or whose families do not speak English. One school staff member said, "[Parents] are afraid. They are illiterate themselves. They don't know. They have so much need."

Again, some of the needs are known and not addressed. While school staff members know that some parents don't speak (or read English) they don't offer supports: translations, Spanish speaking parent coordinators. They understand that parents may not read English and may not read emails and yet they continue to send communications home in English. So, in many way diverse parents are punished for not behaving as wealthy White parents:

> It's like two groups. Like the kids that are born and raised here with parents or maybe grandparents already here, that they know how the system works, how you have to do it, where you can go to ask for help. And there is this group that just came here. They just don't know anything at all. And then you need to help them more.

School staff members don't know how to help parents who are new to the Norwalk, or those that "don't know anything at all." And, because school staff are spending a lot of time helping parents who **do** know how to work the system, they seem fatigued. They are doing a lot but it isn't helping. However, what they are doing is really only to the benefit of one group: affluent White families.

Theme 4: Positive Regard Towards District During Pandemic

Despite many of the challenges, some educators and parents expressed hope that the district was doing the right thing, especially in relation to responses to the COVID pandemic. One principal noticed that providing free breakfast and lunch for all was having a positive impact:

> …I mentioned the after-school program. I know that most recently we have qualified for, like, free breakfast and lunch for all students in the building. And I'm noticing that it's actually making such a huge difference in some of the kids that I just—I know that their parents are struggling. They're also taking bag lunches, but they could be potentially dinners for these families and so I watched some kids take two bags. So physical needs, first of all, 'cause those are things that we have to meet.

Parents praised NPS in its efforts to provide these resources to support student learning during the pandemic. Physical resources had been distributed to students across all schools:

> I'd have to say the school is doing an excellent job providing resources to some, to try to create parity. And I think it's really important. I mean, we're reaping the benefits of not having to make school lunches because everyone in the school system...

Yet, again the evidence suggests that parents who had more did more for their child:

> And so I went out and I ordered our own curriculum. And you know, I knew how to access results and talk like, talk to teachers about you know, the software—where is my child? Okay, she's here. So I'm going to order lessons and help her move forward. But there are other kids in the class who I've noticed you know, on the Zooms, they are right there with answers. But maybe their parents don't also have a different textbook they're using with them at home.

Parents with financial resources and employment flexibility are able to supplement resources for their children during the COVID pandemic. That includes instructional resources. But these parents were already in well-resourced schools. Other parents suggested that not every school or child had what they need to succeed:

> It's just it feels like there's a very wide divide between my kids that, honestly, have everything they need and more, and some of the kids that I see that don't.

Another parent noted that they feel their school and district is better situated than surrounding communities in providing supports:

> If you literally see within Fairfield County, you look at Stanford, Norwalk, and Bridgeport and the school systems, they are not anywhere as good as, next door, like we live three minutes down the road from Westport. And the school, supposedly however the school system or the scores or whatever are, seem to be, seems to be higher.

Overall, the discussion of the district's response during the pandemic, in particular since the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, is perceived as being responsive to the diverse needs across the district.

Appendix A: Survey Demographics

Staff Survey Demographics

Table 35: Percent Race/Ethnicity Demographics.

	N	%
White	143	70%
Black	18	12.6%
Asian	5	2.5%
Native American	1	.5%
Latinx	19	9.3%
Multiracial	8	4%
Other	10	5%
Total	204	

Table 36: Percent Gender Identification.

	N	%
Male	39	19.9
Female	137	69.9
Nonbinary	3	1.5
Other	1	.5
Rather not State	16	8.2
Total	196	

Table 37: Percent Years in Education Field.

	N	%
1 to 3 years	15	7.7
4 to 6 years	19	9.7
7 to 9 years	16	8.2
More than 10 years	146	74.5
Total	196	

Table 38: Percent Role in School/District.

	N	%
Teacher	189	65.9
Teaching aide/assistant/school aide	24	8.4
School administrator	14	4.9
Guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker	15	5.2

Program director, coordinator	4	1.4
Other	36	12.5
District Administrator	5	1.7
Total	287	

Table 39: Percent Grade Levels.

	N	%
Pre-K	20	7.6
Kindergarten	11	4.2
1st Grade	11	4.2
2nd Grade	7	2.7
3rd Grade	9	3.4
4th Grade	9	3.4
5th Grade	13	5.0
6th Grade	17	6.5
7th Grade	14	5.3
8th Grade	31	11.8
9th Grade	27	10.3
10th Grade	14	5.3
11th Grade	17	6.5
12th Grade	14	5.3
Ungraded	22	8.4
Not Applicable	26	9.9
Total	262	

Parent Survey Demographics

Table 40: Percent Race/Ethnicity Demographics.

	N	%
White	678	40.7%
Black	227	13.6%
Asian	114	6.8%
Native American	43	2.6%
Latinx	426	25.6%
Multiracial	86	5.1%
Pacific Islander	17	1%
Other	75	4.5%
Total	1666	

Table 41: Percent Employment Status Demographics.

	N	%
Full Time	737	57%
Part Time	201	15.5%
Self-employed	95	7.3%
Stay at home spouse	179	13.8%
Unemployed	76	5.9%
Retired	6	.5%
Total	1294	

Table 42: Percent Languages Spoken at Home.

	N	%
1 language	741	56.7%
2 languages	484	37%
3 or more languages	82	6.3%
Total	1307	

Table 43: Percent Income Level.

	N	%
$0-25,000	157	12.3%
$25,001-50,000	183	14.3%
$50,001-75,000	137	10.7%
$75,001-100,000	122	9.5%
$100,001-150,000	178	13.9%
$150,001-200,000	132	10.3%
$200,001 or more	138	10.8%
Rather not state	231	18.1%
Total	1278	

Table 44: Percent Highest Level of Education.

	N	%
Less than high school	50	3.9%
High School	248	19.2%
Associate's degree	176	13.6%
Bachelor's degree	398	30.8%
Master's degree	289	22.4%
Ph.D., M.D., or JD degree	45	3.5%
Other	87	6.7%
Total	1293	

Appendix B: Additional Parent Survey Items

Another set of survey items focused on capturing parents' satisfaction with the school their child attended last year, as well as the academic standards, and order and discipline in the school from last year. Tables 45-48 provide the percent of satisfaction with school among parents by race/ethnicity. Across all groups, over 80% of parents are satisfied with the school their child attended last year, as well as the academic standards, and order and discipline. Of potential interest is the item on academic standards, as for each racial/ethnic group that item maintained the highest dissatisfaction rating: although the dissatisfaction rate does not go beyond 10% with any group.

Table 45: Percent **White** Parents Satisfied with School, Standards, and Discipline.

	Satisfied (%)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)
With the school your child attended last year? (1)	84.2%	8.8%	7%
With the teachers your child had last year? (2)	87.6%	6.5%	5.9%
With the academic standards of the school? (3)	80.6%	10.7%	8.8%
With the order and discipline at the school? (4)	83.1%	9.6%	7.3%

Table 46: Percent **Black** Parents Satisfied with School, Standards, and Discipline.

	Satisfied (%)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)
With the school your child attended last year? (1)	83.9%	8.8%	7.2%
With the teachers your child had last year? (2)	87.8%	7.4%	4.8%
With the academic standards of the school? (3)	83.1%	7.9%	9%
With the order and discipline at the school? (4)	82.7%	10.3%	7%

Table 47: Percent **Asian** Parents Satisfied with School, Standards, and Discipline.

	Satisfied (%)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)
With the school your child attended last year? (1)	85.2%	8.3%	3.7%
With the teachers your child had last year? (2)	87.6%	9.5%	2.9%
With the academic standards of the school? (3)	85.6%	7.7%	6.7%
With the order and discipline at the school? (4)	87.6%	8.6%	3.8%

Table 48: Percent **Latinx** Parents Satisfied with School, Standards, and Discipline.

	Satisfied (%)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)
With the school your child attended last year? (1)	86.5%	8%	5.4%
With the teachers your child had last year? (2)	89.9%	5.3%	4.8%
With the academic standards of the school? (3)	87.4%	7%	5.6%
With the order and discipline at the school? (4)	86.3%	7.2%	6.4%