

Equity Audit

Sudbury Public
Schools

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Equity Audit: Sudbury Public Schools

Executive Summary

What is equity analysis? Equity analysis is beyond disaggregated data by student groups. A key component of equity analysis is understanding how our systems impact students. Some studies claim that disproportionality doesn't exist because students of specific groups have higher rates of "bad" behavior and lower achievement. These studies are rooted in racially biased frameworks and try to claim that certain qualities are either inherent to student groups or justify school inequities because these inequities also exist outside the school system. Our analysis is grounded in how the school system impacts students and should not be replicating societal inequities. This report focuses not only on the quantitative analysis through data provided but on the qualitative analysis of school policies and their implementation.

Research Questions:

1. School Services (Title 1, Tier 2 Support, Special Education, English Language)
 - a. Does disproportionality exist in any service assignment compared to their enrolled populations?
2. Student Achievement (Term 2 Grades, MCAS Scaled Score)
 - a. How does achievement intersect with Tiered service assignment?
 - b. Are there differences in achievement by racial/ethnic groups?
3. School Discipline
 - a. Are there any identifiable trends in student discipline data? How can discipline policies be improved?
4. Connectedness Survey (Ephriam Curtis Middle School)
 - a. How do student experiences differ by racial/ethnic identity, gender identity, and grade?

Top Recommendations:

- School Services
 - Review assignment practices to tiered services to identify sources of racial bias.
 - Analyze special education assignment to understand if students of color are being over-referred in specific disability categories or in certain grades.
- Student Achievement
 - Create measures of effectiveness to understand if supplemental support efforts are having the intended impact.
 - Consider adding bilingual services to support students' multilingual development.
- School Discipline
 - Examine the details of the incidents that are leading to the disproportionate application of exclusionary discipline towards students with disabilities.
 - Use the SIS for all behavior tracking, regardless of the type or level of infraction.
- Student Connectedness
 - Follow-up climate surveys with race and gender-specific focus groups to create a more hospitable environment, especially for Black and transgender students.
 - Do not discount groups with small n-sizes. Their experiences matter as much as larger groups.

Research:

- Pertinent reference research studies are included as resources in each section of the report.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
School Services	4
- Tiered Services Supports.....	4
- Special Education Assignment.....	6
- EL Program Assignment.....	7
- School Services Recommendations and Research.....	7
Achievement	8
- Intersection between ELA MCAS Scores and Tier 2 Literacy Services.....	8
- Term 2 Grades by Racial/Ethnic Groups.....	9
- MCAS Achievement Intersection with Economic Status.....	10
- Achievement Recommendations and Research.....	10
Discipline	11
- Discipline Recommendations and Research.....	14
Student Connectedness	15
- Do you feel welcomed by adults at our school?.....	15
- Do you believe the rules and consequences at our school are fair?.....	17
- How many adults do you have a positive relationship with?.....	19
- Student Connectedness Recommendations and Research.....	20

Equity Audit: Sudbury Public Schools

School Services

Research Question:

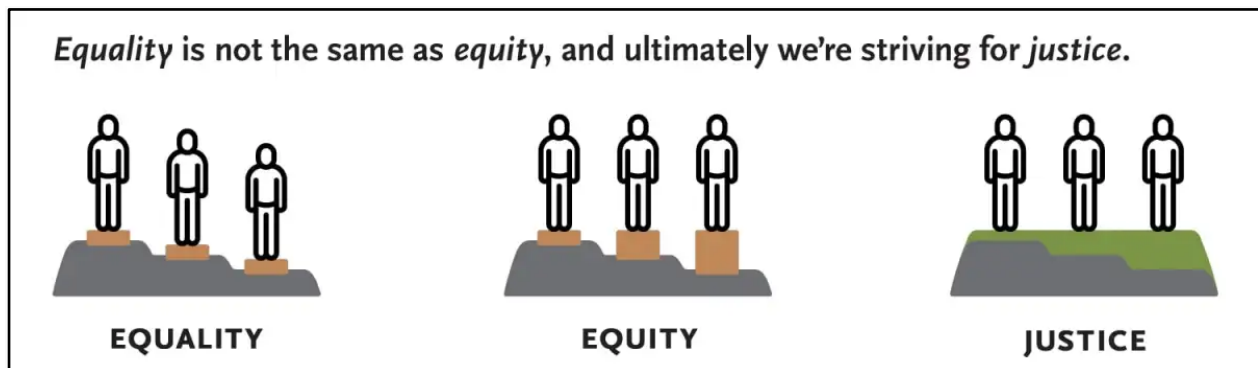
- Does disproportionality exist in any service assignment compared to their enrolled populations?

Sample:

- All schools (Ephraim Curtis Middle School, Josiah Haynes, General John Nixon, Peter Noyes, Israel Loring)
- Demographics Current SY 2021-2022 [Data provided March 2022]

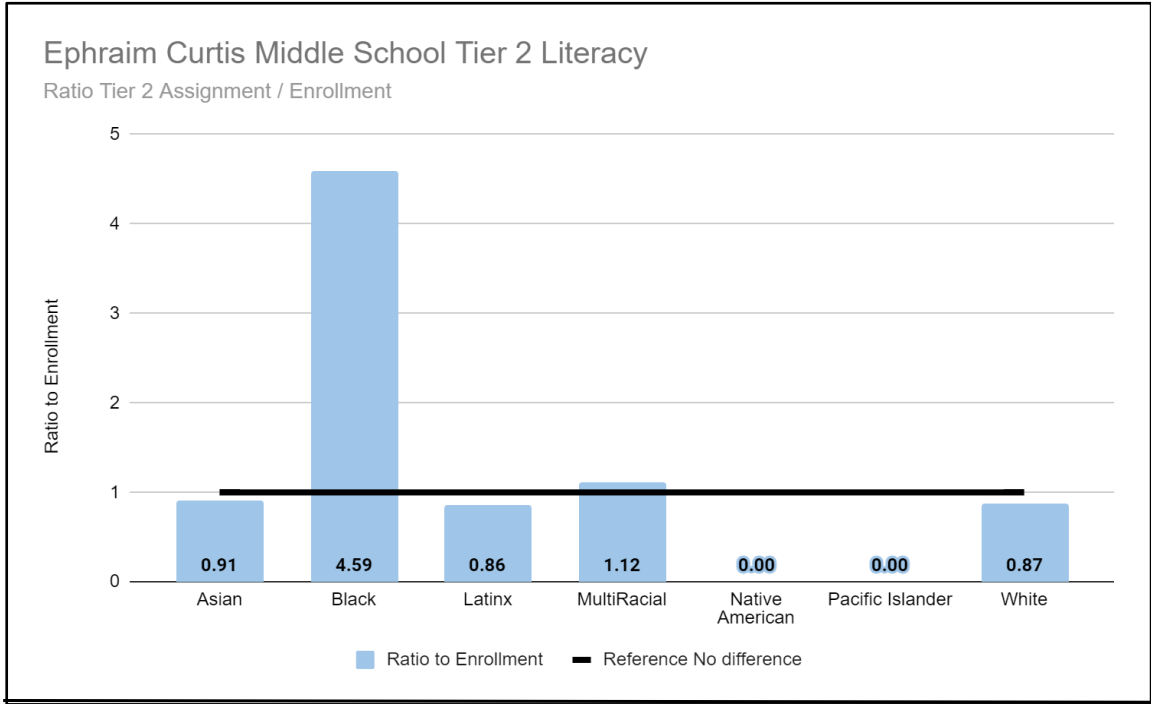
It is important to understand how the image below applies to equity audits. In the image, the differences in hill heights represent the different barriers that students are exposed to. The boxes are the support services that are accessed by students.

Some of our analyses will measure those “boxes” so differences are not always an issue. It is important to understand if these services are supporting students or if are they adding additional barriers and contributing to inequities.



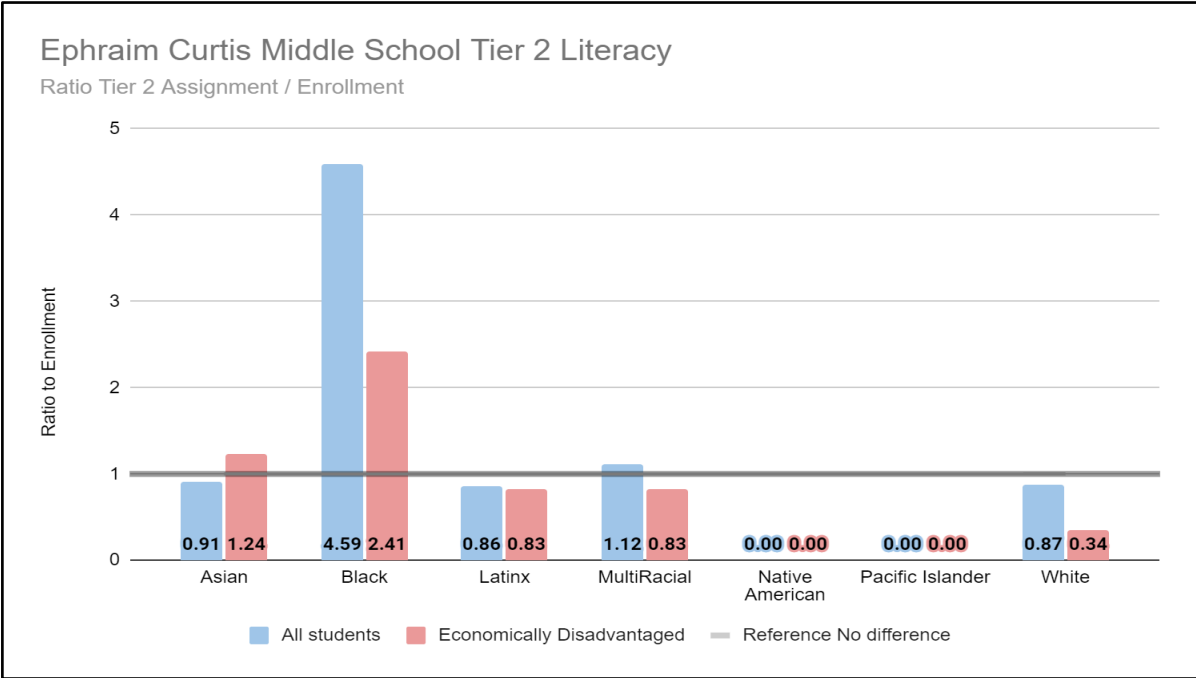
Tier 2 Services Supports

For Tier 2 Literacy services all schools are showing disproportionate Black and Latinx students assigned to these services. We have highlighted two schools with the largest differences between enrolled populations and services assignment. Josiah Haynes also has an underrepresentation of Asian students as part of the services. When accounting for socioeconomic status (SES) these differences still exist. For Ephraim Curtis Middle School, after accounting for SES, Asian students now show an over-representation in Tier 2 Literacy, Black students still show a large over-representation in Tier 2 Literacy. White students show a large underrepresentation in Tier 2 literacy services.



Ephraim Curtis Middle School			
	% of Tier 2 Literacy	Enrollment %	Ratio to Enrollment
Asian	11%(*)	12%(101)	0.91
Black	13%(*)	3%(25)	4.59
Latinx	4%(*)	5%(40)	0.86

Ephraim Curtis Middle School			
	% of Tier 2 Literacy	Enrollment %	Ratio to Enrollment
Multiracial	9%(*)	8%(72)	1.12
Pacific Islander		<1%(*)	0.00
White	63%(48)	72%(632)	0.87



Ephraim Curtis Middle School (SES)			
	% of Tier 2 Literacy	Enrollment %	Ratio to Enrollment
Asian	20%(*)	16% (*)	1.24
Black	47%(*)	19% (12)	2.41
Latinx	13%(*)	16% (*)	0.83
Multiracial	7%(*)	8% (*)	0.83
Native American			0.00
Pacific Islander		2% (*)	0.00
White	13%(*)	39% (24)	0.34

Josiah Haynes School			
	% of Tier 2 Literacy	Enrollment %	Ratio to Enrollment
Asian	3%(*)	7%(27)	0.37
Black	8%(*)	3%(12)	2.51
Latinx	11%(*)	6%(20)	2.01
Multiracial	6%(*)	5%(18)	1.12
Native American		<1%(*)	0.00
Pacific Islander			0.00
White	72%(26)	78%(284)	0.92

Special Education Assignment

Black and Latinx students make up a larger proportion of students with disabilities compared with their proportion of enrollment. This is not consistent across all schools and General John Nixon and Ephraim Curtis Middle show some of the largest differences.

Nationally, Black and Brown students are over-referred to special education services specifically because of racial bias. Without any details of their IEPs and services, it is unclear if this is an issue. Given the identified disproportionality, we suggest a granular analysis of all current IEPs to determine how racial bias plays a role in Sudbury’s racial disproportionality in special education.

District Grades K-8			
	% of Students with Disabilities	Enrollment %	Ratio to Enrollment
Asian	6%(29)	10%(243)	0.61
Black	5%(24)	3%(72)	1.70
Latinx	8%(39)	6%(139)	1.43
Multiracial	7%(36)	8%(193)	0.95
Native American		<1%(*)	0.00
Pacific Islander	<1%(*)	<1%(*)	1.70
White	74%(359)	74%(1830)	1.00

EL Program Assignment

Sudbury's percentage of EL students is much lower compared to the state. The district demographics are very different than the state overall. However, looking at the ratio of First Language not English and EL students the district is still under that of the state. Having a first language other than English doesn't guarantee the need for an ELD program. There should be consideration of how EL students are identified and if this process is giving all students the support they need.

First Language not English to English Language Learner Ratio:

State Ratio: 2.17:1 [23.9%/11.0%]

District Ratio: 3.54:1 [8.5%/2.4%]

Title	% of District	% of State
First Language not English	8.5	23.9
English Language Learner	2.4	11.0
Low-income	8.0	43.8
Students With Disabilities	18.9	18.9
High Needs	26.3	55.6

Recommendations:

- Analyze special education assignment by disability type to understand if students of color are being over-referred in specific disability categories or in certain grades.
- Review EL assignment practices. Consider adding bilingual services to support students' multilingual development.
- Recommendations related to Tiered services are part of the Achievement section.

Research:

- Elder, T. E., Figlio, D. N., Imberman, S. A., & Persico, C. L. (2021). School segregation and racial gaps in special education identification. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 39(S1), S151-S197.
- Cruz, R. A., & Firestone, A. R. (2022). Understanding the empty backpack: The role of timing in disproportionate special education identification. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 8(1), 95-113.

Equity Audit: Sudbury Public Schools

Achievement

Research Questions:

- How does achievement intersect with Tiered service assignment?
- Are there differences in achievement by racial/ethnic groups?

Sample:

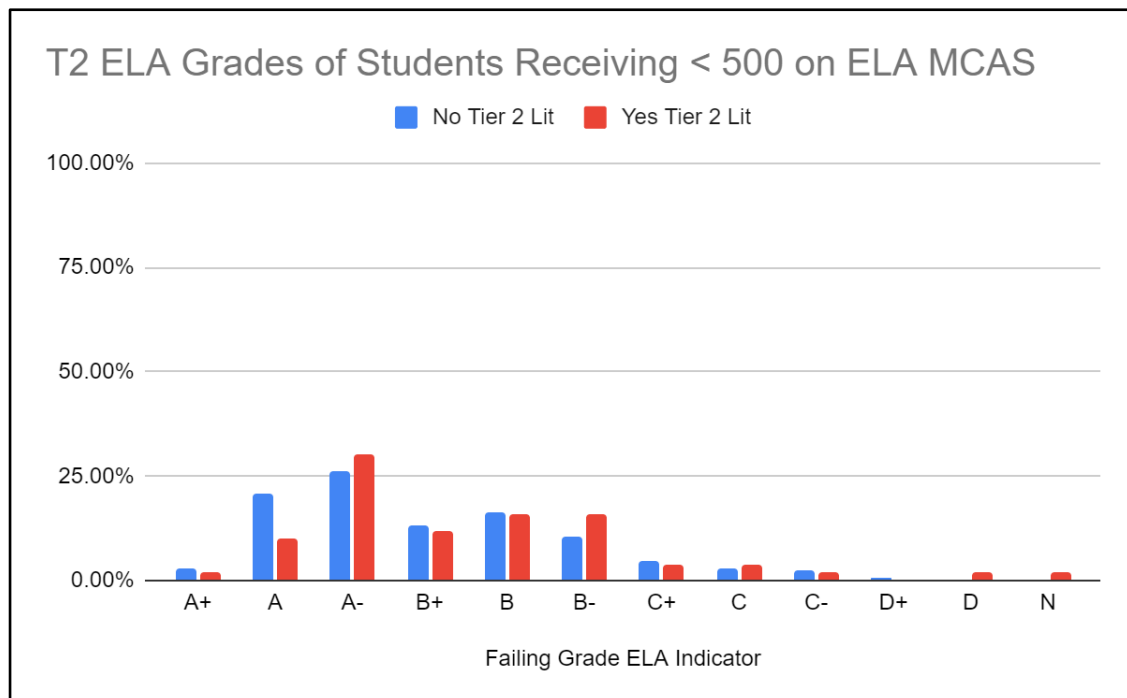
- Ephraim Curtis, Josiah Haynes, General John Nixon, Peter Noyes, Israel Loring
- Current Demographics SY 2021-2022 [Data provided March 2022]
- ELA and Math MCAS SY 2020-2021
- Term 2 Grades SY2021-2022

Major Findings:

- It is unclear if tiered services are leading to improvements in achievement.
- There are noticeable differences in Term 2 grades when looking at the data by racial/ethnic groups.

Intersection between ELA MCAS Scores and Tier 2 Literacy Services

Our analysis looks at the students who are not receiving services that have a score of less than 500. The 500 threshold was chosen because it is the minimum score on the MCAS for *Meeting Expectations*. When looking at the students with T2 grades and scoring less than 500 on the ELA MCAS (223 students), students without Tier 2 services have higher ELA grades even though these students had similar scores on the previous year's MCAS test. The previous analysis showed Black and Latinx students are over-referred to Tier 2 literary services. While our analysis is not predictive, our expectations would be that students receiving services would have higher T2 grades than students without services given the similar MCAS scores.



Term 2 Grades by Racial/Ethnic Groups

All subjects show a difference in Term 2 grade distribution by racial/ethnic groups.

T2 ELA Grades						
	Asian	Black	Latinx	Multiracial	Pacific Islander	White
A's	74% (75)	32% (*)	58% (23)	77% (55)	0% (*)	69% (439)
B's	18% (19)	52% (13)	35% (14)	15% (11)	50% (*)	25% (163)
C's	6% (*)	12% (*)	5% (*)	5% (*)	50% (*)	3% (24)
D's	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)	1% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)
N	0% (*)	4% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)

T2 Math Grades						
	Asian	Black	Latinx	Multiracial	Pacific Islander	White
A's	77% (73)	28% (*)	50% (18)	74% (50)	0% (*)	64% (404)
B's	17% (16)	56% (14)	41% (15)	17% (12)	50% (*)	29% (184)
C's	4% (*)	12% (*)	5% (*)	7% (*)	0% (*)	5% (34)
D's	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)
N	1% (*)	4% (*)	2% (*)	0% (*)	50% (*)	0% (*)

T2 Science Grades						
	Asian	Black	Latinx	Multiracial	Pacific Islander	White
A's	77% (78)	48% (12)	64% (25)	73% (52)	0% (*)	72% (453)
B's	18% (19)	24% (*)	25% (10)	19% (14)	50% (*)	22% (141)
C's	1% (*)	24% (*)	10% (*)	2% (*)	0% (*)	4% (31)
D's	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)	1% (*)	50% (*)	0% (*)
N	0% (*)	4% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)
P	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)	2% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)

T2 Social Studies Grades						
	Asian	Black	Latinx	Multiracial	Pacific Islander	White
A's	80% (81)	36% (*)	66% (26)	83% (59)	0% (*)	74% (471)
B's	15% (16)	44% (11)	30% (12)	11% (*)	0% (*)	22% (143)
C's	2% (*)	16% (*)	2% (*)	2% (*)	100% (*)	1% (12)
D's	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)
N	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)
P	0% (*)	4% (*)	0% (*)	2% (*)	0% (*)	0% (*)

MCAS Achievement Intersection with Economic Status

Often it is claimed that a students’ social-economic status accounts for significant differences in achievement. We do not support the notion that Economic Status can explain differences. This is sometimes used as an excuse for the existence of inequities and doesn’t promote change. When analyzing Sudbury’s data we found, 1) the average MCAS scores for non-economically disadvantaged students is higher than economically disadvantaged students, and 2) there are consistent difference in outcomes across racial groups within similar economic groups.

Average ELA MCAS Scores		
	Non-Eco Dis	Eco Dis
Asian	521 (129)	516 (13)
Black	504 (19)	485 (22)
Latinx	511 (39)	481 (15)
Multiracial	515 (90)	501 (*)
Native American	515 (*)	
Pacific Islander	511 (*)	455 (*)
White	512 (928)	496 (56)
Non-SWD	518 (957)	507 (62)
SWD	493 (251)	480 (53)
Non-EL	513 (1204)	495 (109)
Current EL	489 (*)	473 (*)

Average Math MCAS Scores		
	Non-Eco Dis	Eco Dis
Asian	527 (130)	512 (13)
Black	497 (19)	475 (22)
Latinx	503 (40)	475 (15)
Multiracial	511 (91)	493 (8)
Native American	517 (*)	
Pacific Islander	505 (*)	464 (*)
White	508 (931)	487 (55)
Non-SWD	515 (961)	500 (62)
SWD	490 (253)	470 (52)
Non-EL	510 (1210)	487 (108)
Current EL	475 (*)	474 (*)

Recommendations:

- Create clear definitions and processes of how tiered services are assigned
- Investigate tier 2 assignment practices to identify possible racial bias
- Create measures of effectiveness to understand if supplemental support efforts are having the intended impact

Research:

- Modica, M. (2015). “My skin color stops me from leading”: Tracking, identity, and student dynamics in a racially mixed school. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 17(3), 76-90.
- Ansalone, G. (2001). Schooling, tracking, and inequality. *Journal of Children and Poverty*, 7(1), 33-47.

Equity Audit: Sudbury Public Schools

Discipline

Research Question:

- Are there any identifiable trends in student discipline data? How can discipline policies be improved?

Sample:

- All schools (Ephraim Curtis Middle School, Josiah Haynes, General John Nixon, Peter Noyes, Israel Loring)
- Demographics Current SY 2021-2022 [Data provided March 2022]
- Publicly available data SY16-17 to SY20-21

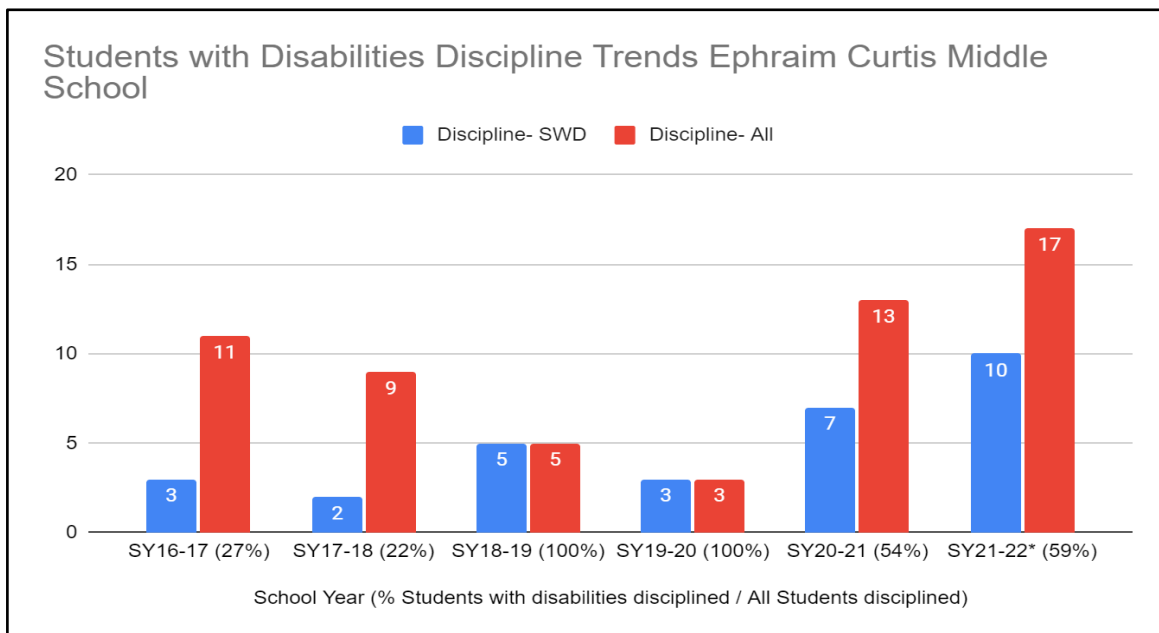
Method:

- Due to limited data for the current school year, we used publicly available data to identify high-level trends.

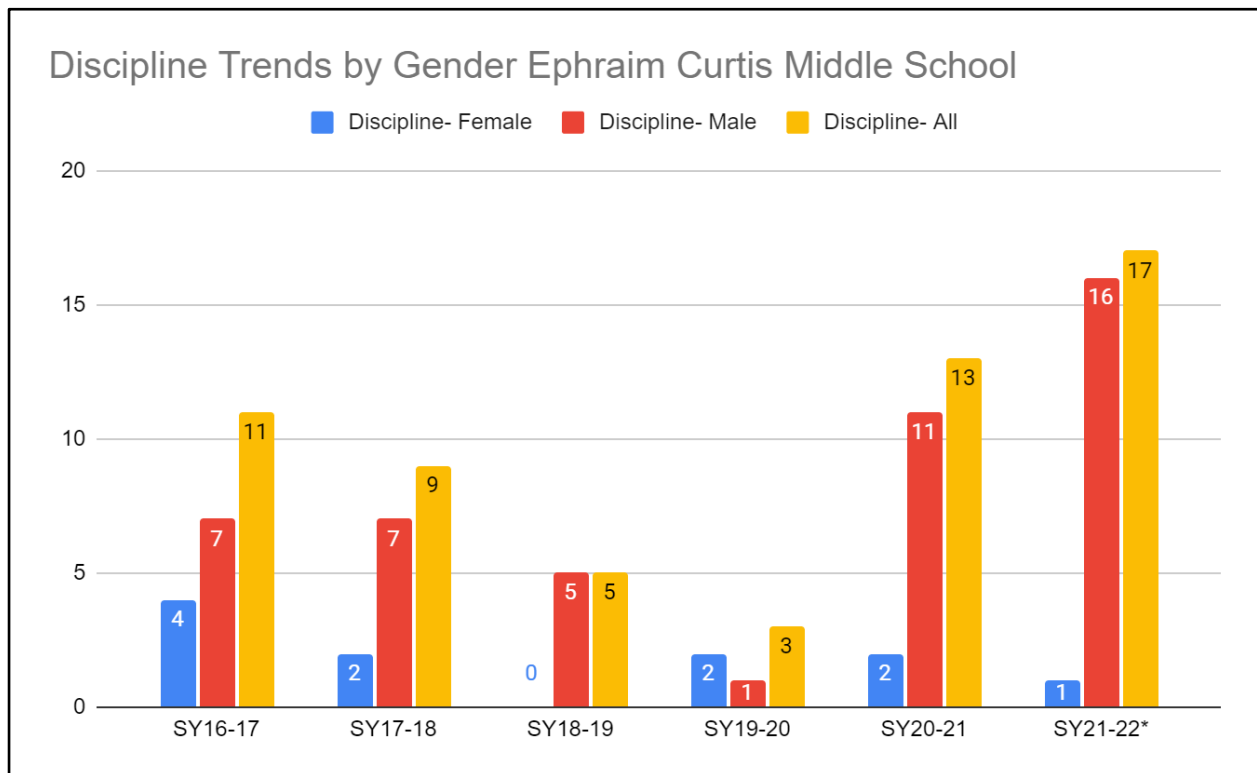
Major Findings:

- Students with disabilities make up most students receiving exclusionary discipline.
- Male students make up most students receiving exclusionary discipline.
- Language in rubrics and thermometers are very subjective which could be contributing to the disproportionate trends.

Students with disabilities represent most of the students receiving exclusionary discipline, including in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and emergency removal. We used the data from Sudbury’s SDDR reports posted on the state’s website to create these charts. In the Aspen data, most of the incidents are listed as *Misbehavior*. This category of discipline needs further inquiry to better understand the ways in which the enforcement of discipline for *Misbehavior* is disproportionately impacting students with disabilities.



Male students are receiving most of the exclusionary discipline, including in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and emergency removal. In the Aspen data, most of the incidents are listed as *Misbehavior*. This category of discipline needs further inquiry to better understand the ways in which the enforcement of discipline for *Misbehavior* is disproportionately impacting students by gender.



In this section, we analyze the Peter Noyes Behavior thermometer terminology. However, this same analysis applies to all the behavior thermometers and rubrics. There are many subjective terms in the thermometer that are open to interpretation. Without clear expectations, policies like this can lead to disproportionate application and outcomes.

Examples of subjective terms	Examples of less vague terms
Being flexible	Using calming down strategies
Respecting differences	Inviting others to play
Using kind words	Following bus rules
Using manners	Sharing or taking turns
Supporting others	Getting an adult to help
Acting as an ally to others	
Encouraging others	
Including and welcoming others	

Consequence Thermometer:

- Swearing seems very different than anything else in the Extremely Unsafe Behavior category.
- Retaliation is also an interesting item in this category. How is this judged? If retaliation is a result of the school not responding to an earlier incident, what happens?

Peter Noyes Behavior Thermometer

Potentially Triple D Behavior
Dangerous
Destructive
Discriminatory
Bullying

Stealing
Swearing
Touching others private area
Discriminatory behavior (Including name calling on ability, race, gender, religion, or focused on other personal or family characteristics)
Threatening to hurt someone or the school
Weapons
Severe hitting, shoving, punching, kicking, slapping, spitting
Getting back at someone (retaliation)
Something requiring police

Potentially Unsafe Behavior

Mistreating other's property
Pushing, roughhousing
Name-calling
Exclusion
(stopping someone from having Friends or participating in an activity)
Starting or spreading rumors
Negative or rude gestures: sticking out tongue at someone, "loser" gesture

Inappropriate Behavior

Talking negative behind someone's back
Distracting others
Laughing at a mistake or weakness
Threatening to leave someone out
Poor sportsmanship
Running in hall
Negative facial expressions (eye rolling, making faces, clicking teeth, etc.)

Core Value Behavior
Respect
Caring
Achievement
Responsibility

Being flexible, sharing or taking turns, encouraging others, inviting others to play, respecting differences, using kind words, listening to others, getting an adult to help, including and welcoming others, following bus rules, using manners, using calming down strategies, supporting others, acting as an ally to others.

Recommendations:

- Remove subjective language in Thermometer and Rubrics to create clear expectations. When doing this understand who is setting these rules and how they will be interpreted. “Being flexible” may seem clear to adults but can mean different things to students.
- Examine the details of the incidents that are leading to exclusionary discipline. Why are incidents these leading to exclusionary discipline for students with disabilities? What types of discipline are students without disabilities receiving for similar events?
- Having multiple sources for discipline tracking can create confusion for staff. It’s recommended to use the SIS for all behavior tracking, regardless of the type or level of infraction.

Research:

- Fisher, A. E., Fisher, B. W., & Railey, K. S. (2021). Disciplinary disparities by race and disability: Using DisCrit theory to examine the manifestation determination review process in special education in the United States. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 24(6), 755-769.
- Skiba, R. J., Arredondo, M. I., & Williams, N. T. (2014). More than a metaphor: The contribution of exclusionary discipline to a school-to-prison pipeline. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 47(4), 546-564.

Equity Audit: Sudbury Public Schools *Connectedness Survey*

Research Question:

Are there any identifiable trends when looking at response rates by grade level, racial/ethnic identity, and gender identity?

Sample:

- Ephraim Curtis Middle School
- Demographics [Self Selection during survey collection SY2021-2022]

Method:

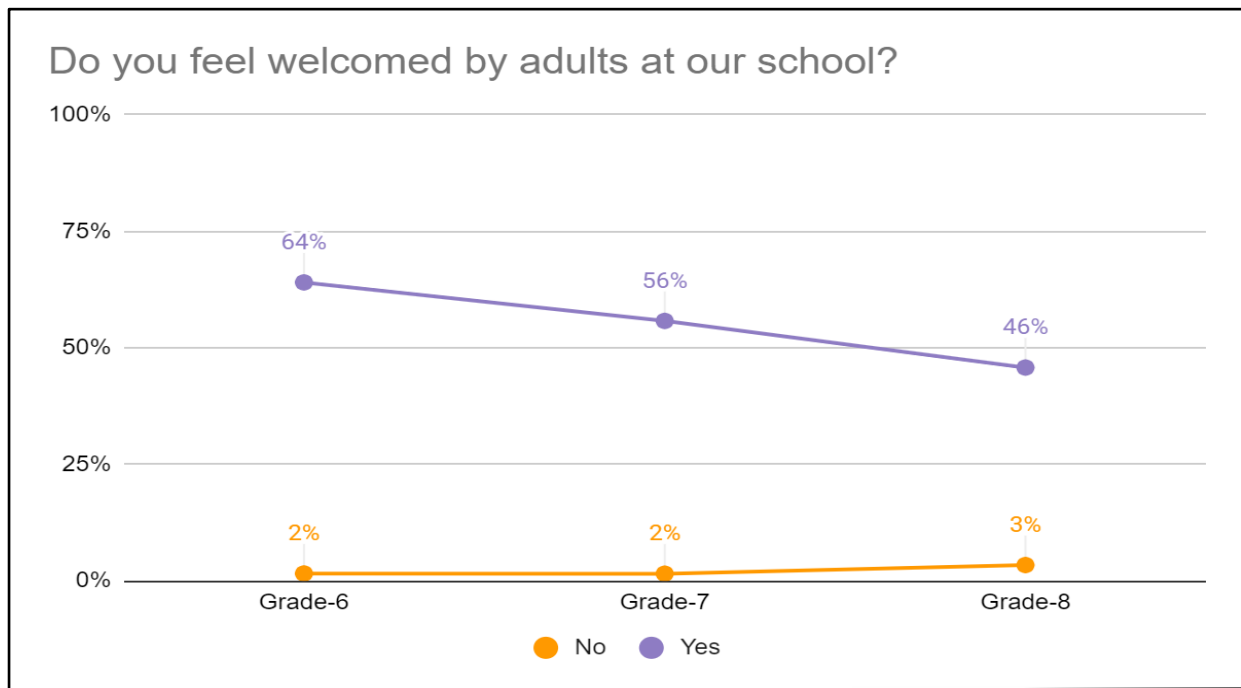
- We examined survey responses by race, gender, and grade.

Major Findings:

- As grade level increases students' positive response rates decline
- The use of the “Gender Diverse” bucket masks the experiences of Transgender students.
- Students who identify as Black and students who left the race/ethnicity question blank have higher rates of responses to having negative experiences than other racial/ethnic identities.

Do you feel welcomed by adults at our school?

Students who identify as Black and [left Race/Ethnicity Blank] report higher rates of not feeling welcomed by adults at school. For gender identity students who identify as transgender or who [Left Gender Identity Blank] report higher rates of not feeling welcomed by students at school.



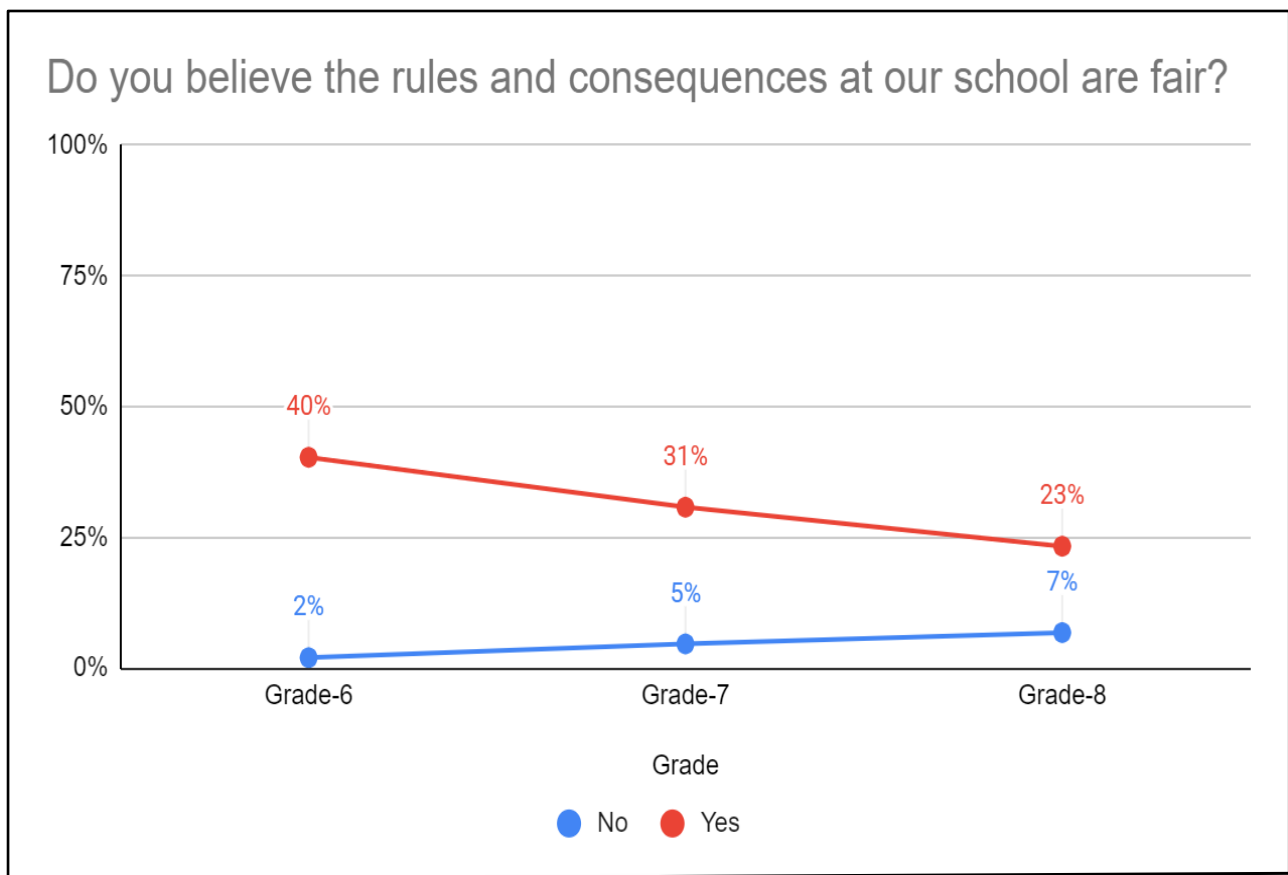
Do you feel welcomed by adults at our school?						
	[Left Blank]	No	Sometimes	Most of the time	Yes	Total Respondents
Alaskan Native or Native American				33%	67%	< 10
Asian		1%	9%	34%	56%	97
Black or African American		16%	16%	36%	32%	25
Hispanic or Latinx			10%	38%	52%	21
Middle Eastern or Arab			17%	42%	42%	12
Multiracial		4%	9%	48%	39%	23
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian				50%	50%	< 10
White		1%	7%	33%	59%	446
I don't know or I don't want to answer	1%	2%	6%	35%	55%	96
[Left Race/Ethnicity Blank]		11%	7%	30%	52%	27
Total Respondents:	< 1 %	2%	8%	34%	56%	752

Do you feel welcomed by adults at our school?						
	[Left Blank]	No	Sometimes	Most of the time	Yes	Total Respondents
Female		1%	8%	32%	59%	291
Male	< 1 %	3%	7%	33%	56%	374
Gender fluid or gender non-conforming			5%	58%	37%	19
Non-binary			9%	55%	36%	< 15
Transgender		20%	20%	60%		< 15
Prefer not to answer		5%	13%	47%	34%	38
[Left Gender Identity Blank]		7%	7%	14%	71%	< 15
Total Respondents:	< 1 %	2%	8%	34%	56%	752

Do you believe the rules and consequences at our school are fair?

Students who identify as Black, Middle Eastern or Arab, Multiracial and who [Left Race/Ethnicity Blank] reported higher rates of not believing that consequences were fair at school. When looking at the data by gender identity, Transgender students, and students who [Left Gender Identity Blank] show higher rates of not believing that consequences were fair at school. The number of students reporting “Yes” the rules are fair drops drastically from Grade 6 to Grade 8.

Looking at the open responses we saw the discipline rules were stricter for males than female students. Which is supported by our discipline analysis as discipline incidents overly involved male students. However, there were also mentions that the dress code rules are unfair to female students. Dress coding did not appear in the discipline data provided to us.

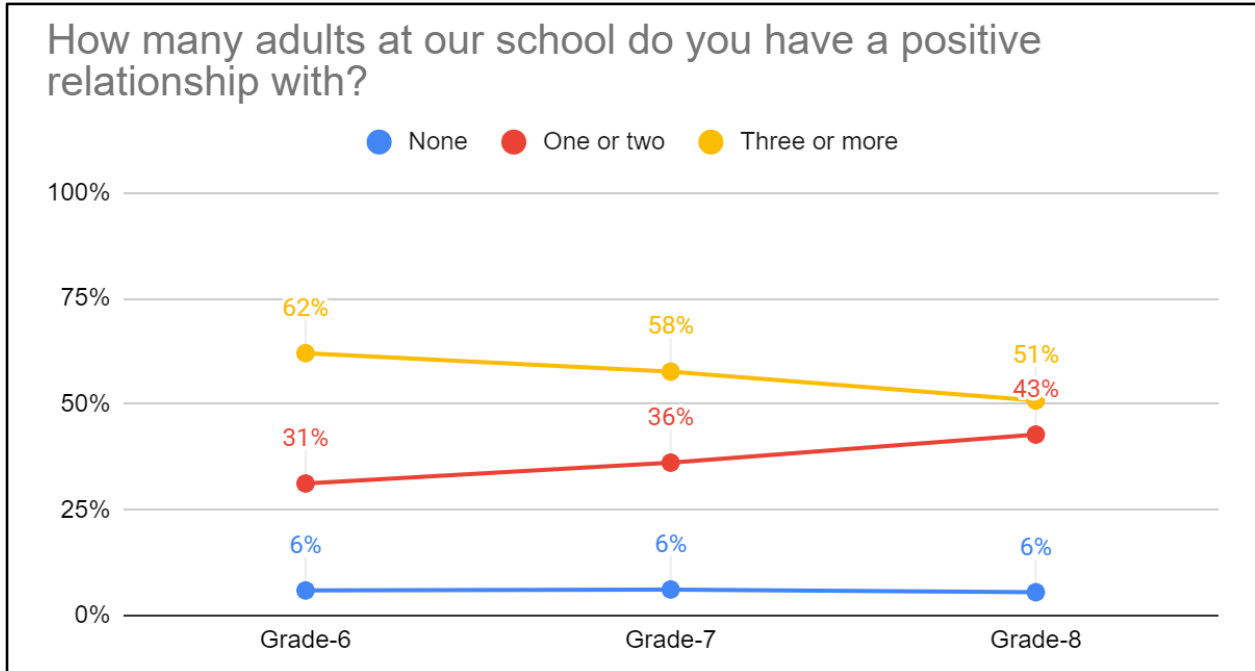


Do you believe the rules and consequences at our school are fair?						
	[Left Blank]	No	Sometimes	Most of the time	Yes	Total Respondents
Alaskan Native or Native American				67%	33%	< 10
Asian		2%	10%	56%	32%	97
Black or African American		12%	32%	36%	20%	25
Hispanic or Latinx		5%	19%	52%	24%	21
Middle Eastern or Arab		8%	42%	25%	25%	12
Multiracial		9%	30%	48%	13%	23
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian			50%	50%		< 10
White	< 1 %	4%	19%	46%	32%	446
I don't know or I don't want to answer	1%	5%	14%	41%	40%	96
[Left Race/Ethnicity Blank]		15%	19%	33%	33%	27
Total Respondents:	< 1 %	5%	18%	45%	32%	752

Do you believe the rules and consequences at our school are fair?						
	[Left Blank]	No	Sometimes	Most of the time	Yes	Total Respondents
Female	< 1 %	1%	14%	48%	37%	291
Male		7%	19%	44%	30%	374
Gender fluid or gender non-conforming		5%	26%	53%	16%	19
Non-binary			18%	64%	18%	< 15
Transgender		20%	40%	20%	20%	< 15
Prefer not to answer	3%	8%	29%	47%	13%	38
[Left Gender Identity Blank]		14%	14%	29%	43%	< 15
Total Respondents:	< 1 %	5%	18%	45%	32%	752

How many adults do you have a positive relationship with?

Students who identify as Black show a much higher rate of reporting no adults who they have a positive relationship with. Any student who doesn't have at least one adult they can go to is a problem. With the number of adults that students interact with in the building even one or two can be problematic. Excluding the condition of "that means they welcome you to class or school" might provide better insights as the key question we are concerned with is if students have a trusted adult they can connect with and having that "and" condition might exclude students who have a trusted adult that didn't welcome them to class or school.



How many adults at our school do you have a positive relationship with? That means they welcome you to class or school and you would go to them if you had a problem.

	[Left Blank]	None	One or two	Three or more	Total Respondents
Alaskan Native or Native American			33%	67%	< 10
Asian		5%	45%	49%	97
Black or African American		24%	36%	40%	25
Hispanic or Latinx			57%	43%	21
Middle Eastern or Arab			50%	50%	12
Multiracial			52%	48%	23
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian				100%	< 10
White	< 1 %	5%	33%	61%	446
I don't know/don't want to answer	1%	9%	35%	54%	96
[Left Race/Ethnicity Blank]	4%	11%	30%	56%	27
All Respondents	< 1 %	6%	37%	57%	752

How many adults at our school do you have a positive relationship with? That means they welcome you to class or school and you would go to them if you had a problem.					
	[Left Blank]	None	One or two	Three or more	Total Respondents
Female	< 1 %	4%	39%	57%	291
Male	< 1 %	7%	33%	59%	374
Gender fluid or gender non-conforming	5%	11%	37%	47%	19
Non-binary			64%	36%	< 15
Transgender		20%	40%	40%	< 15
Prefer not to answer		8%	42%	50%	38
[Left Gender Identity Blank]		14%	36%	50%	< 15
Grand Total	< 1 %	6%	37%	57%	752

Recommendations:

- Use the climate survey as a starting point to understand what is happening in schools as well as judge the progress of initiatives. For example, ask explicit questions “As a district, we are implementing a diverse curriculum. How has this change impacted your school experience?”
- Follow-up climate survey with race and gender-specific focus groups to gain a better understanding of the student experience and modify practices to create a more hospitable environment, especially for Black and transgender students
- If students are allowed to self-select identity markers, disaggregate data by all identified groups. Do not discount groups with small N-Sizes.

Research:

- Voight, A., Hanson, T., O’Malley, M., & Adekanye, L. (2015). The racial school climate gap: Within-school disparities in students’ experiences of safety, support, and connectedness. *American journal of community psychology*, 56(3), 252-267.
- Mangin, M. M. (2022). Teachers’ Strategies for Supporting Transgender and/or Gender-Expansive Elementary School Students. *Educational Researcher*, 51(5), 324-335.